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TIMBER-R-R-R-R!!!!!!!

Division of Forestry Completes Plan for Kumbrabow State Forest

By John McFerrin

The West Virginia Division of Forestry has released its Management Plan for Kumbrabow State Forest. This document is designed to guide the Division in its management of the forest for the period from 2001 until 2011.

State law provides that state forests are to be managed "for conservation and preservation of wildlife, fish, forest species, natural areas, aesthetic and scenic values and to provide developed and undeveloped outdoor recreational opportunities, and hunting and fishing for the citizens of this state and its visitors." The Management Plan is an attempt to demonstrate how the Division of Forestry intends to achieve all of these management objectives through the use of a single tool: timber production.

The Plan identifies the "largest single threat to the continued vibrant existence [of wildlife] is the lack of habitat diversity." It proposes to correct this identified threat by allowing more timbering, including clear cuts. It proposes to increase habitats for wildlife through "expanded use of even age management techniques." Although the Plan does not define the term, "even age management techniques" is probably a euphemism for clear cuts. If one periodically cuts down all the trees in an area, then those trees that return are all of roughly an "even age."

The Plan notes that turkey, bear, deer, and grouse use clearcut areas. Other than that they are species which the Division believes can be enhanced by more timbering, the Plan does not explain why it has chosen these four species to promote. The Plan does not discuss the wide availability of habitat for deer throughout the state or why the Division seeks to promote

a species which is widely seen as over-abundant and in many circumstances an impediment to forest regeneration.

The Plan proposes the improved recreational opportunities by allowing the construction of logging roads and trails. It does not propose that it will construct any additional trails. Instead, it suggests that enhanced recreation will be a byproduct of additional logging.

The Plan notes that "the maintenance of healthy and vigorous timber stands is necessary" in maintaining water quality within the forest. Since the Plan makes clear that a "healthy and vigorous timber stand" is only possible through periodic logging, it apparently concludes that periodic logging is necessary to maintain the quality of water within the forest.

The Plan is both explicit and implicit in its emphasis upon timber production. It lists the past level of timber production (5 million board feet per decade), noting that this is "about one half of the volume that could be harvested and still maintain a well stocked vigorous stand of timber." It also says that the "Division of Forestry intends to continue this level of harvesting, as a minimum. However, in order to maintain the health and vigor of the forest, an increase in the harvest rate, at some point in time, will be necessary."

That timber production is the goal of management is implicit throughout the Plan. It routinely uses terms such as "desirable species" without explaining who or what desires a particular species. From the context, it is apparent that "desirable species" means species which have value as timber. It refers to "over maturity" and the "substantial loss of merchantable vol-

ume" which will result from this condition. While this may be true from the perspective of producing the most board feet per acre, it is irrelevant if the goal of management of the forest were anything other than timber production. The Plan implicitly defines a "healthy" forest as one which produces lumber at a satisfactory rate; it does not consider the possibility that forests have managed to survive for hundreds of thousands of years without any human intervention, making them "healthy" in any ordinary sense of the term. The Plan assumes timbering is necessary because of its definition of a "healthy" forest, a definition that makes timber production the goal of forest management.

The Plan does not identify any natural areas, areas which would be free of human intervention. It suggests that areas immediately adjacent to streams will not be timbered (an activity which would violate state law regardless of what the Plan says). It also suggests that those who wish to experience a forest where there is no timbering should use the State park system where timbering is not allowed. The Plan does not explain how forests in the State parks have managed to remain healthy without the tonic of frequent timbering that the Kumbrabow State Forest requires.

The Plan lists seventeen previous timbering operations which the Division of Forestry has undertaken on the Forest. It does not list any scientific research the Division has sponsored. Neither does it list any research it hopes to undertake in the future. Except for activities it can undertake as part of a logging operation, it lists few, if any, other activities the Division intends to undertake during the ten year period covered by the Plan.

From The Western Slope of the Mountains by Frank Young

'That Cat's out of the Bag'

For years the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has contended that coal mining and associated activities are conducted more by illegal political manipulations than by adherence to relevant laws and regulations. And for years coal companies and state regulatory agencies have said in public and in court that coal operations are indeed conducted in strict compliance with the law.

The most recent serious allegations of unlawful coal related misconduct by coal operators and government agencies involve overweight coal trucks. Over the past 50 years, as rail lines into remote hollows were removed, more coal has been transported to rail and barge loading terminals by trucks. As hauling distances increased the size of trucks increased. And as coal truck weights exceeded legal limits for public roads, governors and highway weight crews mostly winked at and ignored overweight trucks hauling coal.

Public concern about overweight coal trucks has heightened recently after a series of fatal highway accidents involving overweight coal trucks- trucks often loaded to more than double legal weights.

As the overweight coal truck issue has come to a boiling peak of public outrage, politicians and coal industry spokespersons have been unable to maintain any credibility in pretending that all is going according to law. Coal spokespersons have candidly, even braggingly admitted that coal trucks indeed "must" run greatly overweight to economically transport coal.

The governor and state weight enforcement agencies say they are "enforcing the law". This is the same tired, official rhetoric used when we allege that state regulators allow coal companies to routinely illegally fill streambeds, decapitate mountains without adequate reclamation, spill coal sludge and other pollution into streams- all contrary to state and federal laws and regulations.

But in the overweight coal truck controversy "off the record" agency officials, coalfield residents, individual truck owners and drivers, and even the coal industry itself, usually a "we see no evil" entity, openly report otherwise- that the weight laws are routinely violated.

Why is the industry so candid on only this coal related issue? Why does it admit it's lawlessness? Because, unlike with illegal valley fills, pollution spills and inadequate reclamation, it cannot hide the trucking issue in the hills and hollows and under a bunch of legal mumbo-jumbo about what is or isn't

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PROPOSED REGULATION GUTS CLEAN WATER ACT FOR VALLEY FILLS

By Joe Lovett and Robert Kennedy, Jr.

The ancient mountains and pristine streams of Appalachia are being destroyed by a form of coal mining known as "mountaintop removal." The name all too literally describes this devastating practice in which mining companies blow off hundreds of feet from the tops of mountains to reach the thin seams of coal beneath, creating hundreds of millions of tons of waste that is then dumped into nearby valleys and streams.

The waste from mountaintop removal mines has buried forever many hundreds of miles of the region's streams. The extreme noise and dust generated by the blasting from these mines destroys generations-old communities adjacent to the mines. Life near these mines becomes unbearable; citizens are forced to abandon their communities.

