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Crossing our fingers and hoping that untested technique prevents acid mine drainage

METTIKI MINE APPROVED

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection has approved Mettiki Coal's permit application to mine about 2,000 acres in Grant and Tucker counties. The operation would mine beneath tributaries of the Potomac and Blackwater Rivers. The targeted coal seam is highly acid producing.

History

The Department had originally denied a permit application for mining in the same location. At the time, it cited concerns that the operation "will create acid mine drainage that will leave the permit area requiring chemical treatment for an indefinite period of time." In the earlier denial, the Department of Environmental Protection noted that the proposed mine was not "designed to prevent long-term material damage to the hydrologic balance outside the permit area." At the time of the first denial, DEP noted that the mine would create a perpetual discharge of water requiring treatment to meet water quality standards.

Historically, the drainage of acid water from abandoned mines has been one of the most serious problems in parts of West Virginia and surrounding states where acid producing seams are located. Much of the acid drainage is treated while the mines are operating. When the mines are abandoned, the drainage either goes untreated or is treated at enormous expense. The expense is so great in part because the acid mine drainage, and the necessity of treating it, may be expected to continue for a very long time. While it does not continue literally forever, it does continue for such a long time that in planning how society deals with it, it may as well

last forever.

Because of this, it has become state law and policy to avoid this problem by not allowing mining that would result in long term discharge of water that would require treatment. WVDEP's original denial upheld these policies and regulations outlawing mining operations that will result in long term acid mine drainage.

Untried practice proposed

In response to this original denial, Mettiki proposed an untried method for preventing the formation of acid mine drainage in the future. It proposed sealing the mine after the mining is finished, pumping out the mine's water, mixing it with alkaline material and pumping it back in until the water covers the potentially acid producing areas. Since acid production results from the exposure of acid producing materials to oxygen, if the experiment works then filling the mine with alkaline water will eliminate the potential for acid mine drainage. If the experiment does not work, then the mine will become another source of acid mine drainage.

When is an untried practice an "experimental practice"?

The Department of Environmental Protection agrees that no one has ever tried injecting alkaline water into an underground mine as a method for preventing acid mine drainage from forming. In spite of this, it does not consider this an experimental practice.

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From the Western Slope of the Mountains
By Frank Young

Sustainable West Virginia?

Recently I was contacted by the WV Department's of Environmental Protection's (WVDEP) Office of Innovation. It was asking the WV Highlands Conservancy, along with other groups "identified as critical players in the sustainability process", to participate in WVDEP's "Sustainability Project".

It explained that WVDEP had received a \$30,000 grant from the Environmental Council Of States to do a "Sustainability in West Virginia" project.

WVDEP explained further that, *"The Issues of 'sustainability' dominate the landscape of both international and domestic environmental policy as leaders hailing from various communities look to find the balance between society, economy and environment. Whether viewed from an international or domestic perspective, sustainability is the policy framework in which the WVDEP will structure its next generation of environmental protection activities. To do so, the agency must foster and develop an internal culture that is supportive of sustainability concepts and programs."*

Having been invited to participate in a 1 to 2 hour "interview" re: the Conservancy's view on sustainability issues, I put out an electronic mail and telephone call to some of our folks, seeking interest from those who might want to participate in WVDEP's sustainability project. The response was- well, mostly lackluster. Virtually no one had the time and energy to put into the requested "interview" on such short notice.

In contemplating if and how the Highlands Conservancy would participate in this sustainability project with WVDEP, I thought about our historic relationship and interactions with that agency. It has been, well, it's been frustrating and disappointing at times. We and the WVDEP seem to often be working at cross purposes.

One final sentence in WVDEP's recent e-mail communication to me on this was: "As a means of illustration, we will emphasize such efforts within the context of a specific industrial sector - possibly the coal industry."

Well, while our initial response to WVDEP's call for our participation in this was not enthusiastic, we did not tell it to bug off, nor did we indicate that our future interest in its sustainability project was precluded by our initial skepticism about any serious value that might come through our input.

But since WVDEP mentioned the coal industry, we would surely suggest that not burying headwater streams, that ending the destruction of thousands of acres of currently sustainable forestland, and not granting mine permits that will result in long-term acid mine discharge for the Backwater, Potomac and other rivers of WV would have to be some of our suggestions for current options.

Pie in the sky visionary goals are so easy to write. Changing the political and other social cultures of an agency is far more challenging.

WVHC Calendar:
Summer Board meeting- Saturday, July 24th, 9:30 AM, Elkins "Green House"
Fall Review- October 22nd - 24th (Board & General membership meetings Sunday, 24th)

roster of Officers, Board Members and Committee Chairs

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ACID MINE DRAINAGE: THE BIGGER PICTURE

What Does Acid Mine Drainage Mean to You?

Our rivers require near neutral pH levels to support healthy habitats. A neutral value is 7. Rivers affected by acid mine drainage (AMD), a by-product of mining many of the coal seams in northern West Virginia, western Maryland, and Pennsylvania, often run orange with pH levels easily as little as 3. For years, the Cheat's Muddy Creek, has been nicknamed Orange Creek. Putting aside the aesthetics of AMD, realize that tadpoles and crawfish will no longer live in waters with pH values of 6, the fisherman's favorites-- trout and bass-- disappear at pH values of 5.5 and when acidity reaches levels of 4.5, no fish would be expected to survive.

What's New About Acid Mine Drainage?

The problem of AMD is as old as the first coal mining efforts in northern West Virginia coalfields. It wasn't until the 1970's that we recognized the magnitude of the problem and began to stop the mining practices that cause AMD. Cleaning up AMD polluted waters from abandoned mines will take generations longer than the few short years it took to mine coal and waste the affected waters. The geology is ancient, the mining practices are decades old, and the clean-up legacy is here for our future, but still today:



New Mines Continue to Propose Creating More AMD Run-off

West Virginia Rivers Coalition continues to oppose plans by Mettiki Coal to mine. West Virginia Rivers Coalition doesn't want to stop mining nor the associated jobs, but WVRC wants to stop any new AMD from entering the Blackwater River (Cheat River tributary). Mettiki continues to propose mining in a manner and a location that will produce AMD.

Treating the Legacy of AMD is Often Considered a Trade-off for Polluters

WV's Department of Environmental Protection is applying the settlement from a lawsuit against polluter, Dominion Resources, to treating AMD from abandoned mines in West Virginia. At a recent Department ceremony in Pickens, WV, the DEP touted the

settlement as a great win for anglers. We hope that DEP will point out that Dominion is as much a contributor to the problem as a contributor to putting a Band-Aid on the problem. It's a shame WV has need for treating 10 streams annually and that anglers need to welcome treatment-- this in a state where healthy rivers support exceptional fishing.

The Magnitude of the AMD Problem Gets National Press

American Rivers recently released their annual 10 Most Endangered Rivers list and West Virginia's Monongahela River ranks Number 5 because of drainage from Abandoned Coal Mines. American Rivers notes that "thousands of abandoned mines are leaking acid and other toxic substances into streams throughout the coal country of western Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Unless Congress reauthorizes the Abandoned Mine Land Trust Fund, ongoing efforts to treat this problem will cease and the amount of pollution reaching the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers will increase, threatening 42 public drinking water intakes, thousands of private wells, and fish and wildlife."

