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FEDERAL COURT ENJOINS VALLEY FILL

The United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia (Robert J. Goodwin, Judge) has issued a preliminary injunction preventing Green Valley Coal (a Massey subsidiary) from moving forward with the work described in its current application to the United States Corps of Engineers.

The ruling came in a case brought by The Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Coal River Mountain Watch, and the Natural Resources Defense Council against the United States Army Corps of Engineers challenging its minimal regulation of the valley fills associated with mountaintop removal strip mining.

The controversy focuses on the practice of the Corps of Engineers of approving valley fills under a general permit (known as Nationwide Permit 21) rather than performing a site specific analysis of each fill. The suit also challenges the failure of the Corps of Engineers to do a proper environmental analysis before issuing Nationwide Permit 21.

The Corps of Engineers is approving valley fills under a nationwide permit which is designed for activities which have minimal impact. If the activity is one covered by the general permit, it is routinely approved without further review. The plaintiffs contend that the valley fills have more than a minimal impact.

If the Corps could not approve valley fills under a general permit, it would have to do a site specific analysis on each operation.

The purpose of the federal Clean Water Act is to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." To accomplish this goal, the Clean Water Act prohibits the discharge of any pollutant, including dredged spoil or other fill material, into navigable waters unless authorized by a Clean Water Act permit. The Clean Water Act authorizes the Corps of

Engineers to issue permits, in certain circumstances, allowing the discharge of dredged or fill material into the navigable waters of the United States.

The Corps is authorized to issue two types of permits: individual permits and general permits. Individual permits are issued following a "case-by-case evaluation of a specific project involving the proposed discharge(s)." The Corps may issue general permits on a state, regional or nationwide basis in limited circumstances for certain activities having minimal impacts, in lieu of individual permit processing.

The Clean Water Act requires the Corps to make three determinations prior to issuing a general permit. First, it must determine that "the [permitted] activities... are similar in nature." Second, it must determine that the activities "will cause only minimal adverse environmental effects when performed separately." Third, it must determine that the activities "will have only minimal cumulative adverse effect on the environment." If a category of activity meets these standards for minimal impact, then it may be allowed under the generic Nationwide Permit. If it has more than a minimal impact, it must have a site specific permit.

The plaintiffs' primary contention is that it is inappropriate to approve valley fills under a general permit. Those are appropriate for activities which have a minimal impact. If valley fills are to be approved at all, they should be approved following a detailed, site specific analysis.

In a nutshell, the Corps of Engineers believes it can regulate valley fills under a nationwide general permit because they have minimal environmental impact. It also believes it can issue a na-

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From The Western Slope of the Mountains

by Frank Young, President

Pesky Postal Problems

The most visible evidence of the work of the Highlands Conservancy is in the beauty of the natural world we have successfully helped to preserve over our nearly four decades of existence. Perhaps the second most visible evidence of our work is this publication, the *Highlands Voice*, which is quite literally the voice of the WV Highlands Conservancy.

When I joined up with the Conservancy 16 years ago The *Highlands Voice* was a four, sometimes six sometimes eight page newsletter, well edited, distributed widely, but with chronic complaints about late distribution by U.S. Mail. Today's *Voice* has grown into a 16 and sometimes 20 page publication, more like a respectable monthly tabloid newspaper than a simple newsletter, it sometimes seems to me.

But the legendary complaints about late U.S. Mail delivery of the *Voice*, especially to the eastern Maryland, northern Virginia and District of Columbia region, continue. Some of our members tell us that they routinely receive delivery of their *Voice* as late as two to three weeks after I receive my mailed copy here in Ripley.

The *Voice* is mailed in Charleston WV, under our bulk mailing permit, at 3rd class Postal Service mailing rates. Mailing at First Class rates would be cost prohibitive with our current dues structure. So we do not expect "first class" delivery service- although in my personal case here I seem to get *Voice* delivery as I would if it were mailed First Class. But we do expect reasonable delivery of our publication. And we feel that three weeks to deliver our newsletter is not reasonable.

When do you get delivery of your *Highlands Voice*? As a test, I am requesting that any Conservancy member who receives *Voice* delivery of this, the May issue, later than the 18th of May, to please send me an e-mail at fyoung@wvhighlands.org, along with your city and zip code. Likewise, I am requesting that if you received this, the May *Voice* issue, before May 12th, to likewise inform me. Please do not burden our editor with this information. Send it directly to me.

I want to soon confer with Postal Service officials and others with knowledge of 3rd Class mail delivery about problems with delivery of the *Voice*. It will help if I am armed with information about where delivery is made "on time", and where it is made much beyond a reasonable time.

We usually have the *Voice* printed the first week of each month, and it is mailed a day or two after printing. I usually receive mine by about the 10th. We will be looking forward to your reports. And thanks for your support.

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

Roster of Officers, Board Members and Committee Chairs

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Who says we're 49th or 50th in everything?

MONONGAHELA AND ALLEGHENY FIFTH MOST ENDANGERED RIVER IN THE COUNTRY

American Rivers and its partners have placed the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers at the #5 slot on the Most Endangered Rivers list for 2004, citing the prospect of increasing amounts of acid and toxic metals reaching the rivers from thousands of abandoned coal mines in the watershed.

The annual America's Most Endangered Rivers report highlights rivers with the most uncertain futures rather than the worst chronic problems. The groups warned that the next 12 months would be crucial in determining the rivers' long-term future.

"We didn't put the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers on our list to tell the world how bad the problem of pollution from abandoned mines is," said Rebecca R. Wodder, president of American Rivers. "We put the rivers on our list to warn that this problem is about to get worse."

In working mines, miners pump out groundwater that would otherwise fill the shafts where they work. When the mines are abandoned, the pumps are shut off and the mines slowly fill with water that absorbs acid and toxic materials from the coal left in the seam. Eventually, contaminated water fills the mine and "acid mine drainage"

(AMD) begins to seep out into the streams and rivers.

The Allegheny-Monongahela watershed contains the greatest concentration of abandoned mine sites in the nation. 2,188 miles of rivers and streams in the Allegheny and Monongahela watersheds have already been identified as impaired from AMD and the survey is only half done. Acid mine drainage causes fish kills, wipes out aquatic insects and destroys aquatic habitat. It contaminates wells and reduces property values, jeopardizes recreational use of the polluted waters, and threatens municipal water supplies.

Conservationists fear an upsurge in the amount AMD in the Allegheny and Monongahela watersheds for two reasons. The first is that a large number of mines abandoned in earlier decades are close to filling up with water and will soon begin to send acidified and polluted water into surface streams. The second is that the federal Abandoned Mine Land Trust Fund, which pays for cleanup and treatment efforts at many abandoned mine sites, will expire on Sept. 30, 2004. Should Congress fail to reauthorize the program in time – or choose to use the remaining balance of

funds to reduce deficit – ongoing water treatment programs could be shut down and the mines they serve could begin leaking AMD, as well.

To prevent this looming catastrophe, conservationists called on Congress to promptly reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Land Trust Fund.

American Rivers is a nonprofit membership organization. Since 1973 it has been dedicated to protecting and restoring healthy, natural rivers and the variety of life they sustain for people, fish and wildlife. Each year, American Rivers solicits nominations from thousands of river groups, environmental organizations, outdoor clubs, local



VALLEY FILL ENJOINED

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tionwide permit for valley fills without an Environmental Impact Statement because the permit will not have a significant or cumulative adverse effect on the environment. The plaintiffs disagree.

In this case, Green Valley Coal Company had sought to avoid the requirement of an individual permit (and its more stringent review) by segmenting its operations. It sought approval of a small fraction of the

entire operation, contending that the small fraction could be reviewed in isolation and that, standing alone, it would have a minimal impact.

In enjoining the filling from continuing, the Court determined that the permit was improperly segmented and violated the National Environmental Policy Act and the Clean Water Act.

The plaintiffs have also requested an injunction on eleven other mines which present the same legal issue. No decision has been made on those requests.

The injunction issued in this case is only preliminary. It could be lifted after further proceedings. Because, as a general matter, active coal mines must keep moving forward or die, it is likely that Green Valley Coal will move quickly to seek some sort of relief from the injunction.

The plaintiffs are represented by John Barrett and Joe Lovett of the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment and by James Hecker of the Trial Lawyers for Public Justice.

The *Highlands Voice* is published monthly by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Articles, letters to the editor, graphics, photos, poetry, or other information for publication should be sent to the editor via the internet or by the U.S. Mail by last Friday of each month. You may submit material for publication either to the address listed above or to the address listed for Highlands Voice Editor on the previous page. Submissions by internet or on a floppy disk are preferred.

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

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

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.

CITIZENS FIGHT PROPOSED LONGVIEW POWER PLANT

By Paula Hunt

Much has been happening regarding Longview Power since the last full Longview article was printed in the July 2003 Voice. To review: Longview Power is a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant proposed for Monongalia County, West Virginia. The proposed location is near Morgantown in the Community of Fort Martin. The site is approximately 1 mile west of the existing Allegheny Energy Fort Martin Power Station, which is West Virginia's third largest polluter, according to the most recently available Toxics Release Inventory. Mon County already has two coal-fired power plants and one hydroelectric plant. Seven coal-fired power plants are located within a 30-mile radius of Morgantown, including the third largest polluter in West Virginia as well as the third largest polluter in Pennsylvania (Allegheny Energy's Hatfields Ferry Power Station).

