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“Healthy Forests”: Not

CONGRESS SEEKS TO EXCLUDE CITIZENS FROM NATIONAL FOREST DECISION MAKING

By Daave Saville

The so-called “Healthy Forests Initiative” is another Bush scheme that threatens forests, citizen rights

West Virginia forest advocates work hard to be certain that the voices of the citizens are heard by the Forest Service when it is making important management decisions. Federal laws mandate public involvement in such decisions and thus we are actively engaged in the planning and management process of our National Forests. By working cooperatively with the Forest Service in these activities, we balance the forces of extractive industries that would like to exploit and often despoil our public forests for their own gain. But President Bush’s so-called “Healthy Forests Initiative” threatens to impact your and my ability to have a say in the management of the public lands that we all own. And its emphasis on unregulated commercial logging of our national forests is the wrong direction for West Virginia.

Let’s consider the land here in West Virginia that will fall under this policy. The Monongahela National Forest consists of over 909,000 acres in 10 counties making it the fourth largest National Forest in 20 northeastern states. It is within one day’s drive of one-third of the population of the United States, and its rugged ridgetops and wild rivers are a strong backbone of a *Wild, Wonderful West Virginia* natural resource based tourism economy. The Forest provides habitat for 9 federally listed endangered or threatened species. Fifty other species of rare and sensitive plants and animals occur in the forest. The Monongahela has 129 miles of warm



water fishing and 576 miles of trout streams; 90% of the trout waters of West Virginia are within the National Forest. The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources manages the wildlife on this, nearly 1 million acres, which hunters enjoy for a wide variety of game. West Virginians and visitors alike are fortunate to receive the many benefits of one of the jewels of this national system of public lands.

But these benefits that we all enjoy risk being compromised by policies promoted by timber industry officials in the Bush Administration through the insidiously named, “Healthy Forests Initiative.” The fear factor of large forest fires in the West has been used as an opportunity by the Bush Administration to deliver on campaign promises of delivering more of the public’s trees to the timber industry. They say we must cut down the forest to save it and to slow wildfires. However, this grossly misleadingly named policy does little to protect communities and quite a bit to reduce the role of science in national forest management, undermine citizen rights to participate in public forest management, and further subsidize the timber industry. In West Virginia’s moist forests, wildfire does not pose the same degree of danger that it might in the drier west, yet we will suffer relaxed logging rules and citizen participation restrictions on our National Forests too.

In June the United States House of Representatives passed HR 1904, the “Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003,” and the bill is

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From the Western Slope of the Mountains
by Frank Young

More People = More Pressure

Every year there are more issues and more activities within issues that threaten the ecological, geological, hydrological and scenic integrity of the highlands of West Virginia.

There are more demands for coal to generate electricity; more demands for more uses of streams for dilution of pollution and consumption of water; recently more and more demands for mountaintops with swift winds to power gigantic wind machines to produce electricity; more quarter-mile wide corridors for superhighways; more smoky haze that obscures precious vistas; more demands for timber that is shipped half way around the world, and even more "wear and tear" on special places set aside for human and wildlife refuge- more of nearly everything we broadly call "environmental degradation".

What creates the drive for the tangible consumer items behind the mad rush to disturb more of the natural world? What's behind the ever increasing recreational weekend and seasonal "rush to the mountains" that threatens the special qualities we so cherish here?

Well, in a word (two words, actually), the answer is *more people*.

More people mean more demands for energy, more demands for raw and manufactured products and more demands for "natural" places in and on which to recreate.

Several years ago I attended a then new Kanawha Valley Chapter of Sierra Club meeting. One person there said that his only environmental agenda was "population control". He reasoned that conservation of environmental quality vis-à-vis exponential rates of growth of the human population were on a collision course. As I thought about that it became evident to me that I could not refute his rationale.

The east coast and now eastern West Virginia is steadily increasing in people population. The construction of highway Corridor H will both bring the Washington-Baltimore "sprawl" of humanity closer and faster, and will provide a conduit for funneling that mass of humanity into the West Virginia Highlands for recreational, commercial and industrial pursuits at ever increasing rates.

This commentary is not a call for single child families and child gender selection, as has come to some crowded areas of the world. But it is a reminder that the pressures for use and abuse of the highlands we've seen during the thirty six year history of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy will surely be multiplied several fold over the next thirty six years.

MARK YOUR CALENDER

The University of Charleston is using its new speakers series to help local residents get to the root of some of the most controversial issues of the day. One of the most controversial subjects being explored in the forum series will be mountaintop removal. That moderated discussion will feature Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship and one of the company's most outspoken critics, Cindy Rank of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. The forum is scheduled for October 28.