It's a shame the Monongahela has hit American River's number 5 rank. WVRC hopes that the recognition of AMD problems that began in the 70's, will not stop the programs designed to prevent new AMD or clean-up of AMD from abandoned mines. The Monongahela does not need to move up the ranks of American River's Most Endangered Rivers list

What's The Connection?

It's a simple picture. The proposed Mettiki mine sits near the banks of Beaver Creek that flows into the Blackwater River. The Blackwater flows into the Cheat River. The Cheat already accepts AMD water from Muddy (Orange) Creek. The Cheat River flows into the Monongahela River near Morgantown, WV. A few short miles upstream, the Monongahela is formed by the West Fork and Tygart Rivers. The Tygart's most significant tributary is the Buckhannon and it is on the Right Fork of the Buckhannon where DEP is celebrating a legacy of AMD treatment and beginning to apply Dominion's pollution settlement funds.



This story was prepared by the West Virginia Rivers Coalition.

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The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a non-profit corporation which has been recognized as a tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Its bylaws describe its purpose:
The purposes of the Conservancy shall be to promote, encourage, and work for the conservation- including both preservation and wise use- and appreciation of the natural resources of West Virginia and the Nation, and especially of the Highlands Region of West Virginia, for the cultural, social, educational, physical, health, spiritual and economic benefit of present and future generations of West Virginians and Americans.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AT SURFACE MINE BOARD?

By Ken Ward

State Surface Mine Board members with financial ties to the coal industry were urged Wednesday to recuse themselves from a major case before the panel. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy asked the board members to voluntarily step down from their challenge of a permit issued to Arch Coal Inc.

Joe Lovett, a lawyer for the group, said that state law prohibits board members from taking part in cases if they have "any financial interest in the outcome

Board members did not immediately rule on the motion or discuss it during their public meeting. "We need to think about this for a while," said board Chairman Tom Michael.

Under state law, at least one of the appointees to the Surface Mine Board must be a person who "by reason of previous vocation, employment or affiliations, can be classed as one capable and experienced in coal mining."

Another member must have experience in agriculture, another in forestry and a third in engineering. Another member must have experience in water pollution control and another must be "a person with significant experience in the advocacy of environmental protection." The final board member represents "the general public interest," according to state law.

Under the law, the board members with expertise in mining, water pollution control, and engineering can get "significant financial compensation from regulated entities" if they disclose those relationships to the board.

However, the law also says that, "any member who has any financial interest in the outcome of a decision of the board shall not vote or act on any matter which shall directly affect the member's personal interests."

In the case, Lovett seeks to strictly limit valley fills by having a stream buffer

zone rule applied to the waste dumps. The permit challenge also seeks "mandatory testing" by the state Department of Environmental Protection for toxic selenium discharges from strip mining operations. It also seeks "the mandatory reclamation of the state's topsoil resources from surface mining operations through industry investment in re-



forestation activities," the motion said.

No board members appear to be employed by Arch Coal or the Arch subsidiary, Coal-Mac Inc., involved in this case, according to biographies posted on the board's Web site.

But in a written motion, Lovett said that the permit challenge "has raised three specific matters of particular import for the statewide surface mining industry."

"The determination of these three issues will have a substantial economic impact on surface mining operations across the state," Lovett wrote. "In other words, although this is an appeal of one permit, it raises a challenge to DEP's permitting practices generally.

He did not identify any board members who he believes have financial ties to the industry. According to the board's Web site, board member Randy McMillion is vice president of Riverton Coal. McMillion was appointed in December by Gov. Bob Wise. Board member Steve Capelli is a self-employed engineer who was formerly senior vice president of Pen Coal Co., according to the Web site.

Board member Michael Hastings is listed as general manger of Benson International, a company that makes and sells large dump trucks and other similar trucks and trailers.

After a break Wednesday, Michael said that Hastings had decided to recuse himself from the case because he had missed previous hearings. The permit challenge was filed in late October, and hearings began in January.

Arch Coal lawyer Bob McLusky said that Lovett should have filed his motion at the start of the hearings months ago. McLusky also noted that Michael is a former member of the board of the Highlands Conservancy. Michael is on the board of the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, according to that group's Web site.

Lovett responded that the conflict-of-interest law goes only to "financial interests."

In his written motion, he said that, "should board members with the personal, pecuniary ties [to the industry] ... fail to disqualify themselves from this appeal, the authority of the Surface Mine Board would be seriously undermined.

"The confidence of the people of the state of West Virginia (and the confidence of courts reviewing board decisions) in the Surface Mine Board's ability to issue sound and impartial decisions would be jeopardized."

This story originally appeared in the Charleston Gazette.



CORRIDOR H NAMED ONE OF THE NATION'S MOST WASTEFUL HIGHWAY PROJECTS

Corridor H is one of the most wasteful highway projects in the nation, according to a report released in early June by Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS) and Friends of the Earth (FoE). The report, *Road to Ruin*, identifies the 27 most wasteful highway projects in the country.

Welcoming the report, Hugh Rogers of the Highlands Conservancy and Corridor H Alternatives said, "Corridor H is worse than wasteful. It's using our taxes to destroy some of our most precious places. If we don't build this road it would save taxpayers a billion dollars and the heart of our mountains."

Although a settlement agreement in early 2000 between the West Virginia Department of Transportation and fifteen opposition groups allowed some independently useful segments of the highway to be built, there is no current construction between Elkins and Moorefield. The same groups are contesting WV DOT's intention to follow the original alignment across Blackwater Canyon.

"This project is a white elephant that would blow hundreds of millions of hard-earned taxpayer dollars without considering less expensive alternatives," said Erich W. Zimmermann, Research Analyst at Taxpayers for Common Sense. "Corridor H won't solve traffic problems and will waste \$800 million in federal funding, not to mention West Virginia's share."

Construction of the first sections of the project cost approximately double the original estimate of \$10 million per mile. Most Corridor H segments are not projected to even approach the 9,000 vehicles-per-day that national engineering groups use as the threshold for justifying a four-lane highway.

"If you look at the current construction in the Lost River area near Baker in

Hardy County, you can see what the highway would do west of Moorefield," said Rogers. "WV DOT is systematically destroying one of the most beautiful places in the

ties more livable."

The 2004 *Road to Ruin* highlights projects from every part of the county, which together would cost federal taxpayers more than \$24 billion. The 27 projects named in the report are located in 21 states. Virginia leads the list with four wasteful road projects; Indiana has three; and Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota and Pennsylvania each have two. The report recommends that the \$189 million earmarked in this year's transportation bill for the 27 roads listed in the report be eliminated, and the brakes applied to all of these projects before another dollar is wasted.

