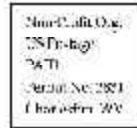


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The Highlands Voice

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FUTURE WILDERNESS AREAS?

For over a year the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has been actively participating in the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition in an effort to have parts of the Monongahela National Forest designated as Wilderness. While such a designation would require an Act of Congress, it would permanently protect those areas as wilderness areas. No bill has yet been introduced in Congress to protect these areas. The Coalition has, however, gathered data on the areas and educated the public on both the process of Wilderness designation and the need for more Wilderness areas.

This issue of the Voice contains articles about two of the areas studied by the Coalition. In addition, Jonathan Jessup has done a profile of Roaring Plains (Roaring, Flatrock and Red Creek) which is now posted on the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web site, www.wvhighlands.org. That profile includes more photographs.

CHEAT MOUNTAIN

By Ruth Blackwell Rogers

The potential Cheat Mountain Wilderness lies on Cheat Mountain west of the Shavers Fork and south of Bemis. It is bordered on the north by a gas pipeline, on the east by the Shavers Fork of Cheat River, on the south by a gated Forest Service logging road, and on the west by National Forest and private lands. About 70% of the area is relatively flat forested plateau at an average of 3650 feet elevation; the eastern 30% is cut by five or six streams and rugged forested terrain dropping steeply to the river. High Falls of Cheat, a favorite destination for hikers and excursion train visitors, is on the eastern border. The geology is primarily infertile pottsville sandstone. This area is relatively remote. The most direct access is on foot by the gated logging road at the south; by the gated pipeline access road at the north; or by the steep pipeline swath up from Bemis.

Continued on p. 3

CRANBERRY WILDERNESS EXPANSION

By Matt Keller

The existing Cranberry Wilderness could be expanded on the west by over 12,000 acres of deep cove hardwood forest between the Williams River on the north and the Cranberry River on the south and west.

The proposed expansion is contiguous to the existing wilderness, which borders it to the east. From atop the ridge between the two rivers, steep hollows drop from almost 4,000 feet to 2,300 feet at the Williams River and 2,500 feet along the Cranberry. These include Little Fork and Lick Branch (of the Williams) to the north and Rough Run, Lick Branch (of the Cranberry) and the Twin Branches to the south, plus numerous small runs. The landscape is predominantly a lush moist forest.

Some red spruce is reclaiming the high elevations, with the rest a wide mixture of hardwood trees, including oak, maple, hem-

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From the Western Slope of the Mountains
by Frank Young

Logging Regulation Needed More Each Year

Yearly, sometimes nearly monthly, we see the desperate need for good regulation of logging in West Virginia. Mudslides, stream siltation, mud flows across highways and into streams, and severe flooding follow massive logging operations in a watershed. The West Virginia logging industry has been even more successful than the coal industry in avoiding having to find ways to either comply with or evade environmental regulations- because effectively there are few or no logging laws for timber operators to have to worry about.

Elsewhere in this issue of the *Highlands Voice* is an article by Highlands Conservancy member Bob Baber, a resident of Richwood, Nicholas County. In this article Baber is pleading with environmentalists and with politicians to come together to support damming of the south fork of Cherry River, primarily for flood protection for Richwood, but also for economic development in the depressed coal community, for recreation, and for a water supply during parched seasons. His pleas come after we witnessed millions of dollars in damages to schools, businesses and homes last November in Richwood.

Mr. Baber is a committed environmentalist. And he knows well that environmentalists often oppose the damming of free flowing streams. What I wish Baber would have addressed is what has been happening the past 10 to 15 years in the watershed **upstream** from the proposed dam. Since the early 1990s I have had private citizens and public officials repeatedly call to my attention the massive logging operations on the South Fork of Cherry River. Logging there has "progressed" to where a very high percentage of the watershed has recently been logged.

Almost three years ago Highlands Conservancy Administrator David Saville chronicled, in the *Highlands Voice* and elsewhere, the flooding that followed the denuding of the mountain forests a century ago. It took more than a half century for the most deleterious effects of that plunder to heal somewhat. In fact, Baber notes that last November Richwood saw "its worst flood in a half century".

In 2002 West Virginia's Department of Environmental Protection issued a report on its flood study from massive flooding in 2001. One of its primary recommendations was that the state promptly enact regulatory measures to limit amounts of large watersheds that may be logged within a short time, and to strictly regulate the practices of logging in areas that are cut. But the state legislature and the governor have treated those recommendations more as political embarrassments than as lessons in industrial cause and effect on the human environment.

If politics cannot permit effective control of the logging industry then I, for one, may conclude that costly dams and flood control lakes are an evil but reasonable alternative to even more costly flooding.

WVHC Calendar:
Spring Review- April 23rd, 24th & 25th (Board meeting on Sunday, 25th)
Summer Board meeting- Saturday, July 24th
Fall Review- October 22nd - 24th (Board & General membership meetings Sunday, 24th)

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MORE ON CRANBERRY (Continued from p. 1)

As late as the early 1900's, vast stands of Red Spruce covered nearly the entire upper portion of the watershed and supported a variety of plant and wildlife species. Two species dependent on this ecosystem are currently federally listed endangered species (the Northern Flying Squirrel and the Cheat Mountain Salamander). Several other plant, animal, and bird species thrive best in this environment, including Saw-whet Owls, Northern Goshawk, Snowshoe Hare, Northern Water Shrew, Long-stalked Holly, White Monkshood and several rare plants growing in scour zones along the river.