The October 28 discussion, sponsored by Walker Machinery, is expected to draw a considerable crowd.

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now moving its way towards a landmark vote in the United States Senate. Sponsors of the bill claim it is necessary to rewrite our environmental safeguards because they result in delays.

In truth, citizen appeals and litigation are not holding up legitimate and necessary hazardous fuels reduction projects. A General Accounting Office (GAO) report published a week before the House passed the "Healthy Forests" bill, derailed the myth that environmentalists' lawsuits are holding up the effort to prevent fires in order to protect communities. The GAO said some 95% of the fire-control plans proposed by the Forest Service and other agencies were approved within 90 days. This demonstrates two things on a national level. First, citizens and organized conservation groups do not delay legitimate fuels reduction projects and second, citizen watchdogs serve as a crucial checks and balance for our public forests.

It is particularly insulting that the President named this bill the "Healthy Forests Initiative," assuming that people would hear the name in the headlines and read no further. We in West Virginia are smarter than that, and we don't like to be duped. We think that science and a good process of broad public participation results in healthy forests.

Our national forests are a gift from generations before us and with this gift comes a responsibility to ensure their continued ability to provide benefits to future generations. We encourage everyone to get outdoors and enjoy your National Forests and remember to tread lightly. Please, call Senators Byrd and Rockefeller today through the Congressional switchboard at 202/224-3121, and ask them to stand by our land and oppose HR 1904, or any bill that advances the Administration's 'Healthy Forest Initiative.' Visit www.americanlands.org for more background information or contact me directly at the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy at dave@wvhighlands.org to get involved in celebrating and protecting the Monongahela National Forest.

PORTE CRAYON SKI RESORT PLANNED

West Virginia businessman/developer Bill Bright apparently hopes to begin developing "Almost Heaven" soon. It would be a new Snowshoe-scale ski resort and second home development in the Laneville-Dry Fork area of Randolph County. He's pursued the project for several years and has considered multiple sites in the northern Mon Forest area. The slopes below Mt. Porte Crayon, the highest point on the Roaring Plains, appear to be the most probable location.

Almost all the Roaring Plains, on top of the Allegheny Front between Dolly Sods and Haystack Knob, is national forest land. It is wild, exceedingly scenic, and unique. The slopes below northwest end of the Plains above Bonner Mountain Road are privately owned. Here, Bright has secured rights to at least three of five tracts on Big Run. One of the three includes a 0.2 mile-wide strip extending almost to the top of 4770-foot-high Mt. Porte Crayon. It's a 2500-foot

drop to Red Creek and would be the longest single drop for a ski area in the mid-Atlantic.

If the project succeeds, local residents will find employment and opportunities for ancillary businesses. Success, however, is by no means assured because demand for skiing in the entire region is not growing. Even with success, there could be losers. The nearby Timberline and Canaan Valley State Park ski facilities might be unable to withstand the new competition.

For skiing, general recreation and second-home development, this site would be spectacular. However, conservation activists fear many adverse impacts. A few include:

- Threats to Mt. Porte Crayon, a Forest Service Research Natural Area established to protect the habitat of the endangered Cheat Mountain Salamander and a mosaic of high altitude plant communities.

- Encroachment on Roaring Plains, leading to degradation of wonderful wilderness recreational opportunities
 - Threats to water quality on Big Creek and Red Creek.
 - Change in the character of the area--now beautiful and sparsely populated--to a place of excessive commercialism, attractive only to customers and residents of the development.
- Despite concerns that Bright may have wanted to use public land on the Roaring Plains for access, transmission lines or other development, it has been reported that he has given some indication that he would not be using public lands.

The Highlands Conservancy has formed a committee to respond to Mr. Bright's plans. The chairperson is Helen McGinnis, helenmcginnis@meer.net, 304-227-4166.

The "Healthy Forests Initiative" would:

Limit environmental analysis and limit public participation by (a) excluding environmental analysis for any site-specific project the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management claim will reduce hazardous fuels, including post-fire salvage projects; and by (b) limiting public participation by allowing "hazardous fuels reduction projects" to be categorically excluded and suspends citizen's rights to appeal projects.

Accelerate aggressive "thinning" across millions of acres of backcountry forests miles away from communities at risk to forest fires.

Use 'Goods for services' as the Funding Mechanism by (a) allowing the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to give away trees to logging companies as payment for any management activity, including logging on public lands; and (b) creating a powerful new incentive to log large fire-resistant trees, old growth, and other commercially valuable forests.