The 27 highways in the report were all nominated by local citizen organizations and individuals, and were researched by Taxpayers for Common Sense and Friends of the Earth. This list represents the most wasteful and environmentally harmful highways in the U.S. Corridor H made the Top 10, which was determined by ranking each road according to its cost to taxpayers and impact on the environment and surrounding community.

The report is available on the Taxpayers for Common Sense website at www.taxpayer.net.

Taxpayers for Common Sense (TCS) is an independent taxpayer organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. that works to cut government waste by reaching out to taxpayers from all political perspectives.

Friends of the Earth is the U.S. voice of an international network of grassroots environmental groups in 70 countries.



Let's see. Costs a lot of money. Doesn't make us any better off. Remind me again why somebody wants to build this thing?

eastern part of our state. It's time to rethink the best way to bring people to Canaan Valley and our other tourist attractions."

"Corridor H is emblematic of a national struggle that local communities are having against new highway construction," stated Erich Pica, economic campaign director at Friends of the Earth. "These highways are impacting air quality, destroying habitat, and are failing to make communi-

Editorial Faux Pas

The story in the May, 2004, issue about the Longview power plant erroneously reported that the permit issued by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Air Quality allowed emissions of "over 19 million tons of regulated pollutants into the air." The correct figure is "over 19 million *pounds per year* of regulated pollutants into the air." We regret any confusion this error may have caused.

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss



Arch Believes in Academic Freedom. All Academics Are Free To Provide The Answers Arch Wants

ARCH ATTACKS FORESTRY EXPERT, SEEKS TO REDUCE HIS RESEARCH FUNDING

By Ken Ward

In late 1999, state regulators, environmentalists, and coal operators sat down to write new rules they hoped would regenerate forests on mountaintop removal sites. Coal industry officials said there was a guy at Virginia Tech who could help. James Burger, a professor of forestry and soil sciences, had been researching reforestation of mined land for years.

The West Virginia Coal Association picked Burger as one of its representatives on a team that would write the new Department of Environmental Protection rules.

Nearly five years later, at least one coal company has decided to go after Burger, by threatening to withdraw funding for the research center where he works.

The rules Burger helped write required coal operators to do something they didn't want to do: Save the topsoil from mine sites, and put the material back when they're done mining. Earlier this year, Burger testified in a state Surface Mine Board case. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy wants the board to require all strip mines in the state to follow Burger's proposals.

Burger was supposed to testify again last week, to rebut the comments of a West Virginia University researcher hired by Arch Coal Inc. to help it defend the permit being challenged in the case. Instead, the hearing ended with testimony from Gene Kitts, a former Massey Energy executive who is now vice president for environmental and technical affairs at Arch Coal. Bob McLusky, a lawyer for Arch Coal, showed Kitts a letter that Burger had written to the board of the Powell River Project.

The project is a cooperative program of Virginia Tech, other schools and industry. It's where Burger does most of his research. Kitts explained that Arch Coal is among several companies and industry groups that provide money to fund the Powell River Project.

Company officials were unhappy, Kitts told the mine board, because it had "become apparent that Dr. Burger was actively challenging an Arch permit." Arch Coal, Kitts testified, began to question the "wisdom of continuing to make contributions to the Powell River Project." Kitts said that another Arch Coal official, John O'Hare, took the company's complaints to the Powell River Project board.

"We questioned the direction that Dr. Burger's research was headed," Kitts said. "We have said that his research needs to be more balanced."

The result?

Burger wrote the letter that McLusky had Kitts explain to the Surface Mine Board. In it, Burger said that he had revised his latest research proposal to address "the perception that I am working counter to the coal industry's interests."

Academic freedom

Over the last 20 years, Burger has published more than three dozen papers on reforestation of mined lands. The Powell

River Project lists the publications on its Web site. "When the research began in 1980, the researchers' bias was that mined areas are 'moonscapes' where it would be a challenge to get anything to grow," the Web site says. "They soon learned, however, that this initial bias was in error, that mined areas have the potential to be highly productive forests."

In his work, Burger found that trees would grow well on mined land if operators would "construct a soil medium from weathered sandstone overburden materials, mixing in minor amounts of native topsoil to provide a source of native seeds whenever possible."

Harold Burkhardt, head of the Virginia Tech forestry department, said that he is not aware of any scientific criticism of Burger's work. "His work, like all scientific work, has to withstand the scrutiny of peer review, and his work has done that," Burkhardt said.

Terry Sammons, a coal industry lawyer who worked with Burger on the West Virginia reforestation rules, said he was always impressed by the professor's work. "My experience with Dr. Burger has been very good," Sammons said last week.

"He's a well-respected researcher and a professional. I think that the commercial forestry regulations are very valuable," Sammons added. "It's an opportunity for real reforestation, which is a great need on surface-mined land."

Charleston lawyer Brian Glasser, who represented the DEP when the rules were written, said that Arch Coal was wrong to threaten to pull Burger's funding. "[Burger] dedicated his life to finding better ways to reforest mined lands, and because they don't like what his scientific findings were, they try to destroy him by going after his funding," Glasser said.

Burger did not return a phone call. Neither did other officials from the Powell River Project or Virginia Tech.

Expanding the rules

Last year, the Highlands Conservancy launched a legal effort to force all strip mines — not just those with approximate original contour variances — to follow Burger's plan. Joe Lovett, the Conservancy's lawyer, appealed a permit that the DEP had granted to Arch Coal subsidiary Coal-Mac Inc. The company wants the 850-acre permit to expand its Phoenix Complex along the Logan-Mingoborder.

In the appeal, Lovett argues that the DEP wrongly approved Coal-Mac's proposal to use a topsoil substitute. Under state and federal rules, Lovett says, the DEP can only approve topsoil substitutes that are "equally suitable for sustaining vegetation as the existing topsoil."

During a hearing in January, Burger said that Coal-Mac's chosen topsoil substitute — a gray, unweathered sandstone that will be uncovered by the company's mining — is not as good as the brown, weathered sandstone the trees are currently growing in.



(Continued from p. 6)

"That doesn't mean that these gray sandstones won't grow trees," Burger said. "They will grow trees. But we're also interested in productivity — in the site being as productive as it was before."

At a March hearing, a mining engineer hired by Coal-Mac testified that



Burger's plan would make mining more difficult and more expensive. "Before you go in and mine, you would have to go and remove all the brown stuff," said the engineer, Barry Doss. But with large-scale mountaintop removal, Doss said, "When you drill it and shoot it, you sort of mix it all up."

Last week, Paul Ziemkiewicz, director of WVU's National Mine Land Reclamation Center, told board members that his preliminary work at Arch Coal's Samples

Mine has found that trees will grow well in the unweathered, gray materials that Coal-Mac wants to use. "It actually works better," Ziemkiewicz said.

On cross-examination Lovett asked Ziemkiewicz for copies of any peer-reviewed articles he has published on this research. "I haven't published any articles on this," Ziemkiewicz responded.

Ziemkiewicz complained, though, that Burger has never directly compared the tree-growing potential of the material Coal-Mac proposes to use. Ziemkiewicz is working on such a study at Arch's Samples Mine, he said.