The once pristine conditions of this area were severely altered by logging in the early 1900's; a railroad was built beside the river and temporary rail lines were laid up most tributaries; coal was deep-mined in the Fishing Hawk Creek drainage and transported by rail; later, when second growth was logged, roads were constructed. The Red Spruce ecosystem of Cheat Mountain may never return to pre-industrial conditions, but after mine reclamation and a decade free of logging, the area shows encouraging signs of healing itself. The Red Spruce/Mixed Northern Hardwood forests in the proposed Cheat Mountain Wilderness Area are quietly regenerating. **This area has the least fragmented Red Spruce stands in the watershed, providing continuous habitat for its relatively rare species.**

These wildlands provide residents and visitors with a unique experience in this remnant northern forest, and remain a favorite of fishermen. The proposed Cheat Mountain Wilderness has no developed trails, although a couple of old logging roads are used by



determined hunters. It is very quiet and beautiful, with occasional views of high knobs to the east across the narrow steep watershed. **The sound of the river below, in one of its steepest, most boulder-strewn stretches, adds to the visitor's experience along the Shavers Fork of Cheat, the highest river of its size in the eastern U.S.** Those bushwhacking to cliffs above High Falls will be rewarded with fine long views of this remote watershed.

Forest Service Planner Don Palmer discusses Wilderness and Mon Plan revision issues with Anna Sale and Matt Keller. Anna is the Sierra Club's Environmental Public Education Campaign (EPEC) Organizer, and Matt is the Coordinator of the West Virginia Wilderness Campaign. The Wilderness Campaign is a cooperative effort of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the Sierra Club - WV Chapter, and The Wilderness Society. photo by Dave Saville.



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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.

MORE ABOUT THE CRANBERRY EXPANSION (Continued from p. 1)

lock, black cherry, yellow birch, beech and poplar. Thickets of rhododendron flank the many streams, and a wide variety of moss and ferns carpet the forest floor.

The area provides habitat for the federally endangered WV northern flying squirrel, and a few goshawk nests have been sited. Other inhabitants leaving signs of their presence include bear, deer, and beaver.

The streams are acidic, but both the Williams and Cranberry Rivers are home to trout. The Cranberry is treated for acidity at two liming stations near the Cranberry Wilderness. In addition to the Cranberry and Williams Rivers, Lick Branch (of the Cranberry) and Lick Branch (of the Williams) as well as Birchlog Run are classified as Tier 2.5 streams, those that will support trout populations. Any additional road building or timbering would cause siltation that would further degrade trout habitat. The entire area, as well as a large portion of the existing wilderness is underlain with hard, pottsville sandstone formed during the Paleozoic Era.

The experience that awaits hikers and backpackers is one of a vast silent forest primeval. The North South Trail leaves the Cranberry Campground on the western boundary and follows the top of the ridge, continuing through the Cranberry Wilderness for a total of 22 miles. Several other trails connect from the North South Trail down to a Forest Service road popular with anglers and bikers

along the Cranberry River or down to the Three Forks of the Williams. The North South Trail and the Cranberry River road are also popular with horseback riders, and the entire area is highly esteemed by hunters. Overall, this proposed expansion would provide excellent connectivity to the existing trail system in the current wilderness area, increasing the recreational opportunities and wilderness values therein.



A THOUSAND WORDS WORTH ON ROARING PLAINS

Bushwhacking on Red Creek Plains I stumbled on this scene. I find this kind of high elevation forest and rocky environment fascinating and wondrous. To me it looks like some far away exotic forest unlike something you'd find here in the mid Atlantic. Extreme winds have pruned these trees into skinny frames and apparently ice action has altered many of these rock areas into 'frost circle' patterns. Later this same day heavy snow and sleet began to fall (in May!). Red Creek Plains are 'en route (South Prong Trail) to the Roaring/Flatrock Plains. Photo © Jonathan Jessup.



Red Creek Plains, WV in May 2002 © Jonathan Jessup.com

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Has Three Tables

E-DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE

By Julian Martin

E-Day at the West Virginia Capitol was a great day! It was pure bliss to be with so many people who are trying to stop the environmental madness. Your West Virginia Highlands Conservancy had three tables of exhibits and, as part of the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, shared another with the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society. We handed out I Heart Mountains bumper stickers, the mountain top removal brochures and reprints of great environmental cartoons and newspaper articles about our issues. We sold several I heart Mountains T-shirts (which you can order right now for only \$8--see order information elsewhere in the Voice) and gathered signatures on the Stop Mountain Top Removal petition.

We had letters out at our E-Day display for people to sign in support of Jack Spadaro. The letters were later mailed to

Secretary of Labor Chao. Jack is the whistle blower on the Martin County disaster cover-up. Look for an update elsewhere in this issue of the Voice.

In the evening, after E-Day at the Capitol, a large crowd gathered at the Perfater law offices in Charleston for middle eastern food and some very good glad to see you talk. We honored the West Virginia Environmental Council's annual award winners. Janet Fout, a co-director of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy member, received the Mother Jones Award. The Linda Schnautz Environmental Courage Award went to Patty Sebok who is very active with the Coal River Mountain Watch, and is married to an underground coal miner. Freda Williams, a founder of Coal River Mountain Watch, whose father was a UMWA orga-

nizer and fought at Blair Mountain, was the Laura Forman Grassroots Environmental Activist Award winner. Bob Hamburg, A West Virginia Highlands Conservancy member, accepted the Green Entrepreneur Award for Spring Valley Natural Foods, makers of tofu in Spencer, West Virginia. I had the high honor of presenting the Chuck Chambers Public Service Award to my good friend Jack Spadaro.

It was sweet to be in a room full of some of West Virginia's most active supporters and workers for the environment. Lordy, lordy it felt good.

REPRESENTATIVE RAHALL SPEAKS

Congressman Nick Rahall (D-WV) is actively engaged in legislation involving the nation's lands and wildlife. Recently he answered a series of questions from *America's Wilderness* (newsletter of The Wilderness Society).

Rep. Rahall

Q: As the ranking member of the House committee that has the most responsibility for the 623 million acres owned by all Americans, how would you describe our duty to future generations?

A: I view it as a sacred duty to both the present and future generations of Americans to preserve and protect our most outstanding and significant natural resources. It is arrogant for any generation to consume and despoil all available natural resources, leaving nothing for the future.

Q: Should additional portions of West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System?