This summary was provided by The Sierra Club. For more information, visit its web site at http://www.sierraclub.org/forests/fires/healthyforests_initiative.asp or the sources cited in the

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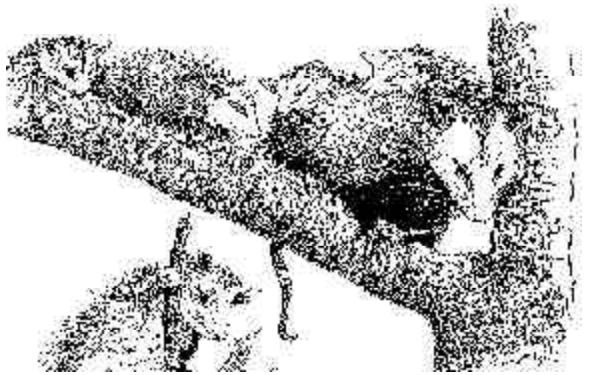
The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a non-profit corporation which has been recognized as a tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Its bylaws describe its purpose:

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

FOURTH CIRCUIT RULES FOR WEST VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has ruled that the federal Office of Surface Mining has to pay the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's attorney fees resulting from a citizen complaint.

The complaint alleged that Valley Camp Coal Co. owned or controlled Bufflick, Inc., a company holding the permit for a mine in Kanawha County, West Virginia, that was in violation of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act's (SMCRA) reclamation requirements. When a mine is in violation of SMCRA, any entity that owns or controls the mine or that owns or controls the permit holder for the mine must be blocked from receiving new mining permits, and its current permits must be rescinded. The



complaint sought to have Valley Camp's permits rescinded because of the violations at Bufflick's mine. The complaint also alleged that Valley Camp violated SMCRA by failing to disclose its ownership or control of Bufflick in its own permit applications.

Upon receiving WVHC's complaint, the Office of Surface

Mining's Charleston Field Office issued a ten-day notice to the state (the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection). The West Virginia DEP did a cursory investigation which the Office of Surface Mining found acceptable.

The WVHC appealed this decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals. At that point, the Office of Surface Mining essentially admitted that its investigation had been cursory and asked that the case be remanded so it could try again.

While this was going on, Valley Camp went out of business. As a result, there never was a final determination on the question of whether it owned or controlled Bufflick, Inc.

WVHC then requested attorney fees for its work in filing the original appeal. The Office of Surface Mining opposed the request, arguing that the WVHC had not prevailed in the case. The SMCRA only allows an award of attorney fees to plaintiffs who prevail. The Office of Surface Mining maintained that, in order to qualify, a plaintiff must (in lay terms) beat the other side senseless. The Conservancy, on the other hand, maintained that it was only necessary that the plaintiff advance the purposes of the Act.

The Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit agreed with the Conservancy's position. It held that if the Conservancy had advanced the purposes of the Surface Mining Reclamation and Control Act then it was entitled to attorney fees.

The Conservancy was represented by Walt Morris. "This case is significant because it means that if environmental plaintiffs advance the purposes of an environmental statute at all then they are entitled to fees," Morris said.

Although the amount of attorney fees is modest, the case is significant because such cases enable attorneys who represent plaintiffs in environmental cases to continue in that work. If, as the Office of Surface Mining maintained, an environmental plaintiff must beat the other side senseless to be awarded fees, such fees will seldom be awarded. This would drive attorneys from this field, leaving many citizens and environmental groups without representation.

RICH MOUNTAIN WINDFARM FULL SPEED AHEAD

By Peter Shoenfeld

In January, the Highlands Conservancy Board voted to publicly oppose the development of a major wind energy facility by the Guascor Group, to be located on Rich Mountain, on private land near the heart of the Monongahela National Forest.

Guascor now acknowledges that they are moving aggressively forward with this project. Siting details have not been revealed and may not yet be determined, but we originally heard that they planned to install 65 or more turbines on Rich Mountain—about 40 south of US 33 and 20-25 north. Turbines so located would be clearly visible from many points on Spruce Mountain, including the observation platform at Spruce Knob. They would also be clearly visible from Mt. Porte Crayon, Haystack Knob, Shaver's Mountain, Middle Mountain and Roaring Plains, as well as the Gandy Creek, Dry Fork and Laurel Fork Valleys.

The view toward the northwest from Spruce Knob looks down on the entire length of Rich Mountain. It is the largest single geographic feature in that vista. The turbines would all be visible at distances from roughly six to fourteen miles. The view from Spruce

is presently pristine and perhaps the best in the state. Spruce Knob is West Virginia's highest mountain, and the centerpiece of the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation area.

Guascor is an international corporation with a US office in Miami. The US web site is at <http://www.awea.org/directory/guascor.html>. Their address is 7220 NW 36th St., Suite 310, Miami, FL 33166.