West Virginia produces approximately three times more electricity that it consumes, so Longview proposes to be an Exempt Wholesale Generator (EWG) that will sell power on the open market, not directly to end users. Massachusetts-based GenPower, Longview's parent company, is a power-plant broker. GenPower does not build or operate power stations, it only contracts the design, obtains the permits, coerces local governments into giving it tax breaks, and obtains financing. Then GenPower sells this package to another company for a huge profit.

Jobs Jobs Jobs

The electricity is not needed in Mon County, the residents of Mon County are giving the power plant a tax break, and the residents of Mon County will be saddled with the pollution over many, many years. So why does the local government want this power plant? As always, the answer is, "We need the jobs." But do we? Monongalia County has the lowest unemployment rate in the State and one of the lowest in the country (3.0% in January 2004 and 3.4% in February 2004). Longview will employ many union tradespeople while it is being built over a three-year period, but after it is built, Longview will employ around 50 nonunion workers. A small proportion of the construction workers will come from Mon County. Three of the five coal mines (all nonunion) planned to supply fuel to Longview will be in Pennsylvania. We need to decide how much we are willing to pay in terms of health, envi-

ronment and similar quality-of-life issues for these jobs. On a pollution-per-job basis, coal-fired power plants are one of the worst deals going.

What has occurred over the last few months:

- June 2003: Monongalia County finalizes a Payment in Lieu of Taxes Agreement (PILOT) which essentially would give Longview a huge tax break because Longview would not have to pay regular property taxes like everyone else. GenPower asserts



that this tax break is necessary for the plant to be built, but it refuses to show proof of this assertion.

- October 2003: Mon County and Longview sign a lease agreement for the site (which is owned by the Monongalia County Development Authority).
- Oct 9, 2003: more than sixty individuals and groups sue Monongalia County over the Longview PILOT Agreement, stating that it violates the State statute allowing such agreements.
- November 3, 2003: Longview applies to the Public Service Commission of West Virginia (PSC) for a Siting Certificate to build the power plant and a Certificate of Need for a transmission line.

- March 2, 2004: The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Air Quality issues a final air permit to Longview. The permit allows Longview to emit over 19 million tons of regulated pollutants into the air.
- March 31, 2004: the PSC, which is currently reviewing Longview's Siting Certificate to build the power plant and Certificate of Need for a transmission line, holds two public hearings in Morgantown. Both hearings were well attended and each lasted for about 3 hours, with many people speaking. Approximately 80% of the people who spoke in favor of the power plant were from outside Mon County (some from as far away as Summersville and Parkersburg), whereas approximately 80% of the people who spoke opposing the plant were from Mon County. It is very clear that the local community does not want this power plant.
- April 1 and 2, 2004: two separate appeals of Longview's air permit are filed. The first is by Jarrett Jamison, a Fort Martin resident concerned that this power plant will tear apart the tight-knit 200+-year old community.
- The second air-permit appeal is from three groups: the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited, and the National Parks Conservation Association. Joe Lovett and Wendy Radcliff of the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment will represent the groups in front of the Air Quality Board. Dr. Phyllis Fox, an environmental engineer with a vast amount of expertise in air-quality issues and power plants, has been retained as an expert witness. A modeling expert, needed because Longview will violate air-quality standards at Class I Areas, will also be retained.
- April 27, 28, and 29, 2003: Evidentiary hearings are held in Charleston in front of the Public Service Commission. Longview and two Interveners gave testimony and cross-examined witnesses in a grueling three-day court hearing. The Interveners in the case are the "Citizens," consisting of the same groups and individuals suing Mon County over the

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PILOT Agreement, and the Affiliates Construction Trades Foundation (ACT), with whom Longview has agreement to use union labor to build the power plant (but not to operate the plant or to mine the coal). Phil Gaujot, attorney for the Citizens, showed how weak and full of holes Longview's application really is. Those who gave testimony on behalf of the Citizens worked hard and did a fantastic job.

While the PSC Commissioners defer to other state agencies, where possible, they do appear to be concerned about noise issues and financing with respect to Longview. The PSC is important because it has to weigh whether or not this power plant is in the public interest. You may recall that the PSC would not allow NedPower to build the southern portion of its windfarm near Blackwater Falls because of its close proximity to "treasured State wilderness locations." The PSC is doing the work that the

Mon County Commission should have done long ago.

Longview told the community that coal would be delivered by conveyor to the power plant from an adjacent coal mine. The PSC asked for a map of any conveyor and truck routes, and it turns out that Longview plans to build a 4-mile long conveyor from three mine mouths in Pennsylvania, as well as truck coal from Pennsylvania. Longview's noise survey was found to be unacceptable and must be redone.

Longview has proposed a night-time noise standard of 65 dB at the closest residence. When asked on the witness stand if he would want something as loud as 65 dB outside his window at night, Longview's noise consultant said, "No." The business studies showing that Longview had only benefits and no costs to the community were found to have no supporting documentation.

Where do we go from here?

Longview is by no means a "done deal." The following three avenues to stop

Longview are being pursued: 1.) the PILOT law suit, which will be taken to the State Supreme Court if necessary; 2.) the two air-permit appeals; and 3.) the Public Service Commission permits.

What You Can Do?

The PSC will likely decide on the Siting Certificate and Certificate of Need in mid-to-late August 2004. So you have until the end of July to write a letter to Ms. Sandra Squire, Executive Secretary, Public Service Commission of West Virginia, PO Box 812, Charleston WV 25323. Please reference "Case Number 03-1860-E-CS-CN" in your letter. Don't wait until July! Please write that letter now!

You can find out more and keep updated as thing progress by going to www.nolongview.org.

ATV'S IN GAULEY RIVER NATIONAL RECREATIONAL AREA?

A new 15-mile rail trail project at Gauley Bridge the Gauley River National Recreation Area is being threatened. All Terrain Vehicle riders held a rally on March 28th to gain access on this trail for ATV use. The group has met with representatives from Congressman Nick Rahall's office to get support for allowing ATV riders on this rail trail.

• The use of off-road motor vehicles on any National Park Service-owned lands is prohibited unless special regulations are promulgated (36 CFR 4.10 b). Such regulations can only be promulgated if the National Park Service can demonstrate that such use will not damage natural or cultural resources or impact other visitors' experience.

• There are no special regulations permitting off-road motor vehicles in the Gauley River NRA, thus, any such activity on NPS-owned lands is illegal.

• A General Management Plan for the Gauley River National Recreation Area was completed in 1996 to provide management guidelines for the area. That document did not consider ATV use as an appropriate activity for the National Recreation Area.

• The National Park Service only recently (2004) acquired about 5 of the 15 miles of the former CSX railroad corridor, the rest is still in private ownership. CSX removed the rail in 1998. Cyclists, hikers and ATVs began using it (including some commercial operations), and CSX did not attempt to stop any of these activities or enforce trespassing violations.

• In 2004, National Park Service rangers will begin special efforts to contact users, informing them of private and public land issues. ATV users will be notified that it is illegal to ride ATVs on National Park Service-owned lands within the NRA.

• The National Park Service limits off-road vehicle use because numerous studies have found that they cause damage to ecosystems ranging from sand dunes to alpine meadows. Also, a quality visitor experience in many areas includes solitude and quiet which

is incompatible with ATV use.

• The National Park Service prohibition on ATV use in the Gauley River NRA is consistent with state law: ATVs are prohibited in all West Virginia state parks.

Send your comments to;

Gauley River NRA
PO Box 246
Glen Jean, WV 25846
gari_dcp@nps.gov



Red Spruce Ecosystem Restoration in the West Virginia Highlands

By Dave Saville

Introduction

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy recently received a grant from the Columbia Gas Transmission, Nisource Environmental Challenge Fund to undertake an important effort to help restore the red spruce ecosystem in West Virginia and promote the use of native species in forest restoration and reclamation projects. Red spruce cones will be collected locally, seeds extracted and seedlings grown to be used by land managing agencies, watershed associations and private land owners for streambank stabilization and stream shading, reforestation, reclamation and restoration projects throughout the West Virginia Highlands.

Red Spruce Ecosystem

Red spruce is a component of the relict montane forest community in West Virginia. Spruce forests of West Virginia are listed as an "endangered ecosystem" by the National Biological Service. They have experienced 85-98% decline from their original range. This plant community has been severely degraded and in some cases entirely removed from the landscape following years of exploitive logging and mining operations and fires. Originally thought to cover as much as 500,000 acres, with some estimates as high as 1 million acres, red spruce and spruce/hardwood forests now cover less than 50,000 acres in West Virginia.

The spruce forest of the West Virginia highlands provide unique habitat for a variety of wildlife species typical of more northern areas such as fisher, snowshoe hare, saw whet owl and northern goshawk. Additionally, the threatened Cheat Mountain salamander and endangered West Virginia northern flying squirrel are found in close association with spruce forests. The lack of suitable red spruce forest and the degraded and isolated condition of existing spruce forest are thought to be the primary reasons for listing the Cheat Mountain salamander and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel under the Endangered Species Act.

There is some data to suggest that red spruce may be making a come back, although very slowly. Research at the US Forest Service Northeastern Research Station at the Fernow Experimental Forest suggests that the growth rates of red spruce, which experienced a downturn in the 80s, are back up and doing fine. Acid rain research has shown mortality effects on red spruce in the southern Appalachians and Adirondacks, but not here in West Virginia. The biggest threats to spruce forests in West Virginia today are development, and a lack of protection from logging on the Monongahela National Forest.