None of this environmental damage would be possible without the approval of the Army Corps of Engineers. Huge mountaintop removal mines require enormous waste disposal areas. Because of the mountainous topography of Appalachia, the only place to dispose of so much waste is in streams. If mining companies were not permitted by the Corps to bury streams under their waste, the mines would have to be smaller and less destructive.

Remarkably, the Corps has been permitting coal companies to dispose of mountaintop removal waste into streams for years, even though the agency has had no legal authority to do so. When asked why the Corps has been illegally approving the disposal, one Corps official testified that the agency "just sort of

oozed into it." Now, rather than enforce the law, the Bush administration is poised to change the law to accommodate the illegal activities of the mining industry.

The change is meant to legalize the largest mountaintop removal mines and to insulate coal companies from the effects of citizen lawsuits, filed under the Clean Water Act, challenging this obliteration of streams. The Bush administration's plan is to change a clean-water regulation that prevents wastes such as these from filling waters of the United States. The administration has publicly stated that it plans to finalize this rule change in April. If it does so, this could be the most significant weakening of Clean Water Act rules since the law was passed.

Congress adopted the Clean Water Act in 1972 to protect the nation's waters. The very first sentence of the law declared this goal: "It is the objective of this Act to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." No activity could be more inconsistent with protecting the integrity of waters than destroying these precious resources by burying them under waste -- yet that is exactly what the Bush administration proposes to allow.

The rule the Bush administration wants to change defines the scope of the Corps of Engineers' ability to issue permits under the part of the Clean Water Act that regulates filling wetlands, streams and all other waters. The Corps can issue permits to allow companies to fill streams, wetlands and other waters for development purposes. But the current

rule expressly forbids the Corps from allowing the use of waste material to fill waterways. It is this waste exclusion in the existing rule -- adopted in 1977 under the Carter administration -- that the Bush administration wants to delete from the law to let mining companies dump their wastes into streams.

The Bush administration rule change will create a loophole in Clean Water Act regulations big enough to drive a coal truck through. Other industries, including hard-rock-mineral mining operations, demolition companies, waste-disposal operations -- all will be able to take advantage of this loophole, and they, too, will be allowed to bury wetlands, streams and other waters with their wastes.

Two years ago, the Clinton administration proposed changing the waste exclusion because of political pressure brought on by a decision in a federal court case in West Virginia that questioned the legality of Corps permits for waste disposal from mountaintop removal coal mining. But more than 17,000 individuals, dozens of members of Congress and national environmental groups all objected to the environmental havoc that would result from allowing waters to be filled by industrial wastes. In the face of this overwhelming opposition, the Clinton administration wisely did not change the law. Unfortunately, the Bush administration now wants to ignore the public's wishes and revive this bad idea.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is president of Water Keeper Alliance in White Plains, N. Y. Joe Lovett is executive director of the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment in Lewisburg, W. Va. Since 2000, Evan has been researching West Virginia's permits and working with watershed organizations to promote involvement in permitting processes.

The workshop is free and will be held on Saturday, June 8 at the Western Steer in Flatwoods from 10 AM to 3 PM. Registration is encouraged, but not required. To register or for more information, please contact Evan Hansen at 304-291-8205 or ehansen@DownstreamStrategies.com. More information about WVRC's Permit Analysis Program is available at www.wvrivers.org/pap.htm.

RIVERS COALITION TO PRESENT WORKSHOP

Antidegradation and Water Quality Permitting to be Covered

You are invited to attend a West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WVRC) workshop on "Antidegradation and Water Quality Permitting in West Virginia." This workshop will present background on antidegradation and examples of how to use the policy as a tool to address local water quality concerns. It is designed for watershed organizations, environmental groups, and others interested in participating in water permitting decisions in West Virginia.

Topics include: (1) Introduction to the Clean Water Act and antidegradation, (2) Trout waters and antidegradation, (3) Using antidegradation in your permit review, (4) Coal permits and antidegradation, and

(5) Panel discussion on social and economic reviews.

Presenters will include experts from WVRC, Trout Unlimited, the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment, the state Department of Environmental Protection, and West Virginia University.

Since 2001, WVRC's Permit Analysis Program has conducted basic permitting workshops across the state. This workshop is designed as a follow-up, advanced workshop. However, everyone with an interest in antidegradation and water quality permitting is invited to attend.

Evan Hansen, director of the Permit Analysis Program, will lead the work-

IF THE GAME DOESN'T GO YOUR WAY, CHANGE THE RULES!

CHANGE TO BUFFER ZONE RULE PROPOSED

CHARLESTON, WV — Coalfield activists say a Bush administration proposal would set a precedent with negative implications for the environment nationwide. The proposal would exempt mountaintop removal coal mining operations from a decades-old stream "buffer zone" provision of the nation's surface mining laws.

The buffer zone provision of federal mining law bans coal strip mining within 100 feet of streams. The Associated Press yesterday reported that the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining has proposed to exempt coal companies from this provision of the law.

Last week, another Bush Administration proposal angered coalfield residents. That proposal would legalize otherwise illegal valley fills at mountaintop removal operations. The proposal would allow polluters to dump industrial and mining waste into waterways across the nation.

In 1999, a federal judge ruled that most large valley fills were created in violation of the buffer zone rule. The 4th Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed that lawsuit for jurisdictional reasons, but the judge's ruling was not addressed. Coalfield residents have filed a new lawsuit that eliminates the jurisdictional question.

"In a way, these absurd proposals are a bittersweet victory for us," said Janet Fout, co-director of the Huntington, W Va.-based Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC). "Obviously, the lawsuits have shown that we are right — the way the coal industry is blowing up mountains and burying streams in southern West Virginia is illegal. Now, we see a dangerous precedent set by Bush and his appointees, many of whom came from the industry they are supposedly regulating. They obviously have taken a cue from the West Virginia Coal Association: If you don't like the law, break it. If someone challenges you in court, get the politicians you fund to change the law in your favor."

"The buffer zone rule is a key legal protection that coalfield citizens fought for years and years to pass into law," said Nathan Fetty, issues coordinator with the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. "Now President Bush would snuff out this protection, appeasing his friends in the coal industry and continuing an open-ended assault on our mountain streams. King Coal refuses to do business according to the rules, so the president wants to change the rules yet again. Could there be a more arrogant and crooked way for the coal industry to make a fast buck?"

Pauline Canterbury, a resident of Sylvester, W.Va. asked, "Is Bush out to gut every law written to protect human health and the environment? People have to understand it's not just poor Appalachians who will suffer under these dangerous proposals. If you breathe air or drink water, you are affected."