'A public servant'

During last week's hearing, McLusky had Kitts read a short portion of Burger's letter to the Powell River Board aloud. "Other, unweathered rock types may be suitable for trees, but they have not been tested," that part of the letter said. Burger wrote that he had changed his latest research proposal to test the same sort of material that Coal-Mac wants to use. "We hope to learn more about these materials with our ongoing research," he wrote.

McLusky told the board, "This document is a concession that he doesn't have the data."

In the letter, Burger also said that his goal has always been, "to find out how to restore forest land capability as economically as possible within the constraints of mining practice and current regulations. But in any case, as a public servant, an employee of a land grant university with both research and outreach missions, and paid by all taxpayers of the commonwealth, I am compelled

to share the results of our research with our entire clientele public," Burger wrote. "I am not in a position that allows me to exclusively work for and confine the results of my research to the coal industry."

At the end of last week's hearing, mine board Chairman Tom Michael said he was troubled by what happened to Burger. "I personally hate to think that a Ph.D. can come in here and give an honest opinion to this board, and be threatened with the loss of his funding for offering an opinion," Michael said. "I hope that isn't what happened."

This story originally appeared in the Charleston Gazette.



BROCHURES

The Sierra Club, Citizens Coal Council, Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Focus(Kentucky), Big Sandy Environmental Coalition(Kentucky), Kentuckians For The Commonwealth and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy have put together a new brochure entitled "Mountaintop Removal Destroys Our Homeplace STOP THE DEVASTATION!" For a copy send a self addressed stamped envelope to Julian Martin, WVHC, Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

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

BUMPER STICKERS

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

T SHIRTS

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

Julian Martin
WVHC
Box 306
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

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

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NEW WILDERNESS AREAS PROPOSED FOR VIRGINIA

Congressman Rick Boucher and Senator John Warner, both of Virginia, have introduced parallel bills (HR 4202 and S 2342) to create four new stand along wilderness areas, expand five existing areas, and create two new national scenic areas. The legislation, entitled the Virginia Ridge and Valley Wilderness and National Scenic Areas Act of 2004 would protect nearly 29,000 additional acres of the Jefferson National Forest as wilderness and almost 12,000 acres of forest as new scenic areas.

The legislation designates certain lands in the Jefferson National Forest in Virginia as wilderness: Brush Mountain and Brush Mountain East, Seng Mountain and Raccoon Branch, Stone Mountain, Mountain Lake Additions, Lewis Fork Addition and Little Wilson Creek Additions, Shawvers Run Additions, and Peters Mountain Addition.

It also designates Seng Mountain and Raccoon Branch, and Crawfish Valley, as National Scenic Areas (Areas). It establishes such areas for purposes of: (1) ensuring the protection and preservation of scenic quality, water quality, natural characteristics, and water resources; (2) protecting wildlife and fish habitat; (3) protecting areas that may develop characteristics of old-growth forests; and (4) providing a variety of recreation opportunities.

The proposed legislation has wide support in the recreational community. Several clubs that maintain the Appalachian Trail have endorsed the act. The bill is supported by the International Mountain Biking Association and many local mountain bike shops as well as bear hunters.. Several riding stables have endorsed the bill.

HR 4202 and S 2342 have the support of many conservation organizations across the state. All the areas included in the legislation have either the support of the United States Forest Service of the local county board of supervisors.

HR 4202 has been referred to the House Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry. S 2342 has been referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

LITTLE ALLEGHENY MOUNTAIN

By Matt Keller

Located in eastern Greenbrier County near the Virginia border, the proposed Little Allegheny Mountain Wilderness Area is over 6,100 acres in size. It is bounded on the south and west by private land, on the north by County Road 14 and private land, and to the east by Forest Service road 372. It is directly adjacent to another proposed wilderness area, Laurel Run, the two being separated only by the gated, high clearance (four-wheel drive) road, FS 372.

The Little Allegheny Mountain area is vegetated mostly by mixed oak forest with interspersed stands of white pine, pitch pine and eastern hemlock. Some of these stands are around 150 years old.

Critical habitat exists here for the federally endangered shale barren rock cress. This plant can be grouped with other wild plants referred to as 'mustards.' As its name suggests, it grows only in shale barrens, a habitat where few other species can survive.

The proposed area lies within the Ridge and Valley Province of West Virginia, a series of long folded mountains and valleys. The bedrock of the area was formed during the Devonian and Mississippian Periods of the Paleozoic Era. The western two

thirds of the area is characterized by Devonian shale while the eastern third contains Mississippian sandstone. The western slope of Little Allegheny Mountain within the proposed area is quite steep and heavily dissected, draining into Anthony Creek below.

The adjacent section of Anthony Creek is stocked with catchable sized trout. The area, like most roadless areas, is a haven for wildlife. Black bear can be found here as can white tail deer, wild turkey and countless other species. A few occurrences of rare species have been noted in the area as well.

The area has been traditionally used for hiking and hunting. The Little Allegheny Mountain Trail generally follows the ridge's spine through nearly the entire length of the proposed area, treating the hiker with scenic overlooks, wildflowers, and flowering trees and shrubs along the way. Branching off to the west is the Humphrey's Draft Trail, leading hikers down into the lower elevations and through some of the shale barrens for which the area is known. In the Wilderness Attribute Rating study of the late 1970's conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, the area was found to have very good opportunity for solitude and high natural integrity. Since this study was conducted, the area has remained roadless and grown wilder, such that wilderness characteristics are even more apparent.



Wilderness By the Numbers

- 9,078,675 Number of acres of the largest U.S. wilderness – Wrangell-St. Elias, AK
- 5 Number of acres of the nation's smallest wilderness – Pelican Island, FL
- 8 Number of years it took to pass the Wilderness Act
- 662 Current number of wilderness areas in the USA
- 44 Number of states with wilderness areas
- 20 Number of states with current wilderness bills or proposals
- 43 Number of laws signed by President Reagan to protect wilderness
- 14 Number of laws signed by President Carter to protect wilderness
- 4 Number of laws signed by President George W. Bush to protect wilderness
- 66,300,000 Acres of wilderness protected by laws signed by President Carter
- 500,000 Acres of wilderness protected by laws signed by George W. Bush
- 106,000,000 Acres of protected wilderness in America
- 4.7 Percentage of America's landmass permanently protected as wilderness
- 85,700,000 Acres of wilderness protected by Democratic presidents
- 19,800,000 Acres of wilderness protected by Republican presidents
- 2,505,011 Acres in the California Wild Heritage Act now pending in Congress
- 106,000 Acres in the Wild Sky Wilderness Bill (WA) now pending in Congress
- 11,000 Acres in the Ojito Wilderness Act (NM) now pending in Congress
- 40,000+ Acres in Virginia's newly introduced Ridge wilderness bill



Wilderness on the Mon: Myth vs. Reality

MYTH: Wilderness erodes private property rights.

REALITY: Wilderness does NOT erode private property rights because it is only designated on federal lands. Private land may be surrounded by wilderness, but wilderness area management restrictions, such as prohibitions on logging and road construction, do not apply to private land. [Property owners must be assured "adequate access" to their parcels that could include permission to drive through wilderness.]