DEVELOPMENT

This country has been swinging the hammer of development so long and so hard that it has forgotten the anvil of wilderness which gave value and significance to its labors. The momentum of our blows is so unprecedented that the remaining remnant of wilderness will be pounded into road-dust long before we find out its values.

Aldo Leopold 1935

PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

By Jonathan Jessup

A recently formed committee within the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has set its goal towards advocating, developing and the supporting of conserving privately owned lands in West Virginia through cooperative activities with the owners. Land owners and conservation advocates can both benefit in developing relationships that focus on concern for conservation and restoration. The committee is called the "Private Lands Conservation Committee (PLCC)." The PLCC is not an attempt to turn the Highlands Conservancy into a land trust but rather to focus on those issues in an advocacy manner similar to how the Public Lands Management Committee focuses on public lands issues. We need to give great consideration to working with land owners and communities because the more people we have working towards conserving our lands, the more successful the Highlands Conservancy's mission will be.

I have discussed the creation and mission of the PLCC with several board members of the WVHC over the past six months and have received much input and feedback. I've also spoken at length with Beth Wheatley of the WV Land Trust and Rodney Bartgis of The Nature Conservancy.

In all my discussions about a PLCC within the Highlands Conservancy, I've heard one recurring topic which needs mention. I'll quote Rodney Bartgis, state director of the WV chapter of The Nature Conservancy:

"A significant challenge in promoting private lands conservation by the Highlands Conservancy will be that it is perceived as being adversarial and not caring about the needs of private property owners. Most land owners view certain regulations the Highlands Conservancy has advocated in a negative light. If you are in the business of truly working with communities to protect private lands then you must honestly and sincerely believe in private property rights, and not just say that when it's seen as being expedient. We may not always agree with what a landowner wants to do, but we need to truly respect their rights. It has to be a core value. I think that will be a serious issue the Highlands Conservancy

will need to confront within itself."

Many land owners are sympathetic to our cause to keep West Virginia Wild & Wonderful. We need to act now in cooperation in volunteering more in and advocating of land conservation activities. Lands conservation needs to be community focused activity.

Conserving private lands without

Trusts,' etc) until after development has already started. One significant problem with that model is that land values have already risen at that point. This year a conservation easement of 460 acres is being acquired on Ruleman Mountain near Panther Knob for just \$20,000. Most of the value of the easement is to be donated by the owner!

The Ruleman Mtn preserve will protect a rare mountaintop paper birch forest that is also home to a dense concentration of rattlesnakes. The preserve extends the Panther Knob Preserve, which is a unique pine barren forest on the southern end of North Fork Mountain. These two preserves will have been created with little or no governmental involvement but rather through cooperation with private land owners and The Nature Conservancy.

The Highlands Conservancy needs your help. The state is too large and the projects too numerous for a handful of people to be as effective as we would like. We need several volunteers to keep their ears to the ground about development threats as well as conservation possibilities. We need volunteers to help with projects by identifying land owners at county tax assessor's offices, volunteer labor time and other passive, non-intrusive methods to stay informed. Please contact me via e-mail or phone at jonathanjessup@yahoo.com or 703-204-1372.

To learn more about conservation easements, one of the tools in conservation of private lands, type 'conservation easements' into google.com. The first result should be titled "Conservation Easements, CDFS-1261-98" at <http://ohioline.osu.edu/cd-fact/1261.html>. The fifth result from Google should be "Conservation Easements" at <http://www.landtrust.org/ProtectingLand/EasementInfo.htm> (case sensitive url).



Rocks shaped by nature Photo © by Jonathan Jessup

governmental acquisition or regulation is an activity the Highlands Conservancy has been involved with in the past and will continue to be, out of necessity. Recent balsam fir conservation and restoration projects on private lands are examples. Other organizations such as The Mountain Institute, The Nature Conservancy and West Virginia Land Trust have engaged in more cooperative conservation activities with private land owners

The vast majority of lands in West Virginia are privately owned. The total acreage of West Virginia is 15,410,560. Roughly seven percent is owned by the federal government (mostly USFS) and only just over two hundred and six thousand acres are in the state park system. It's not practical to expect government to acquire and adequately preserve all the West Virginian Highlands.

The time for us to act is now. Land values are still relatively low and that makes conservation more feasible. Often what happens is communities don't engage in privately based conservation activities ('Land



CHANCE TO KICK IN ON BUMPER STICKERS

By Julian Martin, Outreach Chair

Over one year ago I made an appeal for donations to finance the cost of printing the popular "I (red heart) Mountains" bumper stickers. These bumper stickers were meant originally to counter the bumper sticker put out by the coal industry which claims to love coal.