"If you believe in the authority of Congress to enact laws, look out. In their rush to pay back their Big Energy contributors, Bush and his buddies are stepping all over American democratic principles. They are simply out of control in rewarding their campaign funders. They are putting citizens in the coalfields in danger," Canterbury said.

In mountaintop removal, mostly practiced in southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky, coal companies mine thin layers of low-sulfur coal by blasting off the tops of forested mountains. The area's temperate forests are some of the most biologically diverse forests on earth. The blasts that reduce the mountaintops to rubble have ruined homes and water wells and driven people away from their mountain towns.

The rubble from the mountains is pushed into nearby valleys, burying streams and creating valley fills. In West Virginia alone, over 1,000 miles of biologically crucial headwaters streams have already been buried under these massive valley fills.

VALLEY FILL RULE PROPOSED

CHARLESTON, WV — Coalfield residents and leaders of environmental groups across West Virginia and Kentucky reacted angrily to news that the Bush Administration was closing in on its goal of finalizing a rule change that would facilitate the dumping of wastes into the nation's waterways.

The groups contend the rule change is being pushed by the coal industry in response to a lawsuit challenging the legality of valley fills at mountaintop removal operations. They say the rule change would legalize illegal valley fills and essentially gut the Clean Water Act, endangering streams, rivers and wetlands across the nation.

"This is a terribly dangerous message to send to citizens — that when a citizens' group tries to get the laws of the land enforced, the coal companies get the President to change the laws. It's like a death penalty for the mountains and streams with no way to appeal to the courts," said Julian Martin, a member of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers have written the proposed rule change and say the change only fixes a discrepancy between the way the two agencies define "fill" and does not represent a major change in policy.

Appalachian residents forcefully disagreed.

"This is yet another tragic setback for the people of Appalachia. This rule change would make total ecosystem destruction legal," said Ben Stout, an aquatic biologist with the Wheeling-Jesuit University.

"These so called 'fills' are just huge dumps that create vast wastelands unsuitable for economic development by future generations. Valley dumps also render the water supply unusable," Stout said.

"This rule change, written by the coal industry and embraced by President Bush, would be laughable if it wasn't so close to becoming actual law," said Jeremy P. Muller, executive director of West Virginia Rivers Coalition. "In this rule the President says that dumping refrigerators, sinks and junk cars in West Virginia's rivers will create 'environmentally beneficial artificial reefs.' Come on, is he serious? Unfortunately, it appears he is."

"This is the most incredibly stupid thing that the Bush administration has attempted so far," said Judy Bonds, community outreach coordinator with the Coal River Mountain Watch, based in Whitesville, WV. "Essentially Bush is giving industries nationwide the right to use our public waters as a garbage dump. I guess this is a payback for his buddies in the coal industry." According to the Center for Responsive Politics (www.opensecrets.org), coal mining interests gave over three million dollars to the political campaigns of Republican politicians during the 2000 election cycle.

"This is just another example of the Bush Administration bending over backwards to rewrite laws for the benefit their campaign contributors," said Dave Cooper, a member of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. "Apparently the president won't be satisfied until all of Kentucky is as flat as West Texas."

"Once again, energy industry money is buying favors from political leaders, resulting in massive destruction of the Creator's work," said Bill McCabe, a West Virginia based field organizer with the Citizens Coal Council.

Freda Williams lives along the Big Coal River, downstream from a huge valley fill at a mountaintop removal operation. She worries that the proposed rule change would be a death sentence for streams that feed the Big Coal.

"They've already destroyed so many streams here. This rule change would put the destruction into hyper-drive," Williams said. "Is

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GROUPS DECLINE SPOT ON ADVISORY COUNCIL YOU MADE THIS MESS; DON'T ASK US TO FIX IT!

By John McFerrin

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Coal River Mountain Watch, the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment, the West Virginia Citizen Action Group, the West Virginia Environmental Council, and the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club have declined an invitation to appoint a representative to a Special Reclamation Fund Advisory Council established by the Department of Environmental Protection. The Department of Environmental Protection had originally invited citizen groups to nominate three persons to the Council. The Governor would then select one of the nominees to serve on the eight person Council.

The Special Reclamation Fund Advisory Council is a part of a proposed solution to the problem of inadequate performance bonds for coal mines. The proposed solution was agreed to by the coal industry and the Department of Environmental Protection and enacted by the West Virginia Legislature in 2001 as Senate Bill (SB) 5003.

The problem arises because of the deficiency in the bonding program. Federal law requires that any coal company post a bond to assure that the state could complete reclamation should the company fail to do so. In response to this requirement, West Virginia set up a bonding pool, called the Special Reclamation Fund. Each company was required to pay into that Fund. In theory, the bonds could be smaller than the cost of reclamation but the Special Reclamation Fund would make up the difference.

The difficulty is that the Special Reclamation Fund is

Valley fill rule proposed (Continued from p. 4)

President Bush not aware of the drastic water shortage and the outcry in many states for people to conserve water?"

"Bush and Co. want to make this madness legal and justify it in the name of maintaining the status quo and producing more electricity cheaply," said Vivian Stockman, outreach coordinator with the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, based in Huntington, W. Va. "Read my lips. There is no cheap electricity if it is produced from mountaintop removal," Stockman said. "Just take a look at the southern coalfields. How can officials say it's cheap to displace entire communities, raze huge swaths of forests and disrupt the flow of our most precious resource, water? How can they justify maintaining the status quo? The status quo has made southern West Virginia into the nation's energy sacrifice zone."

In mountaintop removal, mostly practiced in Southern West Virginia and Eastern Kentucky, coal companies get at thin layers of low-sulfur coal by blasting the tops off of forested mountains. The area's temperate forests are some of the most biodiverse forests on earth. The blasts that reduce the mountaintops to rubble have ruined homes and water wells and driven people away from their mountain towns. The rubble from the mountains is pushed into nearby valleys, creating valley fills. Environmentalists estimate that over 1000 miles of biologically crucial headwaters streams in Appalachia have already been buried under massive valley fills and have filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of valley fills. The proposed rule change could render the lawsuit moot.

insolvent. The bonds on individual sites are inadequate to reclaim those sites. This would not be a serious problem if the money in the Special Reclamation Fund were adequate to reclaim those sites where the bond is insufficient. The difficulty arises because the Special Reclamation Fund does not have the money to reclaim all the sites where the bond is inadequate.