MYTH: There is already a large amount of the Monongahela National Forest set aside as wilderness

REALITY: Less than 9%, 78,800 acres of 918,368 acres, are currently designated as wilderness on the Monongahela National Forest (the national average for designated wilderness on federal lands is 18%¹).

MYTH: The Monongahela does not have any areas that qualify for wilderness status.

REALITY: There are nearly 200,000 acres of land on the Mon that meet the criteria established by the 1964 Wilderness Act

MYTH: Wilderness hurts local economies.

REALITY: Wilderness provides numerous economic benefits and helps maintain the natural capital that can help communities diversify economies by attracting and retaining new businesses, residents and a local workforce. Wilderness also protects scenic backdrops that improve property values, thereby increasing county revenues. A study by The Wilderness Society showed that in the Green Mountains of Vermont, wilderness actually increases nearby private property values.²

MYTH: Wilderness "locks up" commercial forest land.

REALITY: Only 3.2% of the state's timber supply comes of the Mon National Forest.³ Timber in potential wilderness areas is generally less accessible than privately owned timber. Wilderness "frees up" land from being developed. The majority of acreage being proposed by the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition is currently off limits to cutting timber by way of its US Forest Service Management Prescription.

Myth: Hunting and fishing are not allowed in wilderness areas.

Reality: Hunting and fishing are traditional uses in National Forests wilderness areas and are permitted. Our current wilderness areas are home to some of the best hunting and fishing in the nation. They provide hunters and anglers a unique experience in wild, unspoiled country.

Myth: Wilderness designation involves acquisition of additional land by the federal government.

Reality: Wilderness designation occurs only on federal, public land.

Myth: Motorized transportation is totally prohibited in wilderness areas, even in emergencies.

Reality: While the Wilderness Act prohibits the general use of motorized equipment or vehicles in wilderness, the law clearly allows for their use by managing agencies for search and rescue, firefighting, and other circumstances where they are found to be the minimum tool necessary for the administration of an area. For example, helicopters may be used to evacuate an injured person, and chainsaws might be allowed to clear massive blow downs of trees across trails.

Myth: Fires, insects, and diseases may not be controlled in wilderness areas.

Reality: Section 4(d)(1) of the 1964 Wilderness Act states that "such measures may be taken as necessary in the control of fires, insects, and diseases."

Myth: Wilderness restricts recreation opportunities, making it available only to the young and healthy

Reality: Wilderness provides people with a broad array of outdoor recreational opportunities. These include backpacking, hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, horseback riding, mountaineering, rock climbing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing, photography, canoeing, and kayaking. Senior citizens, and people with disabilities regularly visits wilderness areas. A 1992 report to Congress and the President wrote, "A significant majority of persons with disabilities surveyed very much enjoy [wilderness areas] and 76 % do not believe that the restrictions on mechanized use stated by the Wilderness Act diminish their ability to enjoy the wilderness."⁴

Myth: Wilderness conflicts with the "multiple use" of federal lands.

Reality: Wilderness *is* multiple use by fact and law.⁵ The 5 multiple uses of National Forests are wildlife, watershed, recreation, range and timber. Wilderness provides for all of these, however, the timber remains standing!

¹ The Wilderness Information Network; <http://www.wilderness.net>


² Phillips, S. 2000. Windfalls for wilderness: land protection and land value in the Green Mountains. In Cole, D.N. and McCool, S.F. *Proceedings: Wilderness Science in a Time of Change*. Proc. RMRS-P-000. Ogden, UT: U.S. Depart. of Agriculture Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

³ The Wilderness Society. 2001. *The Monongahela National Forest and the West Virginia Economy*. November 16

⁴ *Wilderness Accessibility for People with Disabilities*. (Report to the President) Call number: U3.H19:8W64 (microfiche), shipping list: 93-1101-W64

⁵ Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960, Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1976), National Forest Management Act (1976)

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

Outings chairperson: Jonathan Jessup
jonathanjessup@yahoo.com 703-204-1372

June 12 – 15, Sat.-Tues. Roaring & Flatrock Plains. Four days of moderate backpacking, base-camping, and hiking, mainly near the rim of Allegheny Front and Long Run, hopefully all the way to Haystack Knob. Visit one of the highest, most scenic and most rugged parts of the West Va. Highlands, hopefully near the peak of the spring colors (Mountain laurel, azaleas, pink ladyslipper orchids). Prior backpacking experience required. Total backpacking miles is only 16, giving us time to explore and enjoy scenery: Limit: 10. Contact Bruce Sundquist, 724-327-8737 or bsundquist1@juno.com

June 19 – 20, Sat-Sun. Blackwater Canyon Mountain Biking. Come join us as we bike along old forest and logging grades. June 19 will involve biking from the Olson Fire Tower down the north rim on Forest Road 18 to the town of Douglas, and then go down Blackwater Canyon via the old railroad grade to the town of Hendricks. June 20 will involve the Canaan Loop road- Forest Road 13, riding from the road's junction with WV Rt 32 to the BWF State Park, a total of 17 miles. Overnight camping is available in the park. Contact Dave Paxton at explorewilderness@yahoo.com for details and reservations.

June 26, Sat. Roaring Plains Circuit hike. 11.5 mile strenuous hike with fantastic views through hardwood and Red Spruce Forest, Canadian Plateau type environs and beautiful streams. Optional car camping at modern Seneca Shadows Campground Friday and Saturday nights. Reservations suggested for the campground. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

July 2-4, Fri.-Sun. - Roaring Plains - Canyons Rim Trail to Haystack Knob. Explore and witness spectacular, remote, rocky and rarely visited high elevation country. Many excellent views. Be prepared for cool temps and weather extremes. Despite high elevation, climbs are gradual. ~23 miles. Experienced backpackers only please. See photos at <http://www.jonathanjessup.com/rp-set1.html> Hosted by Eric Shereda at: backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468

July 10, Sat. Lake Sherwood/MNF. Nine mile moderate circuit hike with several stream crossings along Lake Sherwood, up Meadow Creek trail and along Allegheny Mountain trail and returning on the Virginia trail. Optional car camping Friday and Saturday nights at semi-primitive tent loop far away from the noise of the main campground. Modern Facilities close at hand. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

July 29 – Aug. 1, Thurs.-Sun. Tea Creek Backcountry. Car camping and backpacking. Set up Base Camp at Tea Creek primitive campground on day one (optional). Day 2 and 3 hike approximately 17 miles while spending the night camped on the trail. Day 4, return to Base camp and spend additional night if required. Limit of 10 participants. Those wishing to meet at the trailhead on Friday morning and not car camp are welcome. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

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

August 13-15, Fri.-Sun. Mount Rogers High Country Backpack (VA). 21 mile strenuous hike with spectacular views of the open highlands and surrounding mountains. Open areas are similar to a hilly Dolly Sods but with better views and a more remote feel. Hike is mostly above 4000' elevation and about half exposed meadows. Please bring appropriate rain gear and equipment. Trails can be rocky and wet and weather can be unpredictable at times. Prior backpacking experience required. Hopefully, the Highbush Blueberries will be ripe. Limit: 10. Contact Eric Shereda for more information at: backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468