The response was very generous. Thank you very much!! Contributions ranged from \$5 to \$700 and made it possible to print two batches of 5000 stickers each. We even have about \$300 left over for this next printing.

We can get one thousand with a little more than what we have which makes a cost of about \$.35 per sticker. But we can get 5,000 at about \$.15 per sticker with just \$400 more. So if you feel so inclined please help us pay for the 5000. Please send your tax deductible donations made out to WVHC with bumper sticker in the memo to:

Julian Martin
WVHC
PO BOX 306, Charleston, WV, 25321

Please indicate how many of the bumper stickers you would like sent to you and/or a business or organization that will distribute them.

If only 80 of you send \$5 we will have enough! If 20 send \$20.....

I will keep donors informed by email of the amount received.

CONSERVANCY HAS PUBLIC INTEREST ADVOCATE FOR THE SUMMER

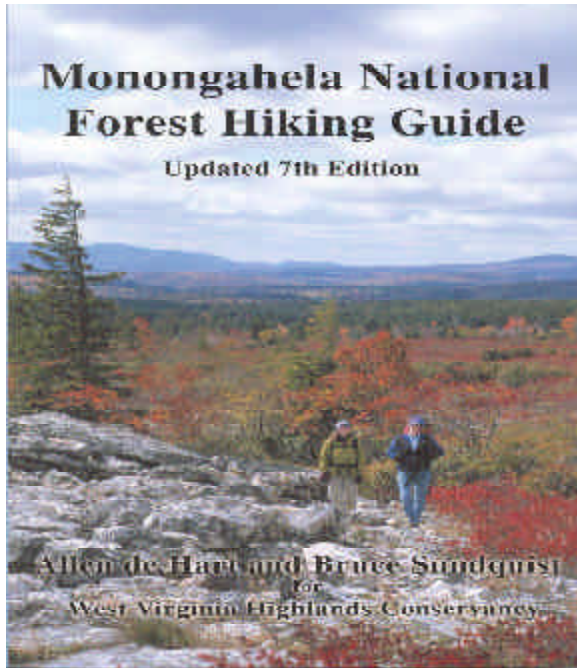
By Nathan Fetty

This past summer, I had the great fortune to receive the annual West Virginia Highlands Conservancy fellowship to do public interest environmental work as a law student. This fellowship is one of several public interest positions offered each summer through Public Interest Advocates at the West Virginia University College of Law.

Having just completed my first year of law school, I was eager do meaningful, progressive legal work on the right side of environmental issues. The Highlands Conservancy fellowship proved to be the perfect avenue. The fellowship placement was with the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment in Lewisburg. Working under the Center's director, Joe Lovett, I got to use my developing skills in a number of key environmental struggles with which the Highlands Conservancy's members are very familiar.

From challenging to permits for mountaintop removal mines, to investigating plans for coal-fired power plants, to contesting government's capitulation to polluters, to helping powerless people stand up to extractive industries, my summer was an exercise in what the law should be about – namely, giving a voice to those people and places otherwise shut out by the powers-that-be.

I'm very appreciative that the Highlands Conservancy continues to offer this opportunity to law students. For me, a main reason for going to law school is to work for meaningful and progressive change, especially for environmental protection. The Highlands Conservancy fellowship fits the bill perfectly. Many thanks to the organization for affording me an outstanding summer!



Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

by Allen deHart & Bruce Sundquist

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

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.

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
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Box 306
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

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

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

October 4th, Sat. - Roaring Plains - Canyons Rim Trail Day Hike. Explore and witness spectacular, remote, rocky and rarely visited high elevation country. Many excellent views. Be prepared for cool temps and weather extremes. Only one 400ft climb. ~5 miles See photos at <http://www.jonathanjessup.com/rp-set1.html> Hosted by Jonathan Jessup. (703)204-1372 jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

October 11-13, Sat-Mon. Fall foliage on North Fork Mountain. Exceptional overlooks for a 26 mile backpack. Reservations required. Bad weather dates are October 17-19. Please email Alan M. Aliskovitz at amxa@hotmail.com or call him @724-283-5436

October 23-30, Thurs.-Thurs. Fall Review at Cheat Mountain Club. There will be a full week long slate of outings, workshops, music and fun. Contact Dave Saville (304) 284-9548, dave@wvhighlands.org

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.

The Outings Committee Needs You

ADVENTURERS NEEDED FOR WINTER OUTINGS

By Jonathan Jessup

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy needs outings scheduled for this winter. If you would like to lead or participate in an outing this winter we would love to meet you and share our enjoyment of the great outdoors!