The result is that today thousand of acres of abandoned sites are not reclaimed and hundreds of miles of polluted streams go untreated. One study found that the cleanup could cost more than \$6 billion over the next fifty years.

In declining the invitation, the groups said, "For ten years, DEP and the federal Office of Surface Mining, along with the coal industry, have been loathe to fully tackle the issue of establishing a bonding program that will adequately and fully cover all present and future forfeited mine sites. We view the bonding program outlined in SB 5003—and particularly the establishment of the special reclamation fund advisory council—as yet another avenue for agencies to let the program languish."

Citizen groups had previously objected both to the inadequacy of the solution contained in SB 5003. They had also objected to the fact that it had been negotiated by the Department of Environmental Protection and the coal industry with no participation by any citizen organization. Had they been allowed to participate, their insights might have led to a Special Reclamation program that could have solved the problem of inadequate bonding. Having been excluded from the creation of the program, the groups could not now participate as part of an Advisory Council trying in vain to make a flawed system function.

Our Readers (or at least one of them) Write:

Thanks for your newsletter and all your work to try to save what's left of this ravaged little planet. I'm almost seventy and got "radicalized" when in the Navy (Korea) and figured out who profits from war and earthrape. In the late '50's, I was confronting the military on campuses. In '76 I bought land in the Ozarks of Arkansas which I willed to a nephew, who swears he'll protect it the land. In twenty five years I've seen at least half of the hardwoods cut, clearcut, the land devastated by greedy, stupid fools.

My mother's family's across the river in Ohio. My father had his left arm crushed off on a coal tippie. An uncle was trapped four times and died of blacklung and cancer. I have seen what the strippers have done and I consider them to be perverted, degenerate, disgusting, evil scum. I want to see them dead and rotting in their toxic filth. The same goes for the timber industry and rapists like Crites.

Frank Young sure nailed the coal industry to the wall! I'd like to get Bill Raney in an open field for thirty seconds.

As long as the stupid, ignorant public insists on consuming electric power as it does—along with other addictions—the earth will continue to be raped. Six billion of us on this planet; 10 billion by 2020? Not likely. The human beast will proliferate itself into extinction. This is a flat fact.

Be well and keep at it. Love and best wishes.

Mick Daugherty, Wheeling, WV

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey Schedule

May 4 (Sat) Canoe trip on the South Branch of the Potomac River. This trip was a favorite last year. Contact Carter Zerbe, (304)343-3175.

May 4 (Sat) The Sierra Club Metropolitan Washington Regional Outing Program's annual 100K hike along the C&O Canal between Washington DC and Harpers Ferry West Virginia. Three versions of the hike are being offered: (i) the full 100K starting at Thompson's Boathouse in Washington DC at 3am, (ii) the 80K starting at Carderock Maryland at 6am, and (iii) the 50K starting at Edwards Ferry lock in Maryland at 10:30am. In order to prepare for this hike, this group is also sponsoring a series of training hikes. For further details, contact Carol Ivory, (703) 476-8730, carolivory@erols.com or see onedayhike.tripod.com/hikes.htm.

May 5 (Sun) Day Hike on seldom-visited portion of North Fork Mountain south of US 33. Contact Peter Shoenfeld, (301)587-6197, peter@cais.net

May 10-12 (Fri-Sun) Backpack trip on the North Fork Mountain Trail. Enjoy the spring up high...atop the ridgeline on North Fork Mountain. This backpacking trip will be a combination day hike/backpack. Thursday night will involve camping either on the trail or at Big Bend campground. You can join the group Thursday night, or later, in time for the weekend backpack. Contact Susan Bly at 304-258-3319 or sbly@shepherd.edu for further details.

May 10-12 (Fri-Sun) Highlands Conservancy Spring Review at Handley Cabin on the Upper Williams River. Canoeing on the Williams River plus hikes in Upper Williams watershed and Cranberry Wilderness. See www.wvhighlands.org and the Highlands Voice for details.

May 25 (Sat) Bird Observation Outing at Blackwater Falls. Dr. Ed Gates, Wildlife and Habitat Ecologist at the Appalachian Laboratory, will lead this fascinating outing. Participants will view returning migrating birds at the height of their spring activity, identify them by their songs, and learn about their behavior patterns in a pristine natural habitat. Bring binoculars. To register or for more information, contact Jack Slocumb at (301)777-8810 or email at JSLOCUMB@prodigy.net.

June 1 (Sat) Spring Cleanup on the Allegheny Highlands Trail. Join members of Highlands Trail Foundation along the 21-mile rail-trail between Elkins and Parsons to explore and spruce up this new recreational resource. Leader: Karen Carper, karen@elkinsbike.com or 304-636-4519.

June 2 thru June 16 Trail Maintenance in Otter Creek Wilderness Area. Join us for the first of our Summer 2002 Trail Maintenance projects. The Highlands Conservancy is co-sponsoring a Vista/NCCC Trail crew for a summer of Service work. Trail Boss, and Highlands Conservancy Board member, Carroll Jett will be coordinating the crew and welcome any volunteers for all or any part of this series of trail work outings. Everyone can contribute, not just high strength and stamina types. Comprehensive Trail Workshop on June 3 for anyone wishing to learn the technical and artistic details of trail construction/maintenance. Contact Carroll Jett at 304-273-5247, carrolljett@yahoo.com

June 15 (Sat) Sinks of Gandy. Walk-crawl-wade-swim almost a mile underground following the Gandy Creek through the mountain. A unique opportunity for an unforgettable adventure. Led by professional geologist and naturalist Barnes Nugent. Suitable for caving novices. Contact Barnes Nugent, (304) 284-9548, barnes@geosrv.wvnet.edu.

June 17 thru June 30 Trail Maintenance on Allegheny Trail Join our Vista/NCCC Trail Crew for the second phase of our Summer 2002 Trail Project. We will be staying at Seneca State Forest. Contact Carroll Jett at 304-273-5247, carrolljett@yahoo.com

June 22-23 (Sat-Sun) - 2.5 mile overnight backpack trip on Allegheny Front south from Bear Rocks to near the Blackbird Knob Trailhead. No trail, but an open country walk through low heathland in peak Mt. Laurel bloom. Several wind-carved rock formations among extensive and blooming mountain laurel. Excellent views. Wear long pants to protect your legs from the heaths. Plan for possible cool temps and winds. Leader: Jonathan Jessup, (703) 204-1372, jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

June 22 (Sat) - Solstice Simultaneous Summit Celebration! Several day hikes of varying difficulty on prominent peaks in the highlands. All the hiking groups will unite in spirit to celebrate these high points, and by extension the entire highland region, with flags, horns, rattles, songs, and flowers! Leader: Ruth Blackwell Rogers, (304)636-2662, ruthbr@wvhighlands.org.