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

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

(Continued on p. 12)

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

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

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

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

September 25 – 26, Sat.-Sun. Seneca Creek Backpack. Fourteen+ miles in the Seneca Back Country utilizing Huckleberry trail, High Meadows trail and Seneca Creek Trail. Several wide stream crossings. Limit of 10 participants. Distant travelers can set up a base camp at Spruce Knob lake Campground Friday evening and stay till Monday if desired. Reservations suggested for the campground. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

October 10, Sunday. Roaring Plains Fall Foliage on Canyons Rim Trail. Day Hike. Medium difficulty, depending on weather. Explore and witness spectacular, remote, rugged, rocky and rarely visited high elevation country with several jaw dropping views. Be prepared for cool temps and possible weather. Only one 400ft climb. ~5 miles. Finish hike by 5pm. See photos at <http://www.jonathanjessup.com/rp-set1.html>. Possible optional nearby day hike on Oct 9th for those interested. Hosted by Jonathan Jessup. (703)204-1372 jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

Almost Anytime. Visit Kayford Mountain south of Charleston to see mountain top removal (MTR) up close and hear Larry Gibson's story about how he saved his mountain, now almost totally surrounded by MTR. Bring a lunch— there is a picnic area on Larry's mountain. Just call Larry or Julian Martin. Leaders: Julian Martin, (304)342-8989, imaginemew@aol.com and Larry Gibson, (304) 586-3287 or (304) 549-3287 cellular.

Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

by Allen deHart & Bruce Sundquist

Published by the
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The 7th edition covers:

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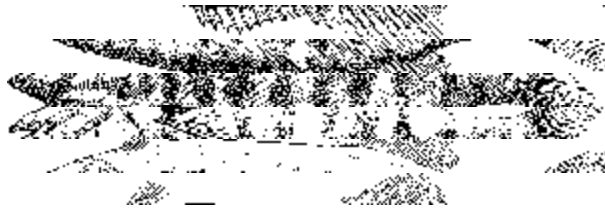
BEGINNING ETHICS

Nature's beauty is often the first to make an impression on us as children. Whether we grow up in the country or the city, we delight in the myriad colors, sounds, textures, fragrances, shapes, and rhythms of the world. Before knowing about identification and quantification, youthful minds sense and absorb these wonders. We are enriched when we sit quietly resting in a forest, gaze into a canyon, watching a snowfall; or we encounter a golden red sunset over the mountains, a starlit night, a summer rainstorm, a dragonfly skimming over a pond, a spunky blade of grass growing up through the sidewalk, a running horse, a singing bird. Without the arrow of beauty shot into the heart, there is a hollowness in people.

The impact of natural beauty goes a long way into our lives and weaves a winding path. Appreciation of the qualities of our natural world is something that makes life worth living and, who knows, may be one of the things that makes us human.

If a boy or girl has heard the words "Isn't it beautiful?", we have the makings not only of environmental literacy, but of good citizenship. Simplistic? Perhaps, but there seems to be a connection between a sense of awe and love for the earth and the understanding that we are responsible for it and for each other.

—Some thoughts from Jeanie Hilten from Tennessee gathered by Don Gasper for The Voice.



THE ORIGINAL FOREST

As the Great Forest of the Appalachians diminished in time and space, it grew ever larger as an idea. It is the idea of this Forest that commands our attention today. The idea of this Forest in its original grandeur, and its profound affect on our history, resonates still in the hearts of so many today. Almost every one of us holds and nurtures some part of that idea. Collectively, the Original Forest for over 10,000 years of human history has embraced: the hunter; the gatherer; the walker; the artist; the dreamer; the seeker of challenge, beauty, harmony and knowledge; the predator and the hider; the mother, the child; the naturalist; the angler; the camper; the in-dweller; the stranger; the musician; the winged; the four-legged; the two legged; the lost; and those who have come home; the father - all have an emotional response to the incomprehensible wildness and beauty that is wilderness. Today, by our own hand, it is so diminished; but it cannot, will not, ever leave us.

Thought based on a paragraph by Sam Gray, Editor of 2nd edition "The Great Forest" "An Appalachian Story". Undated, 59 pages, Appalachian Consortium Press. Submitted by Don Gasper.

Mettiki Mine Approved (Continued from p. 1)

The law allows an "experimental practice" only under limited circumstances. There must be specific information showing that the practice would encourage advances in mining technology while being at least as protective of the environment as would otherwise be required by the West Virginia Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. An experimental practice must be subject to special monitoring and review so that the Department of Environmental Protection may alter any practice that is not working. Perhaps most important, a permit application which proposed an experimental practice would have to be reviewed by the federal Office of Surface Mining (and not just the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection) before the permit is issued.

A written analysis by Clarence Wright, an engineer in DEP's Philippi office, says the company didn't provide any evi-

dence that the process would work. The company should submit it as an "experimental practice" that would require U.S. Office of Surface Mining approval, he said.

In addition to the required review and approval by the federal Office of Surface Mining, making the technique an experimental practice would keep the state from having to approve it at other sites until the DEP knows whether it actually works, Wright says in excerpts of his report that were released by the agency.

"If this practice is approved for this location, it will be the option for all new underground operations in acid producing streams. If it is ultimately unsuccessful, it will eventually require perpetual treatment of (acid mine drainage) at these new underground mining operations," Wright says.

Local permit reviewer overruled

Mettiki refused to submit the technique as an experimental practice, and the officials at DEP's Nitro headquarters overruled the Philippi office's objections and

approved the permit without requiring the additional Office of Surface Mining review. Environmental Protection Secretary Stephanie Timmermeyer said the Mettiki proposal went through the same review as any other mining permit.

Bottom line

Mettiki Coal now has a permit which is supposed to control acid mine drainage using a method that has never been tried anywhere. Since the danger of acid mine drainage comes largely after active mining is complete, there will be no way to verifying if this completely untried technique works until after mining is complete. If we discover then that the technique does not work, the mine will be a perpetual source of acid mine drainage. That drainage would have to be treated at substantial expense or allowed to severely damage the water which it enters.

At press time, the West Virginia Rivers Coalition was considering an appeal of the permit decision.

HIKING THE BIG SOUTH FORK NATIONAL RECREATIONAL AREA

By Susan Bly

If Utah were to transport itself to the East Coast... what would it look like? That question may be answered in the Big South Fork National Recreation Area, shared by Tennessee and Kentucky. This area holds a collection of natural arches, bridges, rock shelters and something UT doesn't have that many of ... waterfalls.

Late spring with its profusion of growth and rain showers, set the scene for exploration of this newer (1970's) federal area. Chris Barry, Deborah Merritt, Robert Mitchell and yours truly pursued a combo of a three day backpack and day hikes over this 100,000+ acre land mass.