A: Never saw a wilderness bill that I did not vote for. Within the Mon, I already worked to designate the Cranberry and Laurel Fork North and South Wilderness Areas. This may come as a surprise to some folks, especially in the West, but I am receiving constituent mail from business interests in West Virginia complaining that it has been 20 years since the last wilderness designation in the Mon and it is high time for more.

Q: You have been a leader in the effort to reform mineral leasing

laws. With mining corporations pressing for increased access to the public's lands, how do you weigh the pros and cons?

A: There are no pros and cons involved here. As long as we allow an antiquated 1872 mining scheme to dictate how these lands are developed, it is all on the con side of the equation.

Q: The current Administration believes that there should be more oil and gas drilling in national forests and on BLM lands. What is your view?

A: I have a long history on this issue and led the effort in the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act during the late 1980s to provide for greater protections for our national forests, especially along the Rocky Mountain Front. It is painful, to say the least, to watch the current Administration do all that it can to tear those protections asunder.



WHISTLE BLOWER STILL SCRAPPING

By Julian Martin

In June of 2003, Jack Spadaro was put on administrative leave from his job as superintendent of the federal Mine Safety and Health Academy in Beckley. An investigation was conducted and several minor charges were made. The worst of the charges was that Jack caused the government to have to pay \$22.60 in ATM fees. (See page 11 of the January Voice for more information)

What really concerns the Mine Health and Safety Administration (MSHA) is that Jack did his job too well by objecting to MSHA's cover-up of the 300 million-gallon Martin County coal slurry spill. Jack told NPR, "I'm being fired because I told the truth about the mine disaster and insisted that the agency responsible for investigating it hold the mining company accountable for its negligence." Jack also called for the investigation of MSHA officials, including John Correll who has now made the decision to demote and transfer Jack. Jack claims Correll and others handed out no bid contracts to their friends.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, in concert with the Coal River Mountain Watch, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, the Citizen's Coal Council, the WV Sierra Club and other environmental organizations, has aroused the national media and some Congresspeople. MSHA seems to be backing off, some. The agency that protects federal government whistle blowers has belatedly, after your letters and phone calls, launched an investigation of Jack's attempted firing. And as we go to press MSHA has backed off from firing Jack and is demoting him to the Pittsburgh office with a substantial pay decrease.

When asked if he wanted us to continue activity in his support Jack had this to say: "Yes, I can still use some help if people want to keep doing it. This transfer to Pittsburgh is an outrage. The person who made the decision, John Correll, is one of the people I

said should be investigated. He certainly has a vested interest in getting me taken out and discredited."

Jack went on to say, "I suggest writing to Senators Byrd and Rockefeller and maybe they can have an investigation as to why the office of special council has taken so long to intervene on my behalf and why this guy, John Correll, who should have at least been recused from the case made the decision for my transfer to Pittsburgh."

You can reach your Representative and Senators toll free at 1-800-839-5276 or by calling the Capital Switchboard at 202-224-3121. Senator Byrd can be reached at 202-224-3954 and by email at senator_byrd@byrd.senate.gov. Senator Rockefeller can be reached at 202-224-6472 and senator@rockefeller.senate.gov

Mr. Spadaro also suggested calling congressman George Miller of California at Phone: (202) 225-2095 or 1-800-839-5276. Miller has been supportive of Jack on this issue.



MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL SHOW GOES ON THE ROAD

By Julian Mountain, Outreach Chair, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Dave Cooper (formerly an organizer for Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition and living in Lexington, Ky) and I presented the slide show on mountain top removal and discussed the issue with students and faculty on Monday and Tuesday at University of Kentucky and Transylvania University. We had an audience of ten at Transylvania and thirty at UK (And we were competing with a basketball game!).

I was very pleased with the student responses. At Transylvania one student said that his father operated the drag line on a mountain top removal mine and that the father hated what he was doing. Another said that his father was a miner on a strip job but the student himself was opposed to the destruction.

We sold twelve I Heart Mountains t-shirts at UK. We handed out the WVHC I

Heart Mountains bumper stickers and the MTR brochures at both schools.

Yesterday we acquired a new distributor of bumper stickers and the MTR brochure--Outdoor Extremes Inc. 3716 MacCorkle Ave in Charleston. If anyone knows of other potential distributors of stickers and brochures please let me know.

The events in Lexington were part of the Mountain Top Removal Road Show. We have a video (and there is a power point and slide show available) that encourages people to ask their Congressperson to support the Shays-Pallone bill that will ban dumping mine waste into streams. The Bushites are changing the clean water act rules to allow dumping into our streams. Let me know if you can book the Road Show on Mountaintop Removal with schools, civic groups, churches etc.



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

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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
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Charleston, WV 25321-0306

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.



DIRT IN THE NATIONAL FOREST

As a part of the ongoing revision of the Monongahela National Forest Management Plan, the The United States Forest Service periodically distributes information it has gathered about issues it is considering in the revision of the plan. More information about the Plan is available from the Forest Service's web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/>. The Plan is a work in progress consisting of several pieces. In previous plans, the Forest Service might have completed a draft of the entire plan and then presented that draft for public comment. This time, it is posting pieces as they develop. If you wish to read what they have so far, it is available. Regardless of the pieces' stage of development, people may comment on the pieces at any time so long as they are still labeled "draft."

One of the issues that has arisen is the nutrient impoverishment in many parts of the Forest. Here is a fact sheet published by the Forest Service on the subject followed by Don Gasper's critique of the fact sheet.

FOREST SERVICE'S VIEW

Monongahela National Forest: A Forest Soil Nutrient Concern

The Issue

The long-term deposition of pollutants from sources outside the Monongahela National Forest is resulting in the accelerated loss of calcium and other important soil nutrients from some areas of the Forest. As a result of this loss, soil productivity in these areas are declining. Forest managers are considering a range of management options in places that may be at high risk for nutrient loss.

Some Facts

Research scientists have found evidence of nutrient depletion occurring in certain soils on the Forest.