June 29 (Sat) - Easy day hike and introduction to examining water quality, on private land in the Laurel Fork headwaters, Highland Co. VA. Macroinvertebrate sampling, indications of water quality, pH, effects of acid rain, railroad logging history and the returning forest; hiking along Laurel Fork through blooming rhododendron and mountain laurel and to the top of the mountain to a view of the Laurel Fork watershed, with guide, Lucile Miller. Meet at 10:30 am, depart after 3pm tea at Lucile's solar cabin. Leader: Ruth Blackwell Rogers, ruthbr@wvhighlands.org, 304-636-2662.

July 5-7 (Fri-Sun) - Canyons Rim Trail hike, Roaring Plains. An unpublished and unmaintained high elevation trail with stunning views into Roaring Creek and Long Run Canyons. We'll connect using South Prong Trail. Experienced hikers only please as the going will be rocky. Photos and more information on this trail can be seen at: <http://www.geocities.com/jonathanjessup/rp-set1.html>. Leader: Jonathan Jessup, (703) 204-1372, jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

July 7 thru July 12 Trail Maintenance in the Seneca Creek Backcountry. Our Vista/NCCC trail crew will continue with the trail work they began last year in the Seneca Creek area. We will be staying at the Shot Cherry Cabin. Remember, we can use your help even if it is just for one day. Contact Carroll Jett at 304-273-5247, carrolljett@yahoo.com

July 11-14 (Thur-Sun) Bicycle trip on the Greenbrier River Trail. Travel the entire 75 mile rail trail on bikes while camping out at Watoga

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

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

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

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

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

MOUNTAIN ODYSSEY HIKES SHAVERS FORK

By Jonathan Jessup

When we awoke Saturday morning snow showers were falling and a nice dusting of snow was on the ground. Dave Saville met us at Cheat Mountain Club at 9:30am. For most of us it was the first time we had met. We soon left as the snow was falling, for the trailhead at Beaver Creek and Shavers Fork.

We were soon on the trail hiking above the river. A short bushwhack downhill and we met up with the railroad tracks before the bridge, which we used to cross the river. On the other side, we took a left along an abandoned road and soon met the mouth of First Fork. Here we saw many ramps sprouting through last year's leaves.

We soon left the road and that was the last path of any kind we'd hike on for quite some time. The going up Second Fork was on the south side through dense spruce forest. The creek was too deep for crossing yet. The snow showers began to subside at this point. After some time we came to what we thought was an abandoned logging camp. We discovered old bottles (pre-1907), a clearing, old rusting metal artifacts and a water pipe leading into the campsite from an uphill spring. These are characteristics Dave Saville described to us as typical of the old encampments that were used for about one year before the great forest was removed from the surrounding mountain slopes.

After leaving the abandoned camp, the going became easier as the creek was not as strong and the stream bank was not so steep or curving. Just before meeting with Odey Run, we entered a spruce forest with many young spruce trees. All had a dusting of snow and when we passed through them we were given a nice shower of powdery snow.

We thought a flat hilltop to the left may offer easier travel. When we reached the top

and discovered an amazing site: taller red spruce trees with a carpet of one foot tall spruce trees on the forest floor. A light dusting of snow covered them, highlighting their countless numbers branches.

After some walking through this wonder, the trees began to get taller and the going much more difficult. We returned to the creek in hopes of better travel. The going became steeper and rocky after we joined Odey Run. We passed a few waterfalls. We eventually climbed out of the valley and into an opening just to the south of the creek where

beavers had dammed a tributary and opened the forest. At this point we realized we had missed the south fork of Odey Run and were on the North Fork. From here we hiked southeast towards a forest road on the ridge. We soon reached the forest road and realized we were very tired and that the sun was beginning to set.

Our mission now was to make camp and eat dinner. We hiked perhaps a half mile to where the road bends around the headwaters near the east ridgeline, before the roads intersection. A flat area along the west side of the forest road looked very tempting and time was very short. We made camp and soon had a fire going.

We enjoyed a warm and sometimes smokey fire on this chilly evening. We enjoyed each other's company while we cooked and ate dinner. Jonathan managed to carry bottled water all the way up the mountain and Terry complained that his filtered ditch water just wasn't the same. The sun set and the clouds made a display above our heads and against the green spruce trees.

That night the temperature reached nine degrees (thanks to Terry for monitoring his thermometer!). The Milky Way Galaxy put on a great show for those of us brave

enough to poke our heads out of the tents.

The next morning we decided to scrub our mission to reach the bog at the headwaters of the South Fork of Odey Run. Time was short and we were unsure of what lay ahead. We hiked north along the forest road, along the ridge top facing east towards Green Bank and down into a bog at the head waters of First Run. The sky was very blue and the air very clean. We ate lunch in the head of the bog. Dave Saville led two of us on a lunchtime walk through a taller spruce forest and back through the bog.

We then set out through the bog, discovering it of some significant size. When the it ended we met up with a jeep trail on the north side of First Run. We followed the grassy unused trail for about four miles. It made for easy walking and a pleasant view of the run. Once we passed by where beavers had dammed the road and a nice pond lay waiting for our discovery. After meeting the forest road we soon descended to the rail road grade and crossed another bridge back to the west side of Shavers Fork. Climbing the hillside back to the forest road above Shavers Fork and met our shuttle car.

The hike turned out to be a perfect distance - not too much or too short. Dave Saville's knowledge of flora was very informative as I know the names of many more types of mosses and other life forms from his teachings that weekend. Our route was well thought out and I've been meaning to hike this very area for some years now. I'm very glad I hiked this Mountain Odyssey trip!

It was an outstanding hike and I'd hike again with Dave any time.

Recreation for Profit

Should we be embracing user fees on our public lands?

NO!!!

Commentary by Dave Saville

The United States Forest Service is currently experimenting with a program called the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program (Fee-demo). While the program is not yet being experimented with here in West Virginia on the Monongahela National Forest, it is being implemented at over 100 other popular National Forests. Under the Fee-demo program, users of national forests pay an entrance fee or some other fee to use the forest. It is designed to demonstrate that the American public is willing to "pay to play." The problem is that under the current political climate of privatization, once willingness to pay is demonstrated, privatization follows. This is called the "Comodification of Nature."