January and February are great times to host and participate in a cross country skiing outing. In January of 2003 we cross country skied in Canaan Valley State Park, Whitegrass and Blackwater Falls State Park all in one weekend and rented a house in Timberline where we enjoyed a hot tub and drinks. We skied over two feet of snow and had quick and easier access to areas that in summer time would have been very difficult to get to.

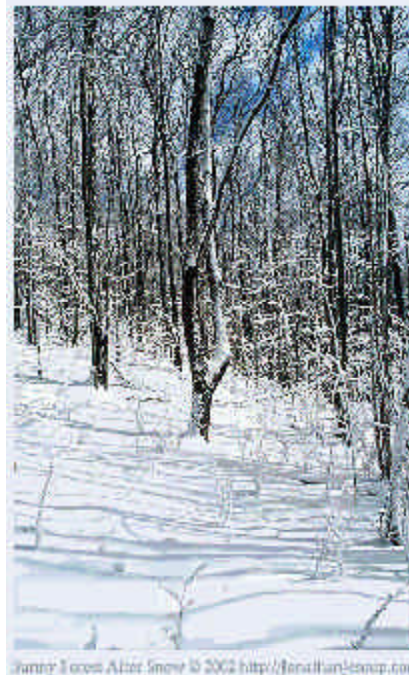
Another option is to day hike in the Mon Forest. With six inches of snow or less one can have a nice hike in the colder months. Movement keeps you surprisingly warm.

If you would like to participate in the Outings program please contact Jonathan Jessup at 703-204-1372 or at jonathanjessup@yahoo.com

Thank you very much! See you on the trails!

Sunny forest after the snow.

Photo © Jonathan Jessup

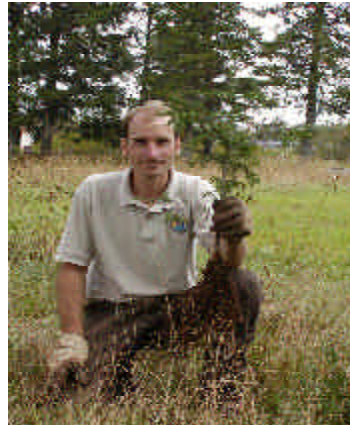


January 3 Green After snow © 2002 <http://jonathanjessup.com>

All we are saying, is give trees a chance

PLANTING TREES IN THE DEER EXCLOSURE

Volunteers get ready to plant balsam fir trees in a deer enclosure on the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Our balsam fir conservation/restoration volunteer outings have been very popular Mountain Odyssey events.



US Fish & Wildlife Service Wildlife Biologist Ken Sturm plants one of 200 balsam fir trees on the Canaan Refuge.

WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN KEEPS ON TRUCKIN'

By Matt Keller

September has been a month for organizing wilderness advocates across the state. We have been working hard to build our grassroots support as we head into fall. Coalition members have been busy soliciting letters from individuals and endorsements from businesses and organizations. So far, we have received endorsements from the following businesses: **The Current Bed & Breakfast** in Hillsboro, WV (www.currentbnb.com), **Elk River Touring Center**, Slatyfork, WV (www.ertc.com), **White Grass Touring Center**, Davis, WV (www.whitegrass.com), **Adventure's Edge**, Morgantown, WV (www.adventuresedge.org), **Amanda's Cottage**, Hillsboro, WV (www.amandascottage.com), **Eight Rivers Web Design**, Hillsboro, WV (www.eightrivers.com), **Plants Etc.**, Lewisburg, WV (102 S. Jefferson St.) and **Dave's Garage**, Dunmore, WV (on Rt. 1). The following organizations have endorsed our campaign: **West Virginia Rivers Coalition, West Virginia Citizen Action Group, Shavers Fork Coalition, Heartwood, American Whitewater, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Greenbrier River Watershed Association, Greenbrier River Trail Association, Greenbrier Land Conservation Trust, Student Sierra Coalition of WVU.** If you own or know of a business or are involved with an organization that supports additional wilderness designations, please contact me (mattk@tws.org or 304-864-5530) for more information or to formally endorse our efforts.



It is of the utmost importance that we show the WV congressional delegation that we have widespread support throughout the Mountain State.

This month, I have given a few more presentations to

various groups and had displays at events to further our outreach efforts. We are engaged in a process of addressing concerns held by the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources regarding management of wild places on the forest.

We recently had a very positive and productive meeting with Director Hamrick members of his staff. We have also begun a dialog with Trout Unlimited to address their concerns regarding streams in areas with wilderness potential. The Coalition recently met in Hillsboro to review and evaluate field data collected by volunteers this summer on potential wilderness areas on the Mon. The initial results are great: things are largely as we expected them to be for most areas, wild!