The geology of the Forest is the underlying reason why some soils are at high risk for nutrient depletion. This is because some geologies have a naturally lower amount of calcium as compared to other geologies found on the Forest.

What nutrients are declining?

Based on research and on-going soil chemistry testing, we know that calcium is the primary nutrient declining on this Forest. However, we suspect that other key nutrients are also declining. Research on other national forests in Pennsylvania and New Hampshire has discovered the loss of these other nutrients. However, on the Monongahela we need to gather further data to support this theory. These nutrients, including calcium, are also known as base cations.

What is causing the loss of calcium?

Sulfate and nitrate pollutants emitted into the air from power plants and other sources in the Ohio River Valley drift eastward with prevailing winds. As the pollutants pass over the mountains of the Monongahela National Forest, the sulfates and nitrates fall to the ground as "acid rain". The sulfates and nitrates move into the soil and combine with the base cations, primarily calcium. They are then flushed through the soil and into the streams, no longer available for plants.

Researchers have long suspected that these sulfates and nitrates were affecting soil chemistry. In fact, research scientists now have evidence of nutrient depletion occurring in certain soils on the Monongahela National Forest. The combination of high sulfate and nitrate emissions, and limited buffering capacity of certain geology and soil types, has led to nutrient depletion in particular soils.

What is the importance of these soil nutrients (base cations)?

Calcium and other base cations are essential for plant growth. The loss of these nutrients from the soil can affect the growth and vigor of vegetation. In addition, these nutrients are able to neutralize acids in soil and water; they provide buffering capacity. The nutrient loss lowers the pH of soil and streams, causing increased soil and water acidity. High soil acidity increases the amount of available aluminum in the soil and water. High concentrations of aluminum are toxic to roots and aquatic species.



How do Forest Managers know an area is high risk for nutrient depletion?

Research conducted on the Forest in the Otter Creek Wilderness, and by the Southern Appalachian Mountain Initiative, has found certain water, soil, and geology characteristics that can be used to identify high risk areas for soil nutrient loss.

These characteristics are:

- > Geology that produces acidic soils
- > Acidic streams
- > High rates of sulfate and nitrate deposition

How were these characteristics determined?

Based on data gathered over time, researchers found commonalities between nutrient depleted areas. Using information from the U.S. Geological Survey, geologists mapped the geology across the Forest. Based on what is known about the Forest geology types, geologists identified what areas had a low, medium, or high potential for producing acidic soils. Second, resource specialists looked at stream surveys to identify streams that are acidic from acid deposition. And finally, resource specialists looked at the sulfate and nitrate deposition rates across the Forest.

How much land is considered high risk?

Preliminary estimates indicate that as much as 40 percent of the Forest may have underlying geology with soils at high risk for nutrient depletion. These estimates are based on what we currently know from geology, soil, water, and sulfate deposition data at the broad forest-wide level. We do know that the level of risk varies from site to site, so site specific information (soil testing) would be needed to narrow down the areas truly at risk for soil nutrient depletion. This would be similar to the site-specific sampling we conduct for other resources to determine their existing condition prior to proposing management activities.

Continued on p. 9

MORE ABOUT DIRT

Continued from p. 8

What options are forest managers considering?

Forest managers are looking to researchers to test and evaluate a variety of methods for dealing with the soil nutrient loss issue. There are some options available today, but there will likely be more to come over the next few years.

Currently, we are looking at ways to address this issue in the Forest Plan Revision as part of our need for change. For example, the Forest Plan Revision alternatives may provide guidance for managing and monitoring soil nutrient levels in high risk areas.

Resources To Learn More About this Issue:

Jenkins, Anthony Blaine (2002). Organic Carbon and Fertility of Forest Soils on the Allegheny Plateau of West Virginia, West Virginia University. [On-line Abstract]. Available: https://etd.wvu.edu/etd/etdDocumentData.jsp?jsp_etdId=2486

Southern Appalachian Mountain Initiative: Final Report. 2002. <http://www.saminet.org/reports.html>

Schnably, Jamie (2003). Soil Characterization, Classification, and Biomass Accumulation in the Otter Creek Wilderness. Master's Thesis, West Virginia University. [On-line Abstract]. Available: https://etd.wvu.edu/etd/etdDocumentData.jsp?jsp_etdId=3215

U.S. Geological Survey. Soil-Calcium Depletion Linked to Acid Rain and Forest Growth in The Eastern United States. WRIR 98-4267. February 1999.

Monongahela National Forest Contacts About This Issue:

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DON GASPER'S CRITIQUE

The United States Forest Service has prepared a nice little (two pages), but very important, report "A Forest Soil Nutrient Concern". It is a neatly prepared attempt to make the public aware of this issue of limited nutrients, so that their responsible (conservative) management of soil productivity will be understood when the public learns it is not "business as usual" on this National Forest.

It is quick, good work (1,2,3 - geology, acid streams, and acid deposition) and quickly presented to the public. It is an example of their use of accepted "good science" and "open-ness" in informing the public.

Although I was excited - what great work this was—the Forest Service is not as honest and candid as hoped. It stops short of even mentioning the soils impoverishment that results during a timber harvest when nutrients are trucked off the site. This omission makes the notice is less useful than it might have been.

It is not really what citizens want. They want candor; they want to know the full significance of this finding. While the Forest Service does not discuss the full implications of the finding, the report does have embedded in it the finding that as much as 40% of the Monongahela may be at risk of depletion of available nutrients.

The Forest Service does not "need to gather further data" or to "test methods for dealing with it" (infertility). The U.S.F.S. had prepared a Nutrient Risk Map, and it is

the basis for the 40% estimate of their soils at "risk for nutrient depletion". They do not, however, offer a risk map. They deceptively state "risk varies from site to site"; instead it varies little over extensive geologies. Site specific sampling is not then needed at all. The U.S.F.S. scientist should feel very comfortable in preparing a nutrient risk map for 30% of their lands (the nutrient poorest). This would be quite useful now. Site specific soil and water sampling could be done on the other 10%.