On a superficial level it sounds appealing. We all pay user fees when we use the swimming pool at a city park, stay at a Forest Service Campground or go to Yellowstone. Why not pay to hike, hunt, fish, bird watch, backpack, or whatever, when I go to the National Forest?

Typical thinking goes something like this: I wouldn't mind paying a small fee, if the money was going to be used to maintain trails, visitor services, trail heads, protect resources, etc. By contributing to the revenue of the Forest Service, recreation would be given a greater voice that the Forest Service might be more inclined to listen to. Accommodations could somehow be built into the fee system for low/fixed income citizens. Our trails would get some much needed work. It all sounds so logical that it is easy to think, "why not?"

Something can sound logical on a superficial level and still be a terrible idea. This is one of those times. It sounds appealing if we assume that it will lead to a better version of what we have now. It would be appealing if the program led to improvements in the undeveloped recreational opportunities we have now. It would be appealing if it produced a higher level of resource protection, acquired more lands, or designed, built and maintained trails and other facilities that allowed us to continue to enjoy our National Forests without degrading them. The problem is that the "Fee-demo" plan will not lead to a better version of the undeveloped recreation we now enjoy. It will lead to more of the kind of recreation that can be packaged and sold, the kind of recreation that destroys what we have now.

"Undeveloped recreation" is a name given to a wide variety of outdoor activities enjoyed by many enthusiasts, including backcountry skiers, hunters, hikers, bird-watchers, mountaineers, stream fisherman, photographers, backpackers and many others. Unlike recreational activities dependent upon campgrounds, roads, sidewalks, and other man-made "improvements", undeveloped recreation is most enjoyable if experienced in a more natural setting.

Undeveloped recreation is also the kind of recreation that is the most difficult to package and sell. By its very nature, it is done alone or in small groups. Those who seek to package and sell a "nature" experience see wildness as something to be tamed and overcome. The very wildness of the experi-

ence is what makes undeveloped recreation special. Any widespread attempt to manage, package, and sell undeveloped recreation will only result in the destruction of that type of recreation. The way to encourage undeveloped recreation is to provide and protect the natural areas it depends upon and then leave people alone to enjoy the experience.

A national forest system that supports undeveloped recreation is a public good. That type of recreation will almost never be profitable for anybody who seeks to package and sell it. It should continue to be available because it is a valuable public resource. We should no more expect it to make a profit than we would expect libraries or schools to make a profit.

It would be theoretically possible for user fees to improve undeveloped recreation. Were they dedicated to improving the types of services and protecting the resources that support that recreation then that could improve this type of recreation. The present plan, however, does not do that. It is a scam, the first step toward privatizing the recreation on national forests. If that ever happens, then the profit motive will drive the corporate managers of forest recreation toward the motorized, organized recreation, the types of recreation that can be packaged and sold. Without adequate support, undeveloped recreation stands little chance against the onslaught of those who seek maximal development and exploitation of our land resources.

We can tell that this is a scam largely because of who supports it. Recreation user-fees now being charged by the US Forest Service and other federal land management agencies are part of a national program being fraudulently foisted upon the public through the efforts of Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska), Rep. Jim Hansen (R-Utah) and the American Recreation Coalition (ARC).

Murkowski and Hansen are anti-environmental Congressmen engaged in an effort to privatize management control of our public lands. ARC is the wise-use, business consortium leading the effort to bring the profit motive to outdoor recreation planning and management. American Recreation Coalition represents the interests of more than 100 industry organizations. Included on its member list are dozens of motorboat, jet-ski, RV, motorcycle, ORV and snowmobile manufacturers and associations. The remainder of the coalition includes ski area associations, sporting equipment manufacturers, tour associations, public-lands concessionaires, petroleum companies and the Walt Disney Company. Not one hiking, backpacking or environmental organization is on this list (though there are some pretenders). ARC is an active participant in the 'wise-use' movement, and is closely linked to two other anti-environmental organizations, Coalition for Vehicle Choice and the Foundation for Clean Air Progress.

Over a period of 20 years, ARC has become perhaps

Continued on p. 9

User fees, Continued from p. 8

the most influential force affecting governmental recreational policy in this country. ARC's goals are to ensure continued and increased access for its many motor sports members, and to promote a climate ripe for new and expanded opportunities for public/private partnerships between federal land management agencies and ARC's commercial development interests. In short: 'privatize, commercialize and motorize.' ARC's ultimate objective is to acquire, for its corporate members, the "rights" to develop and PROFITABLY operate recreational facilities upon public lands.

Unnecessary and inappropriate budget cuts to recreation programs were orchestrated by Murkowski and Hansen so as to create an apparent maintenance crisis for federally managed recreation lands and facilities. The rescue of a visibly decaying public system by ARC's private investors and corporate sponsors is the intended outcome. Fee-Demo does not exist to raise needed funding for trail and facility maintenance. It exists to circumvent and eventually repeal the long-standing legal prohibitions upon the charging for recreation on federally managed lands.

Recreation, if managed well, is a far better use of our national forests than unsustainable timber production. If managed poorly, or managed primarily as a cash generation tool, then a shift to 'Industrial Recreation'; is hardly an improvement over the old Forest Service direction. Unfortunately, the USFS seems hell bent on 'commercializing, privatizing and motorizing' recreational opportunities on federal public lands.

In the first half of the 1980's, budget cutbacks forced the closure of many forest campgrounds and reduced seasons of operation at virtually all others. Beginning in 1987, the agency initiated a program to replace its direct campground management with concessioned operations. In 1996, 70% of all camping in the forests occurred at concessioned campgrounds..." Congressionally mandated' budget cutbacks 'made this possible and Murkowski proudly points out this achievement!

The shift to industrial recreation is well under way. The Recreation Fee Demonstration Program (Fee-demo) that was recently implemented in 100 test sites around the country, is the most visible leading edge of this effort. USFS literature states: "The purpose of this program is to test the effectiveness of collecting fees to help maintain federal recreation facilities and to enhance visitor services and wildlife habitat." Sounds good doesn't it?

If this were true, then the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy should have little complaint with this program. Unfortunately, there is a great deal left unsaid in this simple statement. The attitudes that tell us the full meaning of this statement appear later in this same document when it states: "The Forest Service's Recreation Fee Demonstration Program (Fee-demo) was developed in partnership with leading national recreation interests. Its implementation is occurring through a Challenge Cost Share partnership with the American Recreation Coalition (ARC)."