We are currently redoubling our efforts to get wilderness advocates that are near our areas (in Randolph, Webster, Greenbrier, Pocahontas, Pendleton and Tucker counties) to write their Representative and Senators in Washington D.C. and tell them that they support additional wilderness designations on the Mon. If you live in one of these counties and are willing to write a letter in support of more wilderness, please contact me (mattk@tws.org or 304-864-5530). as soon as possible. Overall, the campaign is progressing nicely with much progress in all relevant areas that we have been focusing on.

The upcoming Fall Review will have a terrific wilderness component for those wanting to learn more and get involved. We are planning a variety of workshops, outings and will have some exception speakers. Look for more info in this edition of the Voice! Also check out our website for more info on wilderness and our campaign: <http://www.wvwild.org>

HIKING ON TEA CREEK

By Mike Juskelis

J Don't know why. Maybe it was the distance. Maybe it was the word "primitive" in the description of the outing. Maybe it was a misconception of the definition of "car camping." For whatever the reason, I only had a few inquiries about this outing and no real "takers". If driving distance is an issue, I can understand but I believe that if you want to see new and beautiful things you haven't seen before... if you want to hike a trail without encountering other groups... if you want greater solitude... then you have to travel greater distances and endure a little more discomfort to achieve your goals. If you're afraid of "primitive" don't be. By primitive I mean there usually are no showers, electricity or running water. All primitive campgrounds I visit have nice toilet facilities whether they are flushers or of the pit variety. They all have potable water sources. The campsites are private and well maintained. AND they are all in the most pristine of settings. I'd also like my fellow outdoor enthusiast to understand that by car camping I mean tent camping. I often wonder if our readers conger up visions of pop-ups and RVs crowded together in open fields when the term car camping is mentioned. That's not at all the case. Many of the folks that camp with us are dyed-in-the-wool backpackers. They bring their usual gear, maybe a cooler with a wider selection of food and beverage, a few more changes of clothes - and - oh yeah - their car. Some of us have - um - let's see - expanded our equipment. I mean HEY, if you got a pick-up truck you may as well use it. Besides bringing more gear than most I also take responsibility for setting up a canopy and a tarp to keep my fellow campers dry during periods of inclement weather. Most hikes either start at or end at camp - or both - or are less than an hour drive from camp.

Anyway, now that I've let you know my definition of car camping, I'll get on with the trip report. Since we had no takers, Janet and I decided to load the dogs into the truck and take them along. They hadn't been out with us since Memorial Day and they love camping as much as we do. We arrived at a nearly empty Tea Creek Campground and found a beautiful spot right on the creek. The site was large enough to hold several tents and it was just us! There were Rhododendron thickets on either side of us concealing us from our neighbors. We set up camp and took a walk along what can only be considered an old beginning to Tea Creek trail. We followed it until we ran into a very severe blowout of the bank and an abrupt end to the trail. We returned to camp and I pulled out my trusty MNF trail guide. Since I no longer had to lead a hike I was free to explore the entire Tea Creek Water Shed.

On two previous trips I was able to hike about a half of the Tea Creek Trail and the entirety of the Right Fork, Tea Creek Mountain and North Face Trails. That left me with about 25 miles of untraveled trails to cover. I studied the MNF bible and laid out two shuttle hikes to be done on consecutive days, both starting at the terminus of the Gauley Mountain Trail on Scenic Highway 150 and both ending at the campground. By the time we packed up the tent I would have hiked all but 1.5 miles of trails that make up the Tea Creek Trail Network.

Hike 1: Gauley Mountain trail at the Scenic Highway to the Tea Creek Connector Trail, Tea Creek Connector to Tea Creek Trail, down Tea Creek Trail to the Boundary Trail, the Boundary Trail to Turkey Point Trail, Turkey Point Trail to Bannock Shoals Trail, Bannock Shoals back to camp. Total distance about 11 miles. Janet dropped Joey and me off at about 8:45 and returned to camp to work on a school assignment. The weather was cool and the sky sunny - a great day for a walk in the woods with man's best friend. Starting at this point made most of the hike flat or downhill with only one significant but short climb up the Boundary Trail and a few rolling hills. The Tea Creek Trail network is one of the best in the Southern Mon. It doesn't quite stack up to Dolly Sods, Otter Creek and other areas in the Northern section but it is not that far behind. You have your choice of trails from two different origins. The trails along Turkey and Gauley mountains are old logging roads, pretty wide and smooth with frequent wet

spots. The trails following the main creeks through the heart of the basin and connector trails are mostly old railroad grades complete with old rock ballast and rotting RR ties - and oh yeah - frequent wet spots. At first I found the Gauley mountain trail a bit boring but then I noticed how the forest composition changed as the trail turned left and right and up and down. At one moment you might be walking through a predominantly deciduous forest and the next be surrounded by thickets of Red Spruce, young and old. In between the woods was in a state of flux, both vegetative types struggling to achieve the advantage. From my experience hiking in other reforested areas of the Mon I have to give the Red Spruce the edge in this constant battle.