Re-forestation using red spruce

In general, there are two different perspectives regarding plant materials for revegetation; the "agricultural" perspective and the "ecological" perspective. The agricultural approach uses whatever works, is practical, and grows on a site. The ecological approach tends to be more complicated and less understood; it looks at the total function of a plant community (soils, plant interactions, etc.) and what nature would do if left on its own.

Congress has mandated that the Forest Service take a more ecological approach on National Forest lands with the use of native plants in revegetation. Under the Invasive Species Executive Order of 1999, it became the Agency's duty to prevent the introduction of invasive species and restore native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded. Maintaining the rich native flora and associated communities of our National Forest is a critical element of Forest Service Management. The use of native plants for revegetation and restoration is integral to the overall goal of conserving the

biodiversity, health, productivity, and sustainable use of forest ecosystems.

Virtually every resource discipline on the Forest has some degree of involvement with revegetation or restoration efforts: wildfire rehabilitation, post logging reseedling, road construction, campground reconstruction, wildlife and fisheries habitat projects, restoration of mineral drilling pads, special uses sites and corridors, soil and water restoration areas, and even restoring conditions in overused Wilderness camping sites. Red spruce is an excellent selection for many of these applications. It grows well on poor soils and disturbed sites and it has also shown some promise with direct seeding.

Indeed, such restoration has been taking place on the Mon for several years. The Shavers Fork Coalition and the Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited have been using "wildlings," (seedlings gathered from the wild) in streambank restoration work on the upper Shavers Fork River. The Highlands Conservancy planted over one thousand wildlings along the Shavers Fork during its Spring Review in 2000. Many of the wildlings have been gathered from spruce forests at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. The Forest Service underplanted 107 acres of red pine plantations last year with native red spruce wildlings. Some have also been used by the Nature Conservancy at their preserves and by other private land owners. The US Fish & Wildlife Service is restoring Spruce forests on the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge using wildlings.

Second home development and recreational developments in areas such as Canaan Valley and elsewhere often have massive ground disturbing activities that require reclamation and revegetation. Homes and condos and resorts need to be landscaped. Strip mines and mountaintop removal mining disturb vast acreage of land that needs to be reclaimed and revegetated. Logging operations throughout the state are being revegetated by direct seeding and tree planting. Currently Colorado blue spruce, Norway spruce, Scotch pine and other exotic tree species are being used in many of these applications.

The practice of using exotic species is having a serious detrimental effect on the local ecology. Native plants are displaced, often replaced by invasive species that further spread and have impacts far beyond the project site. Animal species dependant on the displaced natives are soon impacted. The Highlands Conservancy, along with the West Virginia Native Plants Society, is strongly advocating the use of native species in restoration and reclamation applications.

Local eco-type

Beyond just using native species, the other important factor in restoration/revegetation, according to Forest Service geneticists and others, is to use *local* native plants or *ecotypes* as opposed to non-local natives. An ecotype is a particular population of plants within a species which, due to genetic differences, has a different physical form (leaf size, height, etc.), resistance to diseases/pests, hardiness, or flowering time that is adapted to certain environmental conditions of a particular area. Genetically non-local ecotypes or cultivars brought in from great distances away from the restoration site may contaminate the genetic material of the local plant communities. Introduced non-local genetic plant materials may contribute to weakening the fitness of local native plant populations and their ability to survive. To preserve biodiversity, which involves species diversity, community diversity, and genetic diversity, we need to be working towards maintaining local native plant gene pools. To the extent practicable, seeds and

(Continued on p. 7)



Red Spruce (Continued from p. 6)

plants used in revegetation projects should originate from a population of native plant species from genetically local sources.

There were attempts by the U. S. Forest Service to collect seed, grow and plant red spruce in the 1920's and 30's. In 1928 the Forest Service established a new tree nursery in Parsons, WV. By 1931, they could produce 2 million trees per year. During this period, it was the largest tree nursery in the eastern United States, and employed as many as 116 people. The major seedling crop in those early days was native red spruce.

During the summer of 1931, 800 bushels of red spruce cones were gathered on the Monongahela National Forest. The cone picking crew was recruited from the Thornwood and Hunting Grounds area, and the project began at the Gatewood Switch Cabin (Shot Cherry?). At

the beginning of each day the crew hiked from the cabin to the mountaintop near Spruce Knob, an elevation of 4,860 feet, to pick the red spruce cones. John King was among the group, he describes the process as follows:

"The red spruce trees were climbed, and 12-quart galvanized buckets were filled with red spruce cones and lowered to the ground by an attached line. The cones were emptied into large gunny sacks and backpacked down the mountain to camp. A picker would average four or five bushels a day. The sticky spruce gum clung to hands, face, and clothes and each man carried a pint whiskey bottle of coal oil to help remove the viscous mess."

The seed gathering process was repeated annually for several years to ensure a continuous supply of seed for planting at the Parsons nursery. The Nursery grew red spruce from this seed, until 1982.

Historian and retired WVU Forestry professor Ken Carvell explains that during these early reforestation efforts, most of the red spruce seedlings were planted on former red spruce sites which had burned over repeatedly. Soils were thin or non-existent, and the sites were presently covered with hay-scented fern and bracken fern. In some cases a bucket of soil was imported to the site to plant each tree in. These plantings were generally failures with only 5 to 8% survival. Besides the lack of adequate soils, lost from the fires, much mortality resulted when the ferns dried out in the fall and fell on top of the young seedlings. The snows would then drag the seedlings to the ground, smothering them.

Since Norway spruce has a much stiffer stem, it could better withstand the competition and matting and soon became the tree of choice for reforestation.

What we're doing

Red spruce restoration efforts thus far have had to use wildlings because currently the only red spruce available is of a Nova Scotia



seed source. Being a maritime province very low in elevation and much further north than the spruce forests of West Virginia, it would not be desirable, and could be detrimental, to import Nova Scotia source trees into West Virginia. There are problems associated with using wildlings including damaged root systems, labor intensive harvesting, and poor transplant success. To encourage and facilitate these restoration efforts, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has initiated a project to collect local seeds and grow local eco-type red spruce seedlings to transplanting age. We began this effort in the fall of 2003 when 6 bushels of cones were collected from Canaan Valley and Snowshoe Mountain. With the help of Quarterpine Farms' Jim Rockis, the seed was extracted from the cones.

Seed extraction is a complicated business. First the cones must be cured for about 6 months. During this time, the cones dry out and the scales open up. This triggers the seeds to be released. They are then placed in a large tumbler which dislodges many of the seeds from the cones. The cones are then soaked in water for several days. This closes the cones and "re-cocks" the triggering mechanism that releases the seed. They are then moved into a large kiln that slowly dries the cones, and as they open back up, the remaining seeds are released. The cones are then tumbled a second time. The extracted seeds are then de-winged, and superfluous inert matter removed, by a large thrashing-like machine that uses screens, brushes and a blower to purify the seed. A "gravity table" is then used which creates a fluidized bed to sort good seeds from bad seeds based on their mass. Seed is then evaluated using an x-ray to determine seed purity and soundness, and then germination tests are done.

The small amount of cones collected last fall has yielded enough seed to get our

program under way. We are still awaiting the results from the germination tests, but initial evaluation shows an excellent 114,540 seeds/lb. with 89.8% purity and 98% sound seed. Seed has been sent to the NRCS Plant Materials Center for storage and to two commercial nurseries to be grown.

Providing this seed is a critical component to the larger restoration effort. Once grown, these trees will be made available to land management agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, WV DNR & DEP) as well as private non-profit groups (The Nature Conservancy, Highlands Conservancy, Shaver's Fork Coalition, Upper Elk Watershed Association and others), and the public to increase red spruce habitat throughout the Allegheny Highlands.

With the help of a Columbia Gas Transmission Nisource Environmental Challenge Fund Grant, the Highlands Conservancy will organize and undertake a volunteer

red spruce cone collecting effort in September and early October 2004. Cones will be collected from the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Monongahela National Forest, Canaan Valley and Blackwater Falls State Parks, and at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Once grown, these local source seedlings will be planted where existing spruce is not regenerating quickly or in hardwood forested areas where spruce was historically present and could help enlarge an adjacent spruce stand or connect isolated patches of spruce. Additionally, some underplanting of Eastern Hemlock groves in riparian areas is being considered to offset the impacts of hemlock decline from the woolly adelgid, an exotic insect pest killing hemlock trees.

By making red spruce seed and seedlings available to agencies, industry and the public, more of this important local native conifer will be used in reclamation, restoration, revegetation and landscaping applications. We all need to raise our awareness and understanding of the importance of red spruce and its eco-system in West Virginia and the importance of maintaining and restoring native species in the landscape.



Spring Review in Canaan Valley: Board Meeting Highlights

By Hugh Rogers

Last Saturday in April, cool breeze, hot sun, smear on SPF 30, pick up bag lunch, go! Convivial groups of Highlands Conservancy members set out from our base at Timberline to explore familiar and less-known terrain: Mt. Porte Crayon, the North Fork of the Blackwater, and the National Wildlife Refuge. That evening, even overextended, last-to-finish folks got a crack at the buffet before settling in for a series of updates.

We met Stan Skutek, the new Refuge manager, and Emily Samargo of Friends of Blackwater. Matt Keller showed and told recent developments in the wilderness campaign, including negotiations with the DNR on boundaries of proposed wilderness areas. Other issues and personalities appear in the board meeting report below.