Our backpacking trip began and ended in the Bandy Creek campground located in the smack dab center of Big South Fork. Our first 7 mile day encompassed rock ledges, rock shelters and ground dwelling critters galore. An interesting aspect of Big South Fork is the use of ladders to ascend and descend rock walls. Kind of a small challenge for those with 30-40 pound humps on their backs.

Deborah is studying salamanders for her master's degree and so we were spotting ones here and there under rocks and hiding in crevices in the rock walls. Deborah was finally able to put the elusive green salamander to her life list of "must-see" salamanders. On our first ladder descent, a "green" was spotted in a crevice but was very shy and didn't want to come out and be photographed by Chris, no matter how much material persuasion was used. Other land loving creatures did comply, such as a debilitated luna moth, millipedes, centipedes, red spotted newts and snakes.

The latter created a more memorable experience at our campsite next to Falls Branch Creek. I encountered a snake lying across my path and Chris ran for his camera. He pursued the snake across the creek and up a bank before snagging him physically for the camera. Turns out he was a rat snake, very handy to have around a campsite to clean up the pesky mice. Chris has a boa constrictor so is quite comfortable with handling snakes. Deborah and Chris had a less enchanting encounter with a copperhead near the Big South Fork River later on that evening.

Before we descended to Falls Branch Creek and the Big South Fork River where we were to camp, we lingered at a large rocky outcrop which overlooked Angel Falls below and surrounding rock cliff bluffs for 45 minutes, soaking up the sunbeams and just enjoying the great outdoors. We spotted canoes in the river heading upstream for some

odd reason. Maybe they wanted to run Angel Falls again. Because the water has moved the boulders that used to create the falls, Angel Falls is more of a large rapid. What the river creates it can undo.

After reinstalling our packs, we descended to the river below. After setting up camp, we had plenty of time for exploring the banks of the river. The banks offered a wealth of sculpted rocks, some of which were huge truck size boulders containing potholes, caused by small pebbles swirling round to



create perfect circles. The banks also held flat skipping stones so we vied for position of most times skipped. Robert is a superior skipper of stones, skipping about 7 times across the river.

We spent a good night listening to the gurgle of Falls Branch Creek near our tents...hoping it would drown out the noise of drunk campers 300 yards away. They were still whooping it up at 3am, last time I checked my watch. Rivers attract that sort of person I've observed.

We got the hardest part of the second day's hike over with first thing, by ascending the steep hill to Angel Falls overlook again. We stopped for one last look before continuing on a section of the John Muir trail. This section of trail could certainly use some trail maintenance with clipping and brush cutting at the top of the list. A chain saw wouldn't hurt matters either. We brushed up against poison ivy and blackberry briars which made our legs look like the walking wounded.

At times, we caught glimpses of cliffs and bluffs overlooking the river, through the mist and rain showers. Nothing to do but to keep on trekking. We managed to find a decent place to camp for the night and were able to build a fire and hang a clothesline in a futile attempt to dry out some of our things. Our boots were able to upgrade from soggy to damp. Upon changing into dry clothes, I

discovered three deer ticks attached to my person. They were quickly disposed of. Ticks are as plentiful here as in Shenandoah NP, even with 100% DEET on. After bidding farewell to dead embers, we bedded down for the night.

The next morning we were in better spirits because it wasn't raining and today was our last day. This meant a decent shower was on the way to relieve us of our accumulated dirt and sweat and also the ability to dry out our things. So the last 9.5 miles were viewed without too much difficulty.

We disposed of our fire ring and practiced LNT before descending two miles to Laurel Creek. The majority of our hike was to be along Laurel Creek, which proved to be quite scenic, with boulders strewn here and there, one waterfall, many cascades and lots of hemlocks lining the banks. The woolly adelgid has not come this far south thank goodness, so we were able to see what Virginia looked like 10 - 15 years ago. Beautiful. There were several nice campsites along the creek as this trail is more used than the John Muir we were on earlier today and yesterday.

Towards the end of the Laurel Creek section, we had to cross Laurel Creek twice. The first crossing was made easier by a perfectly smooth fallen tree, upon which we scooted across. The rain from the evening before made the scooting a bit slipperier. Chris was the bravest and walked along the log to the bank beyond. A very well balanced gentleman. We decided to eat lunch before attempting the second crossing as it was 15 feet wide with no bridge of any sort in sight. This meant removing boots. The crossing was done at a horse fording so there was plenty of churned up dirt and sand. Thankfully not much manure was in sight.

The horse trail was a shortcut back to Bandy Creek campground and our cars. Because of the sandstone in the region, the trail at times was at least 6 inches deep in sand. Long story short, we arrived back safely to our cars and the cleaning process began.

Dayhikes that we took place included the Honey Creek Loop (a definite must-do for anyone's list, with rock shelters, rhodies, ladders and much more), Natural Bridge, Yahoo Arch and Falls, Needle Arch, Slave Falls and Twin Arches. This is a geologically pleasing area for anyone who has a rock fetish (like me.)

Editor's note: Chris Barry took lots of photos of this hike. You can see them by going to www.barryworld.t35.com and following the links to Big South Fork.

OLD FORESTS: WHAT ARE THEY GOOD FOR?

Dead and deteriorating trees are actually vital elements of healthy forests; they release nutrients, prevent erosion, store moisture, protect seedlings, and supply food and shelter for wildlife. Despite their importance, the number of dead and dying trees in many forest lands has declined due to timber salvaging of wind downed or damaged trees or insect or disease activity, the timber harvest (logging) of younger trees preventing the development of old trees, fire prevention, fire-wood cutting, and safety regulations where dead limbs might fall on campers or trail users. Good forest stewardship, then requires us to consider both living trees and deadwood as vital, interacting components of the forest ecosystem that can be managed to meet sustainable forestry objectives.

As a tree's health deteriorates, it begins to lose the battle against invading organisms and the wood becomes weaker and softer - ideal for the work of cavity excavators such as woodpeckers. Many wildlife species use tree cavities for sanctuary against predators, extreme temperatures, and unfavorable weather conditions; and for nesting and brooding. Cavity nesters play a significant role in forest ecosystems by preying on harmful insects and helping to disperse seeds. Wood ducks, bluebirds, woodpeckers, owls, chickadees, squirrels, raccoons, bats, and mice are among the 35 species of birds and 20 species of mammals that use tree cavities.

Standing dead trees (snags) not only provide cavities for raccoons, squirrels, etc., but are also favorite perching sites for flycatchers, hawks, and owls. Along the water's edge, snags are excellent places to find perching kingfishers, wood ducks, ospreys, and bald eagles. Nuthatches and some bats and salamanders use spaces between loose bark and tree trunks for roosting.

Woodpeckers and grouse produce audible reminders of the importance of deadwood for wildlife by using the resonant qualities of deadwood for drumming - a communication technique used to indicate territorial boundaries and attract mates.

Dead trees retain their ability to benefit wildlife and contribute to forest health even after they fall to the ground. Downed,

decaying wood provides homes and cover, and foraging habitat for many insects, mites, worms, snails, etc., and salamanders, mice, shrews and voles, bobcats, and foxes. They provide secure winter travel corridors, and thermal protection for hibernating places. Twenty-three species of amphibians and reptiles take refuge in decaying wood in the northeastern United States, including box turtles, salamanders, and snakes.