By saying they will sample soils at each "management activity" proposal, they mean logging. In this report they have not dared to mention the word logging, and then the significance of this terribly important issue is not clear after all. The troublesome issue is raised, briefly explained, but its significance is buried. Apparently the Monongahela, using good data and process, has concluded (not tentatively at all) there should be no further impoverishing timber harvest from nearly 40% of the Monongahela. If, as their data indicates, nearly 40% of the Forest is at risk for nutrient depletion, then it would follow that the nutrient depleting activity of timbering would be banned on that part of the Forest.

We, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, will state all warranted implications, clearly and as often as is necessary to be sure this new forest plan is clear about this. Perhaps, nearly 40% of the Monongahela is off-limits to logging because

of such low nutrient supplies that a new stand may not entirely regrow. Timber is not, on these infertile geologies, a renewable resource.



TRAMPING AROUND IN THE SNOW

Story and photos by Susan Bly

Today, Doug, Marcy, Chris, Debra, John, Jeff, Claudia, Linda and I renewed our vows and pledged everlasting commitment to our love of snow. After assembling at Whitegrass Ski Center and renting a few pairs of 'shoes, we headed for the top of Canaan Mountain. Due to the large amount of snow, the gate was closed on the Canaan Loop Road. But that did not stop us in our goal of tracking down Fire Trail #3 (TR104), the Plantation Trail, Fire Lane Split Trail (TR111) and a section of the



Allegheny Trail. We simply 'shoed' a bit further on the forest road.

The Canaan Loop road looked well frequented by past cross country skiers. Fire Trail #3 took us off the road and plunging into the spruce and rhododendrons. We reveled in the fact that we were one of only one other pair of skiers on this path before... at least since the last snowfall. We encountered a phenomenon that would have disconcerted any cross country skier. We would be 'shoeing along on relatively flat snow, when all at once the bottom of the snow would fall out from beneath us, turning the trail into bare rocks. During wet weather most of these trails are almost stream-like since the air was cold and dry; the streams had dried to their rocky origins.

We arrived at a shelter at the intersection of Plantation and Allegheny and had lunch. This site would be ideal during warm weather as well with the little stream passing in front of the shelter. After lunch we were given ginger chews by Linda to settle our digestions. Then we set off for Fire Lane Split.

We walked through a small canyon of snow before reaching what we perceived to be 111. But since the trail intersection was not marked and appeared to be overgrown, we continued on for five minutes

on the main trail to determine for sure that the overgrown path was indeed correct. So back down the Allegheny we went to the shelter and forewent the pleasure of bushwhacking.

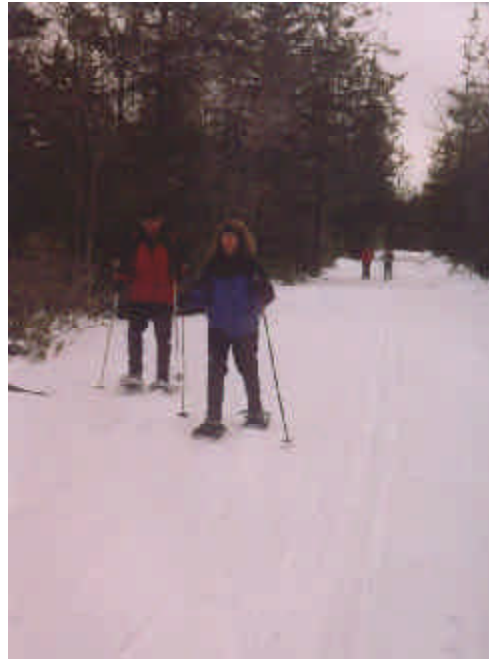
While walking I kept a watch to my

left for an overlook of the valley below, but couldn't spot any clear path to some large boulders that looked promising. Maybe a side trail is visible when no snow exists. Instead, I detected a medium sized rock ledge 25-30 yards behind some rhododendrons with glintings of what looked like ice. It was a spring/summer dripping ledge frozen in the grip of winter. The massive ice columns and stalactites concealed a medium sized rock shelter. We wandered around behind the curtains of ice to gaze out at large hemlock and spruce trees, while observing spray painted graffiti from 1959 on the rock shelter wall. Camera shutters were clicking away, trying to capture winters' massive jaws which must give way to springs warm breath in a couple of months.

After we tore ourselves away from that serendipity experience, we encountered a sporadic group of folks on the trail pulling sleds with backpacks on them or they had the massive pack, sled and all,

on their back. I asked various ones along the way about their adventures. We gathered that this was a group called Venture (gaspd out by one weary soul) who were camping out that night and were going to build snow caves the next night. Brave and hardcore folks. More power to you.

We finally reached the end of our journey in Blackwater Falls State Park. After shuttling the cars, we had hot chocolate in front of a roaring gas fire in the lodge, looking through photos of our last snowshoeing trip and other trips folks had gone on. A grand day to be out of doors.



The Outdoors: It's Not Just For Summer Anymore

SHOWSHOEING IN CANAAN

By Susan Bly

Eleven participants took part in snowshoeing either for the first time or as experienced snowshoers along a 2.5 mile ridge walk above Timberline. This section of the Valley View trail (self titled by Timberline) is a walk through nature's sculpture garden. We strapped on our rented or personal snowshoes and set off on rocky soil and lightly covered grass, wondering where the 13 inch base (as broadcast on the Whitegrass website) could be. We found it shortly afterwards, cowering behind bold looking spruce trees and slinking into ditches, trying to escape the blast of the western winds. Those winds had blown themselves out and we were thankful as the temperatures approached 25+ degrees...and were rising.

We were treated to grand views along the ridge, with Timberline in the foreground and distant hills in MD as the backdrop. About one half hour into our hike snowflakes came dancing from the west and kept up a steady waltz during the rest of our hike. Towards the end of our hike, the wind picked up and the dancing snowflakes turned into sleet covered whirling dervishes, stinging our cheeks in their devilish fury.