George Constantz, ecologist, educator, and erstwhile candidate for the state senate, announced another update: his book, *Hollows, Peepers, and Highlanders: An Appalachian Mountain Ecology*, will soon appear in a second edition. George's slide presentation was interrupted by a blown bulb. Neither that nor noise from the bar next door slowed his stride. Stalking the room, interrogating the audience, George treated us to a seminar. His perspective ranged from the tiniest actors to the entire theater, and he concluded with a reiteration of four baleful threats to our mountains: forest fragmentation, lack of land use planning, acid rain, and exotic species.

Next morning, the board convened to discuss these and related issues, and the organization's wherewithal to make a difference.

Public Lands: The wilderness campaign is one of three related issues affecting the Monongahela National Forest, all coming to a head this year. The others are forest management plan revision and a threatened and endangered species (TES) amendment to the current plan. In mid-April, the supervisor signed off on the TES amendment, which will allow four long-pending timber sales. Our appeal to the regional forester will not stay those sales. All are problematic. We are considering administrative appeals.

Other issues Dave Saville has been working on are trails in the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and ATV problems in the New River Gorge.

Mining: George Constantz had emphasized the insistent threat of forest fragmentation. Cindy Rank reminded us of the continuing reality of forest destruction by mountaintop removal mining (MTR). The Highlands Conservancy, usually represented by Cindy, Julian Martin, and Bob Gates, has been working with a coalition of groups on public

relations and organizing against MTR.

We have administrative and judicial appeals pending at WV's Surface Mine Board and Environmental Quality Board, as well as the U.S. District Court. Some of these involve familiar issues working through new channels: acid drainage, the buffer zone around streams, and the Corps of Engineers' nationwide "don't make us look at it" permit for valley fills.



Wind Power: We have been participating in the Public Service Commission's development of a new type of permit for wholesale generating facilities. Our particular concern is siting, with impacts to wildlife habitat, avian migration, and scenic, historic, and recreational special places.

For two already-permitted projects, both in the Mt. Storm area, whether they get built depends on renewal of the energy tax credit. That's tied up in the struggle over the Bush Administration's energy bill. Given \$17 billion in subsidies for the energy production industry, what's a few million for wind? The proposal for Rich Mountain, which the board has opposed, has not yet gone before the PSC, nor have the meteorological testing towers been installed.

Peter Shoenfeld alerted us to three proposals in the earliest stage of development. One on Gauley Mountain would use national forest land. In addition to the PSC permit process, questions of compliance with the forest management plan would have to be addressed. Forest Service rules will give us plenty of opportunity to comment on this one. Another would be on Jack Mountain in

Pendleton County, southeast of North Fork Mountain. George Beetham showed us photos of the view from Spruce Knob. The board did not take a position on either of these, though there was strong sentiment against the Gauley proposal. Finally, Red Oak Knob of Allegheny Mountain, on the WV-VA border, is being tested for another wind farm. Because of its elevation it would be visible from many special places in the Mon and George Washington National Forests.

Corridor H: Predictably, the town councils of Thomas and Davis did not agree on a new alignment that would avoid Blackwater Canyon. WVDOT wants to go back to the original alignment. That would trigger another lawsuit, based on impacts to historic sites near the head of the canyon. Farther east, near the town of Wardensville, the current highway, WV 55, gets the all-or-nothing treatment. Our state DOH is allowing the pavement to disintegrate, so commuters who want decent access to Virginia and I-81 will be moved to agitate for the four-lane. Under the court-approved settlement agreement, no Corridor H construction would commence for twenty years unless the existing road's level of service declined beyond a certain point.

WVHC operations, and a request for feedback: The hot forest issues are bringing in more new members. Our treasurer projected a deficit budget for 2004, but the first quarter wound up in the black. Look for a report in the Voice on Dave Saville's grant for red spruce ecosystem restoration. Speaking of the Voice, our esteemed editor's tenure has reached two years, a milestone we applauded.

The board would appreciate hearing members' opinions on two matters. First, the Hiking Guide is due for a new edition, and perhaps for alternative formats. If you have ideas and preferences about shape and content, continually updatable CD's, maps in pockets or in downloadable form, or other changes in the Guide, please let us know. You can contact Frank Young at his addresses on the roster. Thanks to Jim Solley for his work on maps.

Second, the outings schedule for the summer is complete. Where else besides the Voice should we advertise it? If you have ideas on reaching people who would want to participate, contact Jonathan Jessup, also on the roster.

To go back to the beginning, that is, Friday night of Spring Review weekend, Jonathan's slide show (with music!) inspired us—those images remain alongside the darker facts of forest fragmentation, acid rain, exotic species, and other threats, and will encourage us to keep working.

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

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

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 Sticker Donations

One of the things I do as outreach chair for the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is go to schools, festivals etc. with information about mountain top removal and other West Virginia Highlands Conservancy issues. At these events the I [Red Heart] Mountains bumper stickers are given out. The bumper stickers are also sent to businesses and organizations and to individuals who send a SASE. The bumper stickers are very popular and are intended to send the message that West Virginia Highlands Conservancy members and supporters love mountains as opposed to the WV Coal Association bumper stickers that claim a love for coal.

We can get the bumper stickers for about fifteen cents each if we order 5000. In the past people have generously contributed enough money to pay for the bumper stickers. We are about out of our last batch. I have ordered another 5000 with the hope people will once again generously donate to help pay for them. Any amount is welcome; in past appeals we have received amounts ranging from \$5 to \$700.

If you would like to contribute make your check payable to WVHC or West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and please put "Bumper Stickers" in the memo. Please mail you contribution to:

Julian Martin
WVHC
POB 306
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

“The Plains”: Roaring, Red Creek, and Flatrock

By © Jonathan Jessup

The Roaring Plains and Flatrock Plains are the highest plateaus of their size in the Eastern United States. Together with Red Creek Plains, “the Plains” are the geologic backbone of West Virginia on Allegheny Front. The Allegheny Front on the Plains is also the Eastern Continental Divide in West Virginia.

Area forests and streams have significantly recovered from devastating industrial clear cut logging and many subsequent fires. By the 1920s, clear cut logging and fires had left these high plateaus a barren jumble of rocks called “plains”. Since then, logging on these USFS lands has taken place only on a few small tracts. The natural grandeur of the Plains and the steep slopes and valley floors below is returning. Most of the Plains area owned by the USFS (12,376 acres) has been managed as if it were a protected Wilderness area since the most recent Forest Service plan revision of 1985. The Plains are surrounded on all sides by very popular recreation destinations such as Seneca Rocks, Spruce Knob, Dolly Sods, Seneca Creek Back country, Canaan Valley, Canaan Valley State Park, North Fork Valley, Blackwater Canyon, Otter Creek Wilderness, North Fork Mountain, and Smoke Hole Canyon.

Climate

The weather on the Plains is one of its special attributes. Weather changes are accentuated on the Plains. Allegheny Front is a mountain ridge over one hundred miles in length that is a great weather modifier along the east coast. The Plains are the highest point along the entire front. Here there are winds of a force factor of five, the greatest in West Virginia. Wind in the spruce trees often sounds as loud as a jet airplane taking off right above you. Winter snows average approximately 180 inches (fifteen feet) of snow a year on the high plateaus and lesser amounts on the lower slopes and valley floors.

The Plains create a significant rain shadow on the east side. The plateaus receive roughly twice the annual precipitation as the valley floors to the East. In the Potomac Valley, cacti can be found along fences and grape vineyards are within which require a drier climate. Clouds hover above the Plains more often than surrounding valleys. Days where the valleys are in sunshine and the Plains are enshrouded in cloud and thick fog are not uncommon and can happen in any month of the year. In winter, the mountaintop fog often deposits thick rime ice in the higher forests. The rime builds up and, when combined with the high speed winds, breaks many branches off the spruce to create flagged trees where all of the upper branches only point east. There are countless thousands of flagged spruce on the Plains. The flagged spruce is a symbol of pride and beauty for West Virginian's of their Allegheny Highlands.

Although nearby Dolly Sods is well known for abundant snow and extreme winter weather, elevations on the Plains are greater. Weather extremes are somewhat greater on the Plains. Snow can remain until June. Frozen precipitation can happen during any month of the year but generally happens from the months of October through any time in May.



One of many flagged spruce trees on the canyon rim

Photo © Jonathan Jessup

Snow storms on the Plains are so common that blizzards happen here when nearby towns and cities get either winter rain or no precipitation at all. Lake effect snows are common on the Plains.

Biology/Geology: vegetation, wildlife, streams, other geologic features

The highest point on Roaring Plains, Mount Porte Crayon, is also the sixth highest mountain in West Virginia and is worthy of special attention due to its outstanding scenic, natural, and ecological attributes. The only mountain higher than Mount Porte Crayon in the vicinity is Spruce Knob, 16 miles to the south. The summit area of Mount Porte Crayon is presently set aside as an 8.11 prescribed management area, and is a Research Natural Area, for a native mountaintop red spruce forest that is home to endangered northern flying squirrel and endangered cheat mountain salamander. Mount Porte Crayon is remote headwaters to three drainages and is the highest point on the Eastern Continental Divide in West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Of special note is that Roaring Plains

towers 3,100 feet above the Potomac River at the east base of the mountain. This is the greatest vertical difference in West Virginia. Spruce Knob, the highest point in the state, has somewhat less vertical difference. Red Creek Plains has similar vertical difference on its east slope to Potomac River.

In these proposed Wilderness areas, on and around the Plains, four points reach or exceed an elevation of forty-seven hundred feet and eight areas exceed forty-five hundred feet, which is exceptional for the entire mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Not only are many cliff areas found on the Plains, but at least seven known high elevation wetlands (sphagnum/cranberry bogs), the highest in the state, are there. These are home to rare northern plants and animals such as the snowshoe hare, bog lemming, bobcats, and fisher. These bogs serve to regulate stream flow at the headwaters for both sides of the eastern continental divide.