By providing habitat and nutrition for organisms at the base of the food web such as fungi, centipedes, beetles, and ants —

which, in turn, provide food for larger animals from skunks to bears, deadwood plays a key role in forest food webs. Besides directly benefitting wildlife, deadwood plays an important role in forest health by adding to forest floor depth and holding moisture, reducing flooding. As they decompose, rotting logs slowly release nutrients that increase soil fertility that helps nurture future tree growth that in turn prevents erosion by holding soil in place. The branches and tops of fallen trees help enable the regeneration of forests by protecting new tree growth from animal browsing. Dead wood in old forests is important not just to sustainability, but recovery.

Woody debris also plays a critical role in aquatic environments. Logs and branches that fall into streams and rivers help diversity habitat by creating dams and plunge pools, shady areas, and shelter. Consequently, aquatic habitats with sufficient woody debris support a greater abundance and variety of fish, invertebrates, algae, and other organisms than habitats devoid of woody debris. Besides habitat,

logs can protect stream banks and lakeshores from erosion and trap leaves, which, together with deadwood, are the major source of nutrients and energy for small streams.

In conclusion, good forest stewardship involves regarding dead and deteriorating trees as vital elements of healthy forests.

Recycled by Don Gasper from a Friends of Allegheny Wilderness newsletter - March, 2003



BUMPER STICKER FUND APPEAL GETS GOOD RESPONSE

The response was great! We have received \$947 in donations to pay for the printing of 5000 of the popular I Love Mountains bumper stickers. This is about \$200 more than needed. The extra is dedicated to the next printing. the donations ranged from \$5 to one donation of \$500. Thank you very much.

Please let me know if you want any bumper stickers by sending a self addressed envelope to Julian Martin, 1525

Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314. If you know of a store or other place where the bumper stickers may be put out for customers and clients please get their permission and send me the address.

The printing job should be finished tomorrow and those who have requested stickers will be getting them next week.

Again, thank you very much.
Julian Martin, Outreach Chair, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Speakers Available!

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

FORESTS ON THE EDGE

By Don Gasper

A national United States Forest Service, and E.P.A. study issued in February 2003, using satellite images for land cover types found less than 1% of U.S. forests (public and private) were further than 1,350 yards from a road or powerline clearing, etc. that would break up a continuous forest and form an "edge". About half this "fragmentation" they found is caused by small (about 18 acre) holes in the interior forest. Today, "Forest clearing has left relatively little interior forest..." they concluded.

The concern about edges is that their effects are not only on the road or in the edge, but that they reach far into the forest. There is edge species predation and competition with interior species. There are microclimate changes, habitat quality, wildlife migration barriers as well as invasive species (plant and animal). Interior bird nesting is reduced by everything from raccoons to catbirds and bluejays.

"Only recently have biologists begun to examine the effects of roads, which constitute a much smaller population of the landscape but have the potential to create both edge effects and strong barriers to animal dispersal. Our preliminary data show significant reductions in salamander densities and changes in habitat characteristics near forest roads..."

Researchers already know that salamanders are less abundant near forest roads; and that with generally more biomass than birds, they play a vital part in the forest food web. Roads cause edge effects on salamander populations by reducing soil moisture and availability of rocks, moss and trees on the forest floor, and create barriers for terrestrial salamanders thus reducing gene flow among populations. Research will shed light on the degree to which these edge effects have changed salamander behavior and genetic character.

In a recent book with 1000 references Donald Davis gives us much of the following information. In the closed canopy of the great forest that extended across the mountains of the eastern United States in

pre-colonial times there were few clearings and edges. Though trapped out later in the 1700's there were beaver and their edges. Also there were woods buffalo (woodland bison) by that time that came into the mountains having discovered deserted Indian settlements and clearings, and they made fields that are some of our high "balds" today. There were always bogs and their edges. The native peoples maintained clearings for cane (bamboo) forage along streams and for their orchards. These were restricted to areas near their settlements. Beyond was the great Appalachian Forest.

This old forest was the "commons" used by many tribes for hunting and commerce. It varied but the trees were generally large, and 200-300 years old, and the tree canopy overhead was closed. There were, here and there, fairly large areas of younger trees resulting from wind and fire. The dynamic throughout, though, was simply tree-fall. Wind surely had a hand in finally toppling a big old tree creating a "gap" in the otherwise closed canopy. In its fall it might bring down another or parts of several trees. The gap was always small, but enough sunlight reached the forest floor for the sun-loving oaks (and chestnut) to regenerate - for they remained an important component of most of this forest.

The gap was typically small, about an acre, but occurred regularly throughout the closed canopy of this vast climax forest. New gaps, as best we know, amounted to only one tenth of one percent of this forest each year. The gap functioned only for 10 years before shade became too great. This meant that one percent of the canopy was composed of functioning gaps at any one time over a vast amount of time and space.

In the southern part of this forest the Cherokee had settled half of their 70,000 square miles. They had clearings, orchards, fields for cattle, and gardens. Their cattle and hogs grazed freely far into the forest. They picked up all the wood on the forest floor for firewood. Beyond though was hunting ground. They sold 25,000 deer skins

per year for many years around 1750. Davis reports, 160,000 deer skins were shipped from Charleston, S.C. alone in 1748, and earlier from 1700 to 1715 over a million deer skins in all from the same port.

C.G. Whitney in a 1994 book describes this pre-colonial forest as "big trees covered with epiphytes, and mosses grew on the forest floor. They were generally 200 years old with some even over 300 years old. Fallen woody debris on the forest floor is estimated at 6 to 12 tons/acre for the central hardwoods and 16 to 21 tons/acre in the cooler hemlock/northern hardwood stands". "The English colonists found the dense forest a stark contrast to the sparsely wooded landscapes of their homeland. Stand volumes ranged from 3,000 to 25,000 board feet/acre with a maximum development in multiple canopied white pine/hemlock forests of 100,000 board feet/acre." (W.Va. spruce stands in 1910 covered 300,000 acres with 50,000 board feet/acre.) "Tree heights ranged from 70 to 130 feet tall." Some "tree diameters ranged from 3 to 15 feet". "Forest blanketed 454 million acres with every state 95% forested"; today, 400 years later it is 99.9% cut over.

The U.S.F.S. and U.S.E.P.A. study found a much more fragmented forest today. The opportunity for a large continuous forest today is very limited and a very rare one.



SUMMER CAMP

There is a Junior Conservation Camp run by the W.V. Division of Natural Resources this summer during the week of June 21 - 25. There may be 200 youngsters from 11 through 14 attending. It is well staffed with outdoor experts, all fun, caring people, mostly from D.N.R.

If you have a youngster that is interested in outdoor things, most certainly it will be time well spent. If two young pals go together, it may be even better. The cost is \$117 each. Youngsters can arrange to go by contacting the Division of Natural Resources, Building 3, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV 25035, and by phoning them at 1-304-558-3370.