Since this is not an official trail and is a wilderness area, we played hide and seek with rock cairns, which suggested a trail here and there. We followed cross country skier markings for awhile before they became confused as well.

We passed through some great scenery though, going under snow covered spruce boughs and around sculpted boulders. The snow cover on the spruce was interesting in that from ground zero up to around 7 feet, snow formed white caps on the branches.



But from 7 feet and upward, the branches were bare, having been stripped by the wind to fall in drifts elsewhere.

The grey rock formations begged your imagination to find the animal or object hidden within its swirls and curves. One of the hikers suggested a bird in repose amongst the stones on Rocky Point. I'm sure that the angle of light and position of the viewer could draw forth many apparitions and images.

After lunch on a rock formation near Rocky Point, we kept heading north in search of the elusive trail, stumbling across it ten minutes later after making a foray into the woods. There were a couple of spots which required some creative footwork, considering our newly elongated webbed feet. But all managed quite well over the stair steps of rock and boulder.

The last 20 minute section of trail brought us through open heath, overlooking the hidden beaver pond region below us, and further east, other open heaths beyond. Our views were limited due to the falling snow but we still gained a sense of openness like nowhere else in WV.

We reached the Raven Ridge trail as listed on Mary Ann Honcharick's topo map and turned around, heading back the way we came. There were thoughts of doing a loop but time and weather were against us. On the way back I led from the rear, taking a little extra time for photos and to enjoy the formations at a slower pace.

We overshot the end of our walk by about an eighth or quarter of a mile but a little modification heading down the hill towards Timberline put us back on track. Just another day in Almost Heaven.

WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF FORESTRY WANTS TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT STATE FORESTS

The West Virginia Division of Forestry and the Department of Natural Resources has published a survey seeking information about revision of state forest management plans. The survey is part of WV DOF and WV DNR public participation efforts which will be used in revision of those state forest management plans. To complete the survey on line, go to <http://www.wvforestry.com/survey.cfm>. To complete the survey the old fashioned, reliable way (paper, pencil, etc.--remember those?) contact the Division of Forestry or the Department of Natural Resources.

MANAGING THE NEW AND GAULEY

Efforts are getting underway for revised management plans for the New and Gauley river public lands that are managed by the National Park Service.

The General Management Plan for the New River Gorge National River was written in 1982, and the process to revise it will begin later this year (2004). Additional information about this process will be posted on our website: www.nps.gov/neri.

A General Management Plan for the Gauley River National Recreation Area was completed in 1996 and a Development Concept Plan (DCP) is now in the process of being developed. Opportunities for public involvement are explained in newsletters about this project. These can be mailed on request, or downloaded from the following website: www.nps.gov/gari

The next stage will occur this spring with the release of a draft Development Concept Plan identifying a preferred alternative. If you have questions or would like copies of the newsletter, please contact: Lorrie Sprague, P. O. Box 246, Glen Jean, WV 25846 304 465-6521 VOICE 304 465-0591 FAX

COUGAR CONFERENCE COMING UP APRIL 28-MAY 1

By Helen McGinnis

The program for this special conference in Morgantown, West Virginia is quickly taking shape and promises a diverse array of exciting and meaningful presentations and



Eastern Cougar Foundation's Todd Lester places one of the cameras designed to photograph cougars in the wild.

posters. It is the only the second such meeting devoted entirely to the fascinating subject of cougars in the East, Southeast, Great Lakes Region and Great Plains of North America.

The gathering is open to anyone with an interest in wildlife, conservation, nature, cougars and related topic, including wildlife professionals, students, professors and lay people. It is jointly sponsored by the Eastern Cougar Foundation (ECF) and the American Ecological Research Institute (AERIE), which is directed by Dr. Jay Tischendorf of the ECF Board.

This is an incredibly rare and unique opportunity for anyone with an interest in mountain lions east of the Rocky Mountains to gather together, network, and share in literally the latest and most cutting-edge information and technology on this important subject. The last time was ten years ago. Those who attend will be monumentally glad they did, and those that don't will regret it for a long time to come.

Chris Bolgiano will give the keynote address. She is the author of three award-winning books: Mountain Lion: An unnatural history of pumas and people, The Appalachian Forest, and Living in the Appalachian Forest: True Tales of Sustainable Forestry. She has written dozens of articles on wildlife and the environment, and is now at work on her fourth book, The Eastern Cougar Anthology.

Another highlight will be a talk by David Baron, author of The Beast in the Garden, an informed and sensitive analysis of the events in Boulder, Colorado, that led to the death of a young jogger in 1991. Baron's talk will be part of the session devoted to Humans Dimensions, the interaction of humans and cougars.

Other sessions will include regional updates (including a report from the United Kingdom, where DNA analysis has documented the existence of free-ranging black leopards), techniques for finding and analyzing evidence of cougars, and lessons to be learned from recovery efforts involving other large predators.

Each session will be followed by a panel discussion. A tracking workshop and tour of the Coopers Rock Mountain Lion Sanctuary are scheduled for Saturday.

The conference will be held at the Ramada Inn and Conference Center and will run from the evening of Wednesday, April 28th to the afternoon of Saturday, May 1st. Registration fees are \$125 for natural resource professionals, scientists and academic faculty; \$75 for non-professionals; and \$50.00 for students. A single day (Thursday, Friday or Saturday) is \$50.00. **A late fee of \$25.00 will be added for registrations after March 31st.** We recommend you make motel or campground reservations soon to assure you have a place to stay.

For complete information, visit the Eastern Cougar Foundation's web site, www.easterncougar.org and click on the lower left corner of the Home Page. There you will find a registration form, schedule of events (subject to last minute changes), information on the tracking workshop, and lists of motels and campgrounds.