Even after many decades of ecological recovery from the timbering and burning on the Plains, the surface is unusually rocky and several dozen areas remain barren and rocky. What soils remain are often thin (almost always less than one foot) and are mainly peat, the result of very slow buildup of primarily spruce needles from the native conifer (red spruce) forest. Before the timbering, this peat layer was reported to be as deep as eight feet. Locals report that the Plains' plateaus had no rocks exposed before the timbering and fires, which is difficult to fathom today because as you walk across Roaring/Flatrock/Red Creek Plains, you get the feeling that the plateaus are a never ending and contiguous jumble of millions of large rocks one to two feet across or larger. No matter how remote a location you bushwhack to on the plateaus, you'll find rocks protruding from thin to non-existent soils.

Locals report that there was an economic crash after the original forest was removed in the 1920s and this was a primary reason the USFS was able to purchase so much land in the area. The rocky, unproductive and snowy high country was sold while more productive lower lands still remain mostly in private ownership. Hard economic times were also a cause for locals to repeatedly burn the plateaus in the 1920's and 30's to promote blueberries for food. The berries can still be found in abundance to this day.

In addition to the native spruce forest on top of the Plains, there are extensive and virtually impenetrable laurel and rhododendron thickets. They help to maintain a sense of mystery for the area and also keep people on the designated trails. The state DNR has rescued at least one disoriented hunter in the laurels. Incidents of people taking hours to go a relatively short distance are reported regularly.

In late June the laurels bloom and there

More about The Plains (continued from previous page)

is a spectacular show of countless acres of pink and white blossoms. The rhododendrons typically bloom in July and add to the grandeur of spring on the Plains. Spring may technically end on June 21st, but because of the high elevation on the Plains, spring arrives late.

Haystack Knob and Green Knob are within the proposed area but are south of the Plains. These are exceptional features. Haystack Knob is unusual and special. It has historic value as well as affording one of the best mountaintop views in the state.

The USFS lands in Long Run valley host an apparently healthy hardwood forest of exceptional scenic and ecological value. These slopes are perhaps the most remote USFS lands in the proposed area. They are of great value for persons seeking solitude and for wildlife. They are also an important forest ecosystem that must be considered as a single forest system that spans from top to the bottom of the mountain. Fauna that live in the spruce forests on top also rely on lower elevation forests for habitat and vice-versa.

Recreational Opportunities

The Plains offer outstanding wild and remote country experiences for many people. They are within a day's drive of a large percentage of the U.S. population. The Plains are less visited than the adjacent Dolly Sods Wilderness area to the north primarily due to less road access and fewer miles of designated trails. The area offers many opportunities for solitude of unusually good quality.

Backpacking: Backpacking is a popular and perhaps the best way people enjoy the Plains. Area trails have been well designed to provide several circuit route opportunities within the area as well as connecting to Dolly Sods and even further north to Canaan Valley. Some trail expansions need to be considered such as a designated route to Haystack Knob, Green Knob and the north cliff rim of Long Run Canyon.

Running: In 2003 a forty mile mountaintop marathon held by the West Virginia Mountain Trail Runners traversed the Plains to eventually end in Canaan Valley. Future events seem likely.

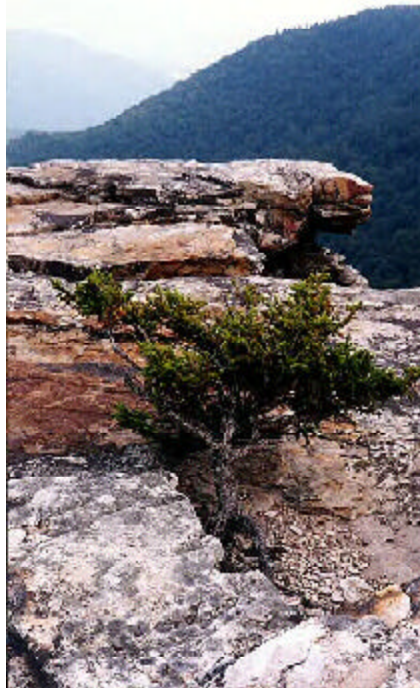
Fishing: Streams within the proposed areas are reported to host an abundance of native trout populations. Fishing is one of the most popular outdoor recreational sports in West Virginia.

Hunting: Deer, turkey, bear, grouse and other animals are abundant and already provide outstanding hunting opportunities.

Exploration: Roaring Plains is unique and ripe for exploration and there are many rewards for it. A retired couple and has dedicated ten years to hiking and exploring the area with high tech tools including a GPS. They are still finding areas they've never visited. They are still being rewarded in discovering great

views as well as outstanding back country exploration on and below the Plateaus. On all sides of the Plains, there are many rocky outcrops and other areas affording spectacular and unparalleled views of the surrounding mountainous countryside.

To date, at least forty two viewpoints have been located; only three of them are on designated trails. Each of these viewpoints offers a different view from the other. Unlike many mountains in the region, these are not viewpoints along a single ridge where the view only changes slightly from one to the next. Rather, they are around the very curvy perimeter of these dissected plateaus. A popular exploration destination is Mt. Porte Crayon. Mt. Porte Crayon is so remote and dense in vegetation that most attempts at reaching the top fail. The very scenic summit of Haystack Knob also has no USFS designated trail leading to it and is much farther from one than Mt. Porte Crayon. Green Knob is even more remote, and would take a serious effort to reach via bushwhack, only across USFS lands from the closest public access point on FR19 or Bonner



Atop the rock outcrop on Haystack Knob, a small spruce tree fights to survive. Although this tree is only one foot tall, it could be very old due to the limited water and soil here on the rock. Photo © Jonathan Jessup.

Mountain Road.

Cross country skiing: The Plains receive plenty of snow. An average of about 180 inches (fifteen feet) of snow every year falls on the Plains. Trails and other routes on the Plains offer outstanding remote skiing opportunities. Nearby Whitegrass resort has hosted outings to Roaring Plains and people venture in small

groups every year to ski the Plains.

Snowshoeing: The Plains receive plenty of snow. With an average of about 180 inches (fifteen feet) of snow per year, the Plains offer outstanding opportunities for snowshoeing and low impact winter recreation.

Visit the Plains

We urge you to consider visiting the Plains. A backpack outing is probably the best way to experience the area. The Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide by Bruce Sundquist and Allen DeHart is recommended. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy hosts outings to the Plains. Check the web site Outings page.

Designated trails exist but skip the most scenic areas. If you are looking for a more remote off trail experience consider the long rock cliffs on the south edge of the Roaring Plains on the north rim of Long Run Canyon. Haystack Knob offers an outstanding view, too. Search the Internet for "roaring plains map" and see what you find. Be responsible for your self and safety. Don't underestimate how rugged and dangerous this wild country can be, especially off designated trails! Getting lost off trail in the laurels and thick spruce forest presents a real danger. This is not a place for the uninitiated. While on the flattish plateaus you may not be able to see any distant landmarks.

Getting there

Public access to Roaring Plains is from Forest Road 19 to South Prong Trail. Bonner Mountain Road offers public access to Flatrock Run Trail.

From Canaan Valley, West Virginia: Take 32 south. Stay on 32 past the state park intersection then begin your descent out of the valley. Take a hard left onto Laneville Road. Laneville Road is very curvy and precarious in spots and ends at Laneville and Forest Road 19. Before Laneville turn right onto Bonner Mountain Road to reach the Flatrock Run Trail head on the left (not far after the bridge over Red Creek at a small gas pumping station). At Laneville, Forest Road 19 starts up the mountain. There are two trail heads on FR19 for South Prong Trail on the right hand side. The first trail head is closer to the bottom of the mountain where the parking is off the road. The second trail head is near the top of the mountain just beyond the FS70 (FS70 is gated) intersection. There will be a signed trail head with roughly eight parking spaces.

From the east: From Petersburg, West Virginia take 55 West. Pass Smoke Hole Caverns on your right, and then pass a small gas station on your left. Soon after you'll reach Jordan Run Road, a right-only turn. Turn right onto Jordan Run Road. Go 1 mile up the mountain and then turn left onto FR19. Go about six more miles to the top of the mountain. You are almost there. At the top stay left and then pass the picnic area on your left. There will be a signed trail head with roughly eight parking spaces on the left hand side for the first trail head for South Prong Trail. Another trail head for South Prong Trail is further down the mountain on the left hand side before Laneville.

EAST FORK OF THE GREENBRIER PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREA

By Matt Keller

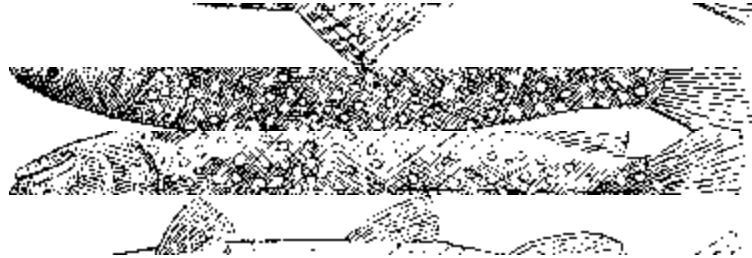
The proposed East Fork Greenbrier Wilderness Area lies in the upper reaches of the Greenbrier watershed within the 'birth-place of rivers,' Pocahontas County. There, the East Fork of the Greenbrier River twists and turns through the shoulders of gentle mountains in a subtle transition zone between the northern and southern regions of the Monongahela National Forest.