Here in West Virginia on the Monongahela National Forest, we are also seeing the effects of this privatization. Campgrounds such as Seneca Shadows and Stewart have already been concessioned out to private industry. What about the campgrounds that don't produce a profit you ask? The Forest Service wants to close them down. Sorry, but if you enjoyed

camping at Laurel Fork or Islands Campground, those days may soon be over. You see Laurel Fork doesn't produce a profit. Spruce Knob Campground may soon be privatized as well as any other Forest Service recreational facilities that might yield windfalls for potential profiteers. So instead of those revenues and profits staying on the Mon, and being put to work to improve and maintain recreational facilities, they are being siphoned off into some corporate coffers.

Another example is the Forest Service entertaining a proposal by an out of state profiteer to commercialize Bell Knob Tower and Red Creek Campground at Dolly Sods. This proposal would have an out-of-state corporation taking control of, and renting out the tower as a tourist cabin, privatizing and expanding Red Creek Campground AND building a store and year-round residence there!

Once we start determining the use of our national forests based upon the profit they can produce, then undeveloped recreation will inevitably suffer. The profit motive will inevitably drive ARC and its corporate members toward what they know and do best: a "nature experience" which can be packaged and sold, one that is long on motor vehicles and souvenir stands but short on solitude. With folks like Yamaha and Disney calling the shots, what else should we expect?

Should we be embracing user fees for our public lands? The answer is simple: **NO!** By turning our backcountry recreational experiences into a product, we will only be opening up the gates for the Disneyfication of Nature. Our fees won't be going to do trail maintenance; they will only used to boost corporate profits.

Please contact our Washington delegation and let them know that you oppose the fee-demo program.

To learn more about this issue, visit the web page for "Wild Wilderness" at wildwilderness.org

Wild Wilderness began in 1991 as a small group of people in Bend, Oregon. Their mission is now endorsed by over 237 national, regional, state and local organizations in almost every state, who believe America's public recreation lands are a national treasure that must be financially supported by the American people and held in public ownership as a legacy for future generations.

Editorial note: User fees in the National Forest are the subject of some controversy nationwide. While the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has never taken a formal position on the issue, many of our members are strongly opposed. The Voice welcomes additional submissions on the topic.

CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES

WV Sierra Club Chapter Secretary, Beth Little, has been asked to speak at the Outdoor Writers Association of America annual conference in June on "Those Darned ATVs and What To Do About Them". The conference is being held in Charleston this year. Another West Virginia topic of discussion, Mountain Top Removal, will feature Cindy Rank of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

West Virginia has the highest death rate in the nation from ATVs. Although numerous attempts have been made over more than 10 years to pass legislation with safety regulations and registration fees to support enforcement, industry backed lobbyists have managed to defeat it every time.

Another ATV issue in WV, as elsewhere, is trespass and property destruction from ATV riders. Beth has files with documentation of this from when she served on a legislative subcommittee in the early 90's, but would appreciate current updates. Anyone who has been harassed or trespassed on by ATVs, please send Beth a message at blittle@citynet.net or call her at 304-653-4277 and she will return your call.



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

To use a credit card to join, visit us on line at www.wvhighlands.org.

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

MARYLAND HAS FINISHED THEIR STREAM FISH POPULATION SAMPLING.

From a report in The Bay Journal, Compiled by Don Gasper

In a recent report by Maryland's D.N.R., trout streams were described. This fine work started as a concern for acidifying streams. Western Maryland gets more Acid Rain than anywhere else. (W. Va. shares this with them.) It was funded by the State Legislature by setting a surcharge on all utility bills. Streams are shown to become more acid. Particularly mountain trout streams are at risk.

"The brook trout is the most abundant sport fish found in Maryland's freshwater streams. But it might not have much of a future in many parts of the state.

The Maryland Biological Stream Survey estimated that about 318,000 brook trout live in state streams today. But that may be only about a tenth of the number found a few centuries ago.

Trout require cold, clean, undisturbed streams. Much of their habitat has been lost since Colonial days.

Today, according to the survey, streams with good habitat conditions average 599 brook trout per mile. If that number were multiplied by the nearly 5,000 miles of streams in the Piedmont and mountain portions of the state - which historically would have been suitable for brook trout - Maryland streams would have once contained nearly 3 million brook trout, according to an estimate by Paul Kazyak, a Department of Natural Resources biologist.

Instead, brook trout are only found in portions of seven of 17 river basins in the state. What's happened to brook trout

Young column, continued from p. 2 legal. They know that the general public sees these monstrous trucks every day. They know that the records of the token enforcement that

does occur reveal that virtually every truck load of coal is overweight.

For about a week in late March the governor let the State Police, the Public Service Commission and the Department of Transportation stop, weigh and otherwise inspect coal trucks in a "show of force" to prove that laws were indeed being enforced. But after a couple days of coal industry pressure and demonstrations involving a hundred or more coal trucks and their drivers encircling the capi-

tal building, disrupting traffic, blaring their horns and even threatening media representatives there to record the event, the governor called off the enforcement brigade and coal trucking went back to normal, with several coal truck accidents, some fatal, occurring in the following month.

The survey never found brook trout in watersheds having more than 2 percent impervious surfaces - things like roads, parking lots and roof tops. In fact, brook trout were only rarely seen in watersheds with more than 0.5 percent impervious surfaces. For reference, a two-lane road running through a square mile is equivalent to 0.5 percent impervious surface."

Brook trout loss is caused by temperature and sediment. Because impervious surfaces collect heat on hot summer days, the temperature of rain hitting them rises to warmer than normal temperatures. When it runs off roads and parking lots, it can raise the temperature of small streams many degrees.

Brook trout require cold streams. In Maryland, the survey never found one in streams warmer than 75 F (23 C). In stream reaches with such maximum temperatures where warmer water minnows are competitively favored the creek chub replaces brook trout. Brown trout do this too. Brown trout are found in watersheds with up to 5% impervious surfaces. Although brown trout are not as acid tolerant as brook trout, brown trout can tolerate stream temperatures that regularly get up to 78 F (26 C) for a few hours.

Both trout lay eggs in the stream bottom where they incubate over winter to emerge in March. They are then easily smothered by sediment deposits over the long winter. (All other fish spawn in summer and their eggs hatch in just 3 weeks.) As impervious surfaces increase with settlement there is more flooding and

tal building, disrupting traffic, blaring their horns and even threatening media representatives there to record the event, the governor called off the enforcement brigade and coal trucking went back to normal, with several coal truck accidents, some fatal, occurring in the following month.

The governor and legislators keep saying that citizens and the outlaw coal industry need to find "common ground" on the issues. One wag said that would be like asking muggers and their victims to find "common ground".