If it is not convenient for you to visit the Internet, you may

send a check for the appropriate amount made payable to: Eastern Cougar Conference 2004. Mail it to ECF, c/o PO Box 300, Harman, WV 26270. Include your name, address, home and business phones, affiliation (if any), and email address. Let us know if you are a vegetarian or require a special dietary menu. The registration fee



includes an information packet, keynote banquet dinner, lunch on Thursday and Friday, snack breaks, and publication of the proceedings on the Eastern Cougar Foundation's web site. If you can't find the answers to your questions on the ECF web site, you may call 304-227-4166.

SAVING A LITTLE MONEY

Note: To avoid a \$25.00 late registration fee, please register by March 31.

A DAM FOR RICHWOOD?

By Bob Henry Baber

On November 20th Richwood suffered its worst flood in a half century. Multi-million dollar damages were sustained by schools, businesses, and hundreds of homes. On January 7th a rally for South Fork Lake was held at the Richwood High School auditorium. Well over 500 people attended the standing-room-only event, along with a wide variety of local and regional political representatives. Many state t.v. stations and newspapers covered the rally. We were gratified by the exposure. We already know we need a lake, but we are also aware that significant and national support will be needed in order to make the lake a reality. We are also praying that environmentalists, federal politicians, and agency officials will recognize our plight and lead a sympathetic ear to our proposal.

A few years ago I was nominated by the Richwood Chamber of Commerce to re-initiate the South Fork Lake project. You see, this is not a new idea and has in fact been batted around since the 1960s. As late as the early 1990s South Fork Lake was re-explored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS, formerly U.S. Soil Conservation Service), the federal agency in charge of such initiatives. But with near-miss flooding occurring nearly annually in recent years, we felt it was imperative to express our concerns over what many in the town unfortunately correctly predicted: an imminent major flood. Alas, our warning went unheeded.

On July of 2002 a letter from NRCS stated that because of recent flooding in other parts of the state, as well as the high cost of planning and implementation of such projects, South Fork Lake would be difficult to fund. And just last week, in a follow-up Gazette article to the January rally, an NRCS official was quoted as saying that the 1990 study indicated it would be difficult for such a project to meet required cost-benefit ratios. True, but at that time those numbers did not include the economic spin-offs that a whitewater rafting industry would bring to the equation.

Of course building South Fork Lake *will* be expensive, but what will the cost of *not* building the lake be? Over time we feel that the benefits in economic development and flood relief protection would greatly exceed the construction expenses.

First, some facts. South Fork Lake would provide some critically needed flood protection. Second, it would provide water to the City during parched summer months. Third, and most importantly, it would be another economic jewel that would fit perfectly within the regional/state crown of tourism. Fourth, the NRCS did not include in its cost-benefit ratios neither the enormous economic development benefits that a time-released white water rafting trade would gener-

ate, nor the possibility of an electric generation facility. Together, these factors, along with a federal waiver for our poverty-stricken region (if required) could combine to make the project not only feasible- but highly desirable!

Within a few years of the building of the Lake, Richwood's historic district (the dying of which has been lamented by so many throughout the state) would soon not resemble a depressed coal town, but the renaissance of Fayetteville. And should the Lake be large enough, time released white water could cascade through the City throughout the rafting season- thereby spawning a vibrant rafting and kayaking industry. On the lake itself swimming, fishing and non-motorized boating could take place. A pavilion/concession with baths and showers could be built. In town restaurants, motels, specialty shops, art galleries and the like would surely follow. Combined these developments would enable the town to attract tourists who are currently passing through but who have little incentive to stop except to purchase gas and snacks. Done right- and in connection with private timber holding companies and development partnerships- a new housing market, perhaps even a four seasons resort, could develop. Only our imaginations limit the possibilities.

I am an ardent environmentalist myself. I have a long record of working for our natural resources. We have only to look around West Virginia to see that sometimes people do abuse nature. But the same eyes will show us that sometimes nature abuses people! If a Lake had been built 15 years ago, it is very likely Richwood would not have flooded in 2003. And if that Lake had been large enough to give birth to a new white water industry- just as the damming of the Gauley River did- Richwood would not be in the dire economic straights that it is. Our recent flood, and our economic hopes for the future, argue strongly for South Fork Lake. We humbly ask for the support of environmentalists and of all the people of West Virginia. What will be good for us- will be good for you. *Mr. Baber, a member of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, is a poet and author from Richwood, in Nicholas County.*



TIME TO COMMENT ON POWER PLANT RULES EXTENDED

By Frank Young

At the request of the WV Highlands Conservancy, the WV Public Service Commission (PSC) has extended until March 15th the date for public comments re: proposed rules for the siting of Wholesale Exempt Generators (EWGs) of electricity generation facilities.

The draft of the siting rules can be viewed at the PSC's internet site at: http://www.psc.state.wv.us/orders/2003_12/GO2551cb.htm.

Among other things, the WV Highlands Conservancy will comment that the draft PSC suggestion that analyses of viewshed effects of smokestacks, large build-

ings and wind turbines and towers at distances up to 5 miles is inadequate, and that viewshed considerations up to 15 or 20 miles need to be offered as part of applications for siting permits. Some of us have determined that some special places can suffer substantial view detriment from distances of up to 20 miles from certain kinds of power plant installations.

We have reason to believe that PSC staff supports viewshed considerations up to 20 miles from most EWG generation facilities. But it will take public support to back up staff's concerns about viewsheds. The PSC's staff will need to 'sell' this to the Com-

mission, and in turn to the legislature in getting approval for the final rules.

You may offer any comments you have to the Commission by March 15th. Then all parties have until March 24th to reply to any other party's comments.

Public comments should be addressed to: Sandra Squire, Executive Secretary, Public Service Commission of West Virginia, P.O. Box 812, Charleston, West Virginia 25323. Comment letters should reference "General Order 255.1, Power Plant Siting Certificates"

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

March 27, Sat. Racer Camp Hollow-White Rocks/Great North Mountain/GWNF. Moderate difficulty. 9.4 mile moderate difficulty circuit hike with 1300 foot elevation change. Highlights are streams, beaver dams, views. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

March 27, Sat. Rarely visited waterfall in the Great North MTN. Strenuous GPS Hike. On this challenging hike we will climb the mountain leading to a breathtaking view. Route has the most difficult steepness-distance ratio in the area according to the leader's software. There will be a short bushwhack to the water falls. 17.7 mi, 3500 ft accumulated elevation gain all in the first half of the hike. Leader Dimitri Tundra: 301-770-9639, tartakd@hotmail.com.