The area is bounded on the south and east by WV-28 and FS 112, on the west by FS 14, and on the north by FS 430, 254, County Road 250/4 and private land. The proposed area is just over 10,000 acres, the majority of which has been managed as semi-primitive/non-motorized by the U.S. Forest Service for the past 18 years.

The East Fork Greenbrier area is covered mostly with second growth sugar maple and other hardwoods, with interspersed stands of red spruce. It provides habi-

at for the federally endangered WV northern flying squirrel, and the candy darter, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife species of concern, as well as other rare species.

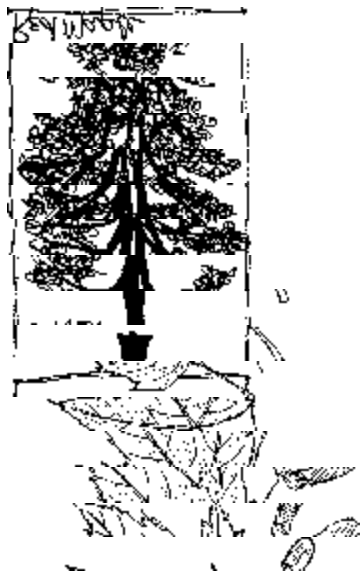
tat for the federally endangered WV northern flying squirrel, and the candy darter, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife species of concern, as well as other rare species. The area is known for its excellent trout fishing and contains four Tier 2.5 streams. These streams, East Fork of Greenbrier, Poca Run, Mullenax Run and Abes Run, received the 2.5 classification because of their ability to support native trout populations. Large brook trout have been caught in this area, and if protected, these streams could become a headwaters stronghold for brook trout in the Greenbrier. Other wild-



life species flourish here as well, providing excellent opportunities for hunting and wildlife viewing. The area is underlain primarily by shale formed during the Denovian period and to a lesser extent, sandstone formed during the Mississippian period. It lies within the Ridge and Valley physi-

ographic province of West Virginia, near the Allegheny Front. Remote and wild in character, the proposed East Fork Greenbrier Wilderness Area is a quiet, peaceful place, with excellent opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The central East Fork Trail follows the East Fork of Greenbrier River from Island Campground to Pigs Ear Road, providing the hiker with especially scenic views along this pristine stream. Small waterfalls abound with many gentle pools to cool off in on a hot summer day as the kids chase crayfish.

The trail is exceptional when serviceberries are in bloom or fruit, joining a wealth of other wildflowers. Wild strawberries can also be found. Active or past beaver activity may be evident as one travels along the river. The only other system trail in the area is the Poca Run Trail which provides an opportunity for a shorter day hike near the headwaters of Poca Run. Forest vegetation along this trail includes red cedar, cherry, basswood, sweet cicely, ferns and blue cohosh. Other remote hiking opportunities are available on the long-since closed and largely overgrown logging roads within the area. This area is a great place for fishing, hunting, backpacking and day-hiking.



Other remote hiking opportunities are available on the long-since closed and largely overgrown logging roads within the area. This area is a great place for fishing, hunting, backpacking and day-hiking.

Editor's Note: This is another in a series of profiles of areas which the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition plans to propose for wilderness designation. Other profiles appeared in the March and April issues of The Highlands Voice. In addition to this article on the East Fork of the Greenbrier, Jonathan Jessup has done an article on the Roaring Plains which appears on the previous two pages. 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.

For an update on the Coalition's work and information about how you can help, see the following page.

WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN ROLLS AHEAD

By Matt Keller

As we roll into May, there are a lot of exciting updates to report on progress made by the Wilderness Coalition. This summer and fall, we will be traveling far and wide across West Virginia, spreading the word about the opportunity we have to protect special places on the Mon.

In addition to the many presentations we've been giving to different groups and organizations, we now have an intern that will be working on education and outreach and encouraging folks to contact the congressional delegation in support of wilderness. Aurora Moldovanyi, a WVU graduate student in Parks and Recreation, will start her work to promote West Virginia Wilderness Memorial Day weekend. Aurora has a BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology and Management and is currently working towards an MS in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Resources. She has had a wide range of professional and volunteer experience in environmental work and has been involved in wilderness campaigns in other states. We are thrilled to have her aboard!

In our continuing effort to work collaboratively with WV Division of Natural Resources, we have made some significant adjustments to proposed wilderness boundaries to exclude the majority of locations

where they conduct wildlife management in ways that is not conducive to wilderness designation. While it's hard to lose potential wilderness acreage, we feel it is a positive step towards working with an important stakeholder with a great interest in the management of future wilderness areas.

Our main push this summer and fall will be to build our grassroots base stronger than ever, it is absolutely critical that West Virginia's congressional delegation continue to get mail from their constituents in support of protecting additional wilderness areas on the Mon. They've already gotten a good amount, but we need to push harder than ever towards reaching a critical mass of support that will be necessary to get a wilderness bill introduced next congress. That being said, **if you haven't already written a letter in support of more wilderness, please take 10 minutes and do so now!** Talking points and addresses can be found on our website (www.wvwild.org) as well as this edition of the *Highlands Voice*.

Another component of our grassroots base is businesses and organizations. We have a solid and growing list of these that have formally endorsed our work. Up until now, we've focused almost entirely on building this part of our base in the com-

munities near proposed wilderness areas. As we shift now to a statewide focus in our campaign, we want to bring in endorsements from businesses and organizations across our great state and region. Endorsements can be made on our website, www.wvwild.org. There is a link on the main page which will take you to the online forms to fill. We have hard copies of endorsement forms as well that I can send out if you'd like to get a business' or organization's support for wilderness.

Speakers for wilderness are available to make presentations to groups and organizations. Please contact me if you are interested. (Matt Keller, matk@tw.org, 304-864-5530).

Many trips to proposed wilderness areas are already scheduled for this summer and fall. Check the Mountain Odyssey schedule for trips to Dolly Sods North (potential expansion to the wilderness) North Fork Mountain, Seneca Creek (Spruce Knob area), Roaring Plains and Big Draft (Blue Bend area). If you aren't motivated enough to write a letter yet, get out and see one or more of these spectacular places and you certainly will be!

TALKING POINTS FOR A LETTER ABOUT WILDERNESS

I support protection of significant new wilderness areas on the Monongahela National Forest (MNF). Currently, just 78,000 acres - less than 9% - of the MNF is protected as Wilderness, well below the average for eastern National Forests. Wilderness areas protect the headwaters of our rivers, the source of clean drinking water. Also, forested watersheds control rain runoff to minimize flooding. They provide ideal locations for hunting, fishing, backpacking and other forms of outdoor recreation in scenic and natural settings.

It has been 20 years since any new wilderness was designated in West Virginia. Our current areas are a major tourist draw. We are fortunate in WV to have wild areas left in the East that qualify for Wilderness. Economically, we should take advantage of this op-

portunity to better compete with surrounding states for tourism dollars, as well as prevent overuse of our current areas.

Now is the time to designate additional wilderness areas in our state. Benefits associated with designated wilderness are far reaching for the people of West Virginia, our wildlife populations and the land itself. Protecting our last few remaining wilderness areas will ensure that present and future generations can use and enjoy parts of the forest in their natural state.

I strongly urge you to support efforts to designate new wilderness areas on the MNF and hope that you will be a leader in crafting legislation that will preserve our last remaining unprotected wild places.

Contact Info:

Senator Robert C. Byrd
311 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-224-3954
Fax: (202) 228-0002

Senator Jay Rockefeller
531 Hart Senate Office
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-6472
Fax: (202) 224-7665

Rep. Alan Mollohan
2302 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-4172
Fax: (202) 225-7564

Rep. Nick Rahall
2307 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 225-3452
Fax: (202) 225-9061

Governor Robert Wise:
State Capitol Building
Charleston, WV 25305
1-888-438-2731
Fax: (304) 342-7025

Rep. Shelley Moore-Capito
1431 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-2711
Fax: (202) 225-7856

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

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 12/13 – 18. Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area TN, KY. Come join us in one of the nation's newer recreation areas. Car camping for a couple of nights and completing a 30 mile backpacking loop. "The free flowing Big South Fork of the Cumberland River and its tributaries pass through 90 miles of scenic gorges and valleys containing a wide range of natural and historic features." "Plenty of remote wilderness, with steep cliffs and interesting geology, including some of the biggest arches in the east." Knoxville-TN.com. Contact Susan Bly 304-876-5177 (day) or 304-258-3319 (7:00 pm - 9:00 pm) or sbly@shepherd.edu.

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. Visit http://users.1st.net/wheeling/outdoors/otter_creek/ for more information or contact Eric Shereda 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 19 – 20, Sat-Sun. Blackwater Canyon Mountain Biking. Come join us as we bike along old forest and logging grades. June

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

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

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

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

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

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

information at: backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468

mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

by Allen deHart & Bruce Sundquist

Published by the

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

The 7th edition covers:

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wilderness warriors tme the elk

By Dave Saville

Undaunted by the snow and freezing temperatures, hard core boaters and novices alike flocked to Webster Springs for the 5th annual Webster Wildwater Weekend River Festival and Race. Some folks were skiing on 18 inches of fresh April fools powder in Canaan Valley but the recent precipitation had the Elk River running at a primo level for the down river race. Indeed a new course record was set by Jess Whittemore!