Yet, "on the record", the governor and truck weight and safety agencies still maintain that the law is being "strictly enforced". Off the record, they don't bother

sediment generated from stream bank and bottom scour and from surface disturbance. Not only are trout eggs smothered, but fish hiding places in the bottom are filled with sand, and getting out of the current is very important during the winter.

Blacknose dace is the most common species in Maryland. They estimate today this cool water, acid intolerant minnow averages 1,950 individuals per mile - and 11.6 million in total. It is the most common fish in W. Va. also - certainly in steeper reaches. Other common fish species they mention, we share also: the sculpin or mudler minnow, rosieside dace, bluntnose minnow, and the creek chub.

Maryland-wide no stream with over 15% impervious cover (this is low density development) was ever found to rate "good" considering its fish and bottom characteristics and bottom fauna. Those rated "good" had only 4% settlement. Streams with forested streamside cover were colder and had better stream quality scores. The wider the border, the better the quality. They found tree borders on 58% of Maryland's stream miles, but no border on 28%.

They did find 18% of Maryland streams to be "acid sensitive". This generally means suffering from the impacts of Acid Rain. These had an average or 135 fewer fish per mile than comparable richer buffered streams - and they found 17 species were absent from comparable reaches of acid sensitive streams. (They found 3% of Maryland's stream miles to be effected by acid mine drainage.)

to deny the obvious.

So the next time you hear politicians, regulatory agency personnel and coal operators say that the laws about coal mining are being enforced, remember how those same officials continue to say that the overweight truck laws are being strictly enforced.

So whether it's about streams being filled with coal mining wastes, wholly inadequate reclamation, pollution of waters, improper coal mining permitting, truck weight enforcement, or other claims of "laws on coal mining are being strictly enforced", don't believe a word of it.

The laws are NOT being enforced. That cat's out of the bag.

ACTION ALERT ! YOUR HELP IS NEEDED NOW!**OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUIRE PROPERTY IN THE GREENBRIER RIVER WATERSHED FOR THE MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST**

This year, the Forest Service has an opportunity to purchase and protect two important properties as additions to the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. In order for these lands to be protected, the U.S. Congress must appropriate \$4.1 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund in FY 2003. Members of Congress will be making decisions in the coming months on which projects will receive funding from this limited funding source, and your help is needed.

The 6,840-acre White Sulphur Springs property (known locally as the "Buskirk" tract), located in Greenbrier County, adjoins the Monongahela National Forest to the north and the Jefferson National Forest to the east. The property contains an ecologically diverse forest and several streams that drain into Howard Creek, an important Greenbrier River tributary. The property also serves as the recharge area for the nearby White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery and is popular among local hunters. Acquisition of this property will provide a wonderful link between the Monongahela National Forest and the Jefferson National Forest, protecting natural and scenic resources of both, and would create a continuous corridor for wildlife between the two forests.

The 404-acre John Lee Hollow property, located in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, is surrounded on three sides by the Monongahela National Forest and drains into Cummings Creek, a Greenbrier River tributary. The property, which stretches to the top of Buckley Mountain, affords sweeping vistas of the surrounding Alleghenies. Addition of these two properties to the Monongahela National Forest would improve the accessibility of the nearby Allegheny Trail, and would otherwise greatly improve public access for hiking, hunting, mountain biking, camping, bird watching and cross-country skiing in the southern portion of the Forest.

Please fax or e-mail Senator Byrd and Senator Rockefeller, and Representative Rahall, and ask them to make sure that a \$4.1 million allocation for the Monongahela National Forest is included in the Interior Appropriations bill for FY 2003.

Address for Representatives:

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3954
senator_byrd@byrd.senate.gov

The Honorable Nicholas J. Rahall, II
U.S. House
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3452
nrahall@mail.house.gov

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller, IV
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Washington, DC 20510
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(202) 224-7665 (fax)
senator@rockefeller.senate.gov

Monongahela National Forest Plan Revision "Imminent"

by Frank Slider

It is now crystal clear that the Bush administration is doing everything in its power to subvert the single most popular federal initiative on record, the Roadless Area Conservation Plan. Of the 1.6 million comments received by the USDA Forest Service, 80% of West Virginians and 95% of all Americans who commented supported protection our National Forest roadless areas. The Roadless Area Conservation Plan would have doubled the area in the Monongahela National Forest that would have been off limits to roadbuilding and the destructive practices that follow.

In light of the administration's blatant disregard for preserving our last, best places, it is imperative that folks become involved in the upcoming Monongahela National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan revision a.k.a. Forest Plan revision. This plan revision will determine "the management and the sustained yield of goods and services from the Monongahela National Forest lands" for the next 10 to 15 years. The Forest Plan determines management prescriptions, boundaries for administrative areas, timber resource allocation, and many other details of the Monongahela National Forest's future direction. The more green folks involved in the process, the less likely the Monongahela National Forest will be a tree factory for the timber beasts.

Now for the big question: when is all this going to take place? All I can say is "soon". The USDA Forest Service in Elkins says that the revision is "imminent", but that's about all you can get out of them. I would say the process will start sometime in the late Spring of 2002. The easiest way to stay informed about what's going on in the 909,000 acres of the Monongahela National Forest is to subscribe to the "MNF Schedule of Proposed Actions" (SOPA). The publication is free and can be received by e-mailing Laura Hise at lhise@fs.fed.us or calling 304-636-1800, extension 219. You can also subscribe by mail by writing Supervisor's Office, Monongahela National Forest, 200 Sycamore Street, Elkins, WV 26241. The publication is mailed quarterly and is free.

Public Hearings for the Forest Plan revision are scheduled at the following locations:

6/15 Seneca Rocks 9am-12noon and 1-4pm
6/17 Elkins, D&E college 4-7pm
6/18 Richwood Public Library 4-7pm
6/20 Marlinton McClintock Public Library 4-7pm
6/24 Blackwater Falls State Park 4-7pm
6/25 White Sulphur Springs City Hall 4-7pm

Highlands Voice Online

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For clear Voice readability, set your browser to its full-screen setting and adjust the Acrobat zoom setting to suit. In older versions of Acrobat Reader the zoom control is at the bottom. In newer versions, click the little triangle at the upper right hand corner of the Acrobat display, and then click Preferences.

There is a hyperlink index of "bookmarks" at the left. The pages are sized to print out on 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper, smaller than the regular Voice, but still clearly legible. The photos, which sometimes come out poorly in the regular Voice tend to very clear and sometimes in color in the online edition.