April 3 – 4, Sat-Sun. Big Schloss-Great North Mountain/GWNF, VA-WV: 13 mile strenuous backpacking circuit hike, first along a stream and then along a ridge line with a fantastic 360 degree view at Big Schloss. Maximum number of participants is 10. Contact Mike Juskelis to reserve your spot: ph# 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

April 17 – 19, Sat-Mon. Early spring backpack on North Fork Mountain. Many exceptional cliff overlooks for a 26 mile backpack. Reservations required. Please email Alan M. Aliskovitz at amxa@hotmail.com or call him @ 724-283-5436.

April 23 – 25, Cranberry Wilderness. Southern Mon Forest GPS backpack. North and Middle Fork Trails, Laureley Branch Trail. 23.5 mi, 3450' gain elevation. Optional bushwhack. Unscouted hike. Most of the time we will be walking along the river banks. The goal of the hike is to find as many different types of Trillium flowers (last year we saw 3 types) and salamanders (only one type last year) as we can. Please, reserve your seat no later than a week in advance. Leader Dimitri Tundra: 301-770-9639, tartakd@hotmail.com.

April 30 - May 2, Fri.-Sun. North Fork Mountain. Car Camp at modern Seneca Shadows with all facilities. Day 1: Set up camp and hike to the top of Seneca Rocks. Day 2: Moderate 9 mile shuttle hike to Chimney Rocks. Day 3: Break camp and tour Dolly Sods on the way home. Reservations recommended. Those wishing to meet at the trailhead on day two and not car camp are welcome. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

May 8, Sat. Laurel Run/Stack Rocks - Great North Mountain/GWNF. 6.5 mile strenuous circuit hike featuring incredible views beyond Big Schloss! 1600 ft. elevation change over 2.2 miles. Pink Lady Slippers and wild Iris line portions of the trail. Leave Brokenland Parkway/Rt. 32 Park and Ride (Bus Side) at 8:00. Contact Mike Juskelis for details: ph# 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

May 29 – 31, Sat-Mon. Northern Dolly Sods. Memorial Day Weekend. 3-day intermediate backpack trip in northern Dolly Sods, the higher, more open, less visited part of Dolly Sods. Start and end at Bear Rocks. The route includes Raven Ridge, Cabin Mountain, and the Forks. Only 15 total miles of backpacking so there will be time to explore. Recent prior backpacking experience required. Limit: 10. Contact Bruce Sundquist at 724-327-8737 or bsundquist1@juno.com

May 29 – 31, Sat.-Mon. Otter Creek Wilderness Backpack. Plan for a picturesque backpack up most of Otter Creek and explore a rarely visited bog. If time allows, bushwhacking to a few potential overlooks spotted on a previous trip. Multiple fords, steep trails, and up to 11 miles per day. Strenuous. Itinerary may change based on weather and water levels. Contact Eric Shereda for more information at: backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468

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 26, Saturday. 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 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

(More fun on p. 15)

EVEN MORE FUN (Continued from p. 14)

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

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

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

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

campground. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

September 25 – 26, 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

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ANNIE DILLARD ANNOUNCES BLACKWATER ELECTION YEAR CAMPAIGN

Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Annie Dillard is helping Friends of Blackwater kick off the "Blackwater 2004 Election Year Petition Campaign." Dillard, who was raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and often visited West Virginia as a child, is the author of the best-selling books Pilgrim at Tinker Creek and An American Childhood. She writes, in the Winter 2003-04 Friends of Blackwater Newsletter:



Dear Friend,

As a child, I fell in love with the West Virginia Highlands. These beautiful, ancient mountains are an oasis of peace and natural beauty.

But today, the destructive roar of chainsaws and bulldozers is threatening the Mountain State's scenic "Crown Jewel" — the magnificent, 10,000 acre Blackwater Canyon, and the wild and scenic Blackwater River. We must preserve and protect this extraordinary, pristine landscape — home to endangered salamanders, flying squirrels, water shrews, and much, much more — for our children and grandchildren.

*That's why I am asking you to take a few minutes, right now, to let your voice be heard. Please add your name to the BLACKWATER ELECTION YEAR PETITION. **Your voice will join with thousands of others to show West Virginia's 2004 statewide political candidates that protecting the Blackwater Canyon is an important public issue.***

The creatures of the Blackwater Canyon have no voice . . . they are counting on you.

Yours in friendship, Annie

So far we have had positive responses for Blackwater protection from Democratic candidates for Governor, Lloyd Jackson and Jim Lees and from Republican candidate Richie Robb. Please take a minute now and add your name to the 2004 Blackwater Election Year Petition. Use the form printed below, or go to www.saveblackwater.org. Your name and state (not your address and phone) will be delivered to West Virginia statewide candidates throughout the 2004 election season. Your e-mail address allows Friends of Blackwater to send you Blackwater alerts and updates inexpensively (and, we promise you, infrequently).

2004 Blackwater Election Year Petition

Dear West Virginia Candidates in the 2004 Elections:

Protecting West Virginia's signature landscape — the magnificent Blackwater Canyon — is very important to me. I support moving all of the private land in the Canyon into public ownership. I urge you to make protecting the entire Canyon a prominent campaign issue in 2004 — for the welfare of West Virginia, today and in the future.

Yours truly, _____ (Name)

_____ (Address)
_____ (City, State, Zip)
_____ E-mail _____ (Phone)

Send to Friends of Blackwater, 501 Elizabeth St, Charleston, WV 25311, 1-304-345-7663. Or fill out this form on-line at www.saveblackwater.org. Thanks!