The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition was well represented at the race and in the Winners Circle. In the kayak division Coalition Coordinator, Matt Keller, took a first place in the 18-29 year old age class, Highlands Conservancy members Joe Carney bagged a win in the 50+ class, and Sally Naas snagged a victory in the 50+ women's class .

In the Whitewater Canoe division, Dave Saville took a first place and J. T. Sutton a third in the solo class. The 6 mile course runs the Class II, III Elk River from Curtin to Webster Springs.

In the photo, J. T. Sutton and Matt Keller prepare to put in.



Hiking the White Rocks Trail

By Mike Juskelis

It rained almost continuously as we drove west on I-66 but by the time we reached the trailhead on Waites Run Road it had stopped and the temperature started to rise. Thirteen of us started up Wilson's Cove Rd/Trail. Shortly after turning off onto the Pink-blazed Old Mail Trail and crossing Cove Run on a new footbridge it was time for an equipment modification moment. The group stopped and long sleeve shirts, pant legs, when removable, and jackets were quickly removed and stored in our backpacks. We made great time traveling up the Old Mail Trail and then the orange-blazed Racer Camp Hollow Trail. As we neared the junction of the Big Blue nearly everyone was ready for a break. We paused for a snack and water at an old hunters' camp, the long logs making handy seats.

After about 10 minutes we resumed our trek along the Tuscarora and then down the White Rocks Trail to a fabulous view of Little North Mountain, Paddy Mountain and, in the distance, Massanutten Mountain with Signal Knob anchoring it's northern end. We took about 30 minutes to lunch, rest and take in the scenery. Andrew noticed some more white blazes painted on the rocks and we followed them north a few feet to an even greater overlook of the valley.

It took a bit of prodding each other but eventually we found ourselves back on the Tuscarora, descending quickly, and then the Old Mail Trail back to the cars chanting "It's all downhill from here!"

MORE WIND FARMS PROPOSED

By Peter Shoenfeld

Wind farm developers have plans for additional locations in our Highlands.

Atlantic Renewable Energy (ARE) has told of us interest in a project on Gauley Mountain, on public land in the Monongahela National Forest, near Slatyfork. The project would extend along the ridgeline road from a point between Gauley Peak and Sharp Knob on the south end, to a point between the Bradshaw Hill and Rocky Point at the north end. This land is in management prescription 6.1. Although now heavily roaded, it lies within a RARE II Inventoried Roadless Area. There are several Northern Flying Squirrel capture sites in the vicinity. The current status is that ARE expects to very soon file an application for a Special Use Permit to erect meteorological towers to confirm the wind energy potential of this site.

US Wind Force hopes to develop an additional West Virginia project on Jack Mountain, in the Liberty Gap area of eastern Pendleton County. This would extend from the Virginia state line to the northern down slope of Jack Mountain. They have announced this project on their web site, are seeking investors, and hope soon to be ready to file for a PSC permit.

Community Energy has been pursuing a project on Allegheny Mountain, Red Oak Knob, and Tamarack Ridge, in Highland County, Virginia. This is on the West Virginia state line and would have significant visual impact in our state.

In early 2003, the Highlands Conservancy announced opposition to a planned project by Guascor (now GreenWind) on Rich

Mountain, near Harman, on private land in the heart of the Monongahela National Forest. This would have severe visual impact at many special places, including Spruce Knob, and the Dolly Sods, Laurel Fork, and Otter Creek wilderness areas. This project is moving forward, but has not yet applied for a PSC permit.

One wind farm is currently operating in the Highlands, on Backbone Mountain in Tucker County. PSC permits have been granted for two others, one north of Route 93 and west of Stony Front in Grant County, and the other on the Allegheny Front in Grant County.



BIG SCHLOSS: GLORIOUS EVEN IN THE WIND AND RAIN

By Mike Juselkis

There were 14 of us on this shake down backpack. In the next 35 hours or so we would experience every kind of weather there is except sun and warmth! As we donned our backpacks a slight mist began to fall. We begrudgingly removed our packs, put on our rain gear and duck bags and started over again.

We began our ascent up Stony Run Trail, The pace was fast at first but as we neared the top we all started to slow down. With about 0.5 miles to go to Sugar Knob Cabin Betty noticed patches of snow in the woods. Soon the snow was everywhere, 3 inches deep in places. We took our lunch at the cabin as planned and then resumed our "unplanned" trek through the snow.

We turned left onto the Tuscarora Trail and at the junction of Mill Mountain Trail met an electronic friend of mine resting on his hiking stick. Tony Van Vugt maintains a web page full of hiking info mostly in the VA area, www.hikingupwards.com. We had been sharing ideas via Email for quite some time but never met even though it seemed like we were both on the same mountain almost every weekend. We chatted briefly but could sense our group wanted to move on. I said goodbye to Tony and fell in with my crew.

We trudged up over the high point of Mill Mountain and started to descend toward Sandstone Spring, our campsite for the night. As the elevation dropped so did the amount of snow on the ground. By the time we reached the spring there were only patches of light snow scattered about the carpet of pine needles. It was only 2 o'clock and the weather had eased up for now so we hastily set up camp, grabbed our water bottles, cameras and snacks (We all agreed we had seen enough of our backpacks for the day.) and continued south along Mill Mountain Trail.

In about three quarters of a mile we reached a fantastic little overlook, not as significant as Big Schloss but still a pretty notable place to end up on the first day of our trip. To the south we could see the real focus of the outing, Big Schloss, and then Tibet's Knob and the continuation of the Great North Mountain. Straight across Trout Run Valley was Long Mountain and to our right we could see Halfmoon Lookout. Hard to believe we were just there a month ago. We lingered a bit but pulled away and headed back to camp. We all ate and took care of things as one has to do when carrying everything one needs to exist on his/her back. By nightfall the sky was clear and the moon bright. Mike and Tom set out to build a decent little fire considering the wetness of every thing. We stood around the fire and chatted until the day's exertions started to take their effect and then one by one we went to bed for the night.

The weather didn't stay kind for long. No sooner had we retired for the evening than clouds started rolling in, hiding the moon completely. Little by little the sound of a roaring train began roaring through the camp as the winds reached gale force. The temperature quickly dropped and sleet began to pelt our tents.

By morning all of our gear was covered in a thin sheet of ice. Initial consensus upon arising was to hastily break camp and head back to the cars, leaving Big Schloss for another day. By the time we arrived at the cut-off trail the wind eased ... just a bit ... and the clouds started to break up. To a person the consensus rapidly changed. "Let's stash our packs behind a big ol' log and go for it!" And so it went, 14 folks braving the elements for the greatest 360 degree view in the George Washington National Forest! The wind was pretty frightful but most of us made it to the top and took it all in. Eventually the wind won this one, driving us off of that rock, but not before we accomplished what we came to do. With a new sense of accomplishment we returned to the trail junction, recovered our gear and in a little more than an hour were back in our vehicles heading home.

Big Schloss



Photo ©
Jonathan Jessup

HATS FOR SALE

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

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.

T SHIRTS

White, heavy cotton T-Shirts with the I[heart]MOUNTAINS slogan on the front. The lettering is blue and the heart is red. Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL \$8 total by mail. Send sizes wanted and check made out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to Julian Martin, WVHC, Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

BRING BACK THE GIANTS!

By Jim Waggy

What would you think if an earthquake suddenly reduced our impressive State Capitol building to a jumbled pile of rubble and it was then replaced with a building that looked like a very large Kroger warehouse? Or what if Michelangelo's sculptural masterpiece, The Pieta, was destroyed by a deranged vandal and the Vatican proudly replaced it with a molded concrete lawn ornament?

This is roughly what has happened to the forests of West Virginia – actually, it has happened to virtually all the forests of the eastern United States. What was once one of nature's greatest earthly creations was annihilated over time, with the worst of the damage coming during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as the railroads and steam-powered sawmills combined to steadily and relentlessly clearcut the landscape. Our Appalachian world has been severely diminished aesthetically, spiritually, and ecologically by the almost total destruction of the virgin forest.

Some replacement, second-growth forests have sprouted in parts of the eastern U.S., particularly in the Appalachian Mountain region, which has West Virginia at its center. The vigor of the forests' return should not be surprising, since the Appalachian region – because of its geographic location, climate, evolutionary history, and other factors – is one of the two best places in the world for growing temperate hardwood forests.

But it's important to understand that the replacement forests we see today, for all their good and charming qualities, are still in an early stage of recovery. They remain a pale shadow of what fully mature, healthy Appalachian forests are supposed to look like and function like. And unless we change how we manage our forested lands, nature will not be able to reassemble her masterpiece, and we will be permanently stuck with various lawn-ornament versions of a forest.

The book, *Tumult on the Mountains*, by Roy Clarkson, offers hints of what we are missing. The old black-and-white photos show the enormous trees that made up the virgin, old-growth forest, with scenes of logging crews standing beside and dwarfed by the logs and stumps of fallen trees. The text describes a white oak from Tucker County that measured 13.5 feet in diameter and produced enough lumber to fill an entire train.

Or even better, take a walk through the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest in North Carolina. Here are several thousand acres of virgin forest that escaped the ax by sheer

luck. Many different species of trees, hundreds of years old, have grown into massive, ramrod-straight, towering specimens. Walking among these giants, most people will feel the same type of hushed reverence as if they were looking at the finest stained glass windows of Notre Dame or Chartres cathedrals. It's not just the big trees; it's the stillness and quiet, the powerful sense of nature's ancient rhythms, the soft light filtering through the



canopy of leaves, the riot of lush green mosses and ferns across the forest floor.

Research shows that there's more species of everything in an old-growth forest compared to young forests – more trees, more wildflowers, more birds, more salamanders, more mammals, and more insects, ferns, mosses, lichens, fungi, etc. These complex, intertwined systems are better at recycling nutrients, generating clean water, limiting floods, and fending off environmental stresses. This is the highest and best form of an Appalachian forest, the result of eons of painstaking evolutionary experiments.

I believe it's time to make a much greater effort to restore our old-growth forests. Of course, given the pervasive impact of human population and activities, we can't expect to bring them back everywhere that they formerly flourished. But if we want to see the return of these majestic forests, and if we want them to be healthy and sustainable far into the future, we have to give nature more room and better opportunities to work her magic.

A forest goes through several stages of development on its way to becoming a climax, old-growth forest, with each stage help-

ing to create the necessary conditions for subsequent stages (shade, moisture, nutrients in the soil, species mix, etc.). The complete process takes hundreds of years (although the forest does become more beautiful and functional at each step along the way), and it won't play out properly unless the forest is protected from logging and other forms of human interference.

We already have some protected areas where natural processes are allowed to unfold, including federally designated wilderness and a few other types of preserves. Unfortunately, these areas are mostly small and scattered, making them extremely vulnerable.

Conservation biologists have discovered that these isolated fragments are subject to a whole host of harmful "edge effects." Their perimeters are weakly defended and face greater exposure to diseases, parasites, weather extremes, and the invasion of non-native species and predators. The smaller the refuge, the more likely that these border attacks will eventually overwhelm and degrade it.

Biologists have also concluded that these forest fragments have much less chance of recovering intact from natural disasters such as ice storms, drought, severe winters, hurricanes, or tornadoes, or from human-induced disasters such as acid rain or global warming. In the past, when disasters struck our virgin forests, the populations of all effected species could readily be replenished from adjacent areas. With these modern preserves, many species are too far away from others of their kind, so that even small-scale disasters can wipe out entire populations.

Our current array of small, scattered forest preserves is not capable of maintaining the biological integrity of old-growth forests (or any other kind of complex, healthy forest ecosystem) over the long run. These refuges are sitting ducks, and they will be picked off one by one by a wide variety of calamities. This inability to protect the integrity of natural ecosystems is precisely the reason why we are losing species globally at a rate estimated to be between 1,000 to 10,000 times greater than normal.

Our growing body of ecological knowledge shows us that nature needs more room and less disturbance, and that we need to make several changes if we want healthy ecosystems such as old-growth forest to survive. First, we need to look for opportunities to dramatically increase the size of our

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Giants (Continued from p. 18)

protected natural areas, making them large enough at their cores that they can successfully resist attacks on their borders. Second, we need to find creative ways to establish protected corridors that will connect these large, core areas to each other. These links will allow species to maintain genetic contact with others of their kind, and it will allow them to migrate if necessary in response to stresses such as global warming. Third, we need to give some of the most biologically productive areas back to nature. In many cases, we've established preserves in places that we've already degraded or places that we couldn't figure out how to exploit. If we want to see the return of truly magnificent Appalachian forests, we have to give nature fertile ground to work with.

This is a good time to discuss forest issues, because, for the first time in almost twenty years, the managers of West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest

are examining their management plan for the forest and seeking public input about potential changes to the plan. They are conducting public meetings, posting information on their web site (www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf), and soliciting public comments. They hope to have a draft plan in place by December 2004 and a final plan by fall of 2005.

This revision of the forest management plan presents the perfect opportunity to put to use our improved understanding of forest ecology and conservation that we've acquired over the past two decades. Any effort to restore old-growth forest in West

Virginia will have to lean heavily on existing public land, and in particular the Monongahela Forest.

Within the Monongahela's 930,000 acres, there are opportunities to expand the core areas of existing preserves; add new protected areas; establish corridors between preserves inside the Monongahela, as well



as corridors to nearby preserves, such as those within the George Washington National Forest; and put more of the most biologically productive acreage into this network of protected land. I believe there would be strong public support for these measures, and their impact on West Virginia's overall timber production would be minimal.

In many ways, it's now or never for restoring old-growth forest in West Virginia. Once Corridor H is complete, the current steady flow of tourists and second-home developments in the West Virginia highlands will likely become a flood, making it much

more difficult to put together a linked network of protected land. Also, the seeds and spores for the plants that thrive in the later stages of a developing old-growth forest are lying dormant in the soil, awaiting their chance. They are hardy, but they won't last forever. We need to let nature reassemble the pieces while they are still viable.

People everywhere are struggling to find a balance that allows both nature and civilization to thrive. In Florida, the Everglades ecosystem is being restored, and in the midwest people are working to bring back tall-grass prairies.

Rugged mountains and lush hardwood forests are the primary, distinguishing characteristics of West Virginia. If we succeed in restoring generously sized, sustainable landscapes of old-growth forest, this highest and best form of an Appalachian forest, this will be an investment that pays

us back many times over, in economic terms (tourism, and creating a desirable location for living and working), in ecological terms (biological services, and because we need these examples of how healthy forests operate), and in terms of our overall quality of life. Now is the time. Let's bring back the giants!

Mr. Waggy is the president of Friends of Coonskin and a board member of Kanawha State Forest Foundation. This commentary originally appeared in the Charleston Gazette.

AMPLIFICATION

The April, 2004, issue of *The Highlands Voice* included the results of inquiries by the Friends of Blackwater of the positions of candidates for public office on the preservation of Blackwater Canyon. While neither *The Highlands Conservancy* nor *The Highlands Voice* endorses or supports any candidates, the information was included in the *Voice* as a service to readers who may be interested in the issue. Each of the candidates listed in the story supported the preservation of Blackwater Canyon.

Since the publication of that story, the *Voice* editor has received correspondence from gubernatorial candidate Jim Lees indicating his willingness to use the state's power of eminent domain to place Blackwater Canyon in public ownership. Since this willingness was not included in either the story or his response to the Friends of Blackwater, it is included here as an amplification of Mr. Lees' position.

POSITION TAKEN

As part of the correspondence concerning his position of Blackwater Canyon (see adjoining story), Mr. Lees talked about a wide range of environmental issues. Many of these appear on his web site or have been widely reported.

One issue which he discussed which has neither been widely reported nor addressed on his web site was his position on mountaintop removal mining:

Let me be perfectly clear on the subject of mountaintop mining practices. I detest those practices and believe they are harmful to West Virginia. My intent as Governor is to "reduce and restrict" those practices as much as possible to the extent I can under existing law. My intent is to explore various legislative mechanisms by which the state can constitutionally reduce and restrict without violating existing federal law.

Because this position has never been widely reported, it is offered here as a service to *Voice* readers.

OUR READERS WRITE AND POETS WAX

Dear Editor:

I believe the time has come when we must confront the land companies, and in this area that is Rowland land company, for their role in Mountaintop Removal coal mining.

I have enclosed a poem that I composed concerning the early figures who formed Rowland Land Company and their roles in acquiring this land at Edwight and Hazy. I wanted to write my testimony to the Surface Mine Board, which would not, during our appeal of the Edwight permit, #S-3012-99, on March 9, 2004.

In March of 1875, William Mongold sold 222 1/2 acres "on the waters of Hazy Creek on the mountain between Shumates Branch and said creek" to his son-in-law and stepdaughter, Elijah and Marinda Brdley.

After living there on Bradley Mountain for 42 years, they sold this same land conveyed by William Mongold by deed March

30, 1875 to C. H. Mead, a coal operator. Now this tract of land was given as 127 acres. What happened to the other acres? That is what we wanted to know.

On March 20, 1923, Mead sold this same tract of land to the Rowland Land Company, and now the tract contained only 119.913 acres.

We wanted the Mine Board and DEP to understand that we wanted to know what happened to the missing 102 acres and was that acreage part of the permit #S-3012-99.

We, the citizens were rudely denied an answer because the DEP lawyer strenuously objected and the testimony was not allowed.

Richard Bradford
Naoma, Raleigh County, West Virginia

The Agent

In 1903 and a few years before
Came a man through the land
Old Dameron in lore.
To get the land in fee
fee simple absolute was the very best
That was the plan to be put to the test.

With a calf under one arm
and a pig under the other
and a sack of gold behind;
he bragged on the ladies
and placed his goodies
and got the men to sell the land.

"Madam, these are find biscuits."
"Sir, that is the best tobacco I ever smoked."
the silver-tongued devil said.
"Now if you'll just sign here
You'll ever be free of want."

Curst was the day he ever did say,
"Now that you've signed, everything will be fine;
Everything will be OK."
(Plenty of pigs, plenty of cows, plenty of taxes to pay.)
But plenty of misery—
misery and grief—
has followed the thief
from then to this very day.

And still the tales are alive
Among those that survive
of the past deals of yore.
He was a legend in town
for transferring the ground
but now he is no more.

Absalom up there in Heaven,
Damer down in Hell,
Those that he worked for as well.
"Colcord."

Here.

"Rowland."

Here.

"Way."

Here.

Down to the smallest man.
A roll call in Hell
held so devilish well,
The names from the Devil's tongue ran.

"Fee or fee simple" yelled Damer from the spit
(Old habits being hard to quit.)

"You mistreated a man
in applying your plan;
Now you must pay for your crime."
So Damer and the others
joined their brothers
in a corner of Hell's darkest clime.

Now remember to play fair and not represent,
Remember Old Damer and where he was sent,
Remember the time when it was all for a dime,
money for the company to spend.
Now heed the stories
for there are no glories
when the agent for you they send.