Joey and I hit the junction of Tea Creek Connector trail in no time and started a rapid descent to the valley floor. We turned left onto the Tea Creek, which is more of a foot path at this point, and came across a freshly steaming specimen of scat. Now, I am not a scatologist by any stretch of the imagination but when you are in bear country and you see something that is that fresh and that -... BIG -. You take notice. I've seen bear scat before. It's usually a round black pool of fecal matter filled with berry seeds. Right? This was pumpkin or squash



Joey the wonder dog looking at the Right Fork of Tea Creek from a vista on Turkey Mountain

colored with berry seeds and bits of something else - acorns - or nuts - but it's too early for acorns? I shrugged my shoulders, Joey seemed to care less, and we both headed down the trail with renewed zest. (More on this later.) We passed by an old but well maintained beaver pond that literally had its dam at trail's edge. It was so packed with mud you could only see the sticks on the outer surface. We hopped over an eroded area and soon found ourselves at the junction of the Boundary Trail. Even though neither of us were tired we took 10 as I pondered how shallow the creek crossing was at this intersection and if the seven stream crossings I had to do the next day would be as effortless.

After our break we did our quick ascent to the ridge and walked the old logging road known as the Boundary trail, enjoying partially obstructed views of the valley below and Gauley Mountain across the valley. We came upon a break in the tree line which offered a photo op of the upper Tea Creek valley. I took a few shots and then stepped back, realizing what had created that sudden opening. I was shooting through a hole where a beech tree once stood. It laid there before me, leaves still fresh. Its trunk had been broken 3 or 4 feet above its base - snapped like a tooth pick. To show you how much of a novice I am, I never even knew Beech trees had nuts. I mean, I always thought the word Beechnut referred to chewing gum made in years long past. So anyway, we had a snapped Beech tree and Beech nuts by the buckets, all nearly cracked open, exposing the ripe flesh inside. I picked

(Continued on p. 11)

More about Tea Creek (Continued from p. 10)

one and scrapped out the meat. I chewed it a bit and looked at the residue in my hand. (May I refer the reader to the previous paragraph?) Once again, Joey and I and this zest fellow headed up the trail.

There comes a point where the forest road continues between two very large cairns. I'm not sure but I believe this goes out to a forest road or the upper reaches of the Bannock Shoals Trail. At this point, the hiker abandons the road, making a left hand turn up a short embankment and into a chapel of Hemlocks. The Boundary Trail is mostly a foot path for the rest of its length. Both this trail and the Turkey Point trail cross over several knobs. They are easily seen on a topo map of the area. Mark them and try to visit them all because each one is topped by a majestic stand of Red Spruce sheltering a forest floor of soft needles, moss covered rocks and logs and the occasional bouquet of ferns.



Scene at the new wildlife viewing area off of the Right Fork Connector

There are actually two intersections with Turkey Point trail. The first one takes you behind Turkey Point (the continuation of Boundary Trail). We stayed to the left walking along Turkey Point trail to the second intersection. At this point there is a great view of Tea Creek and Gauley Mountains just to the left of the trail. We stopped there briefly and then commenced a rapid descent to Bannock Shoals Trail and the campground. The descent was made even quicker by holding on to the working end of a Brittainy which had just gotten a scent of the campground. Funny how dogs do that!

Hike 2: Today's hike followed this route: Gauley Mountain Trail and the Scenic Highway to the Right Fork Connector Trail, Right Fork Connector to Right Fork Trail, Right Fork Trail to Red Run Trail back to Gauley Mountain Trail, Gauley Mountain Trail to the Bear Pen Ridge Trail, Bear Pen Ridge Trail to Tea Creek Trail and Tea Creek Trail back to camp. Distance about 12 miles.

The weather changed. Rain was in the air and the humidity was high. Janet dropped us off at the same spot and Joey and I quickly plunged into the woods. At 0.3 miles we made a left turn down the Right Fork Connector Trail. At its halfway point we came upon a gravel road. To the right was a brand new boardwalk that led into a boggy area containing a beaver pond (with hut), fields of Goldenrod and a back drop, first of a Spruce forest and then, finally, Gauley Mountain. We lingered at the two wildlife viewing blinds before proceeding on our way. We explored the gravel road to confirm what I already knew. It runs out to the trailheads for the Right Fork Trail and Tea Creek Mountain Trail. Oddly, there is no signage telling the traveler of what awaits at the end of this path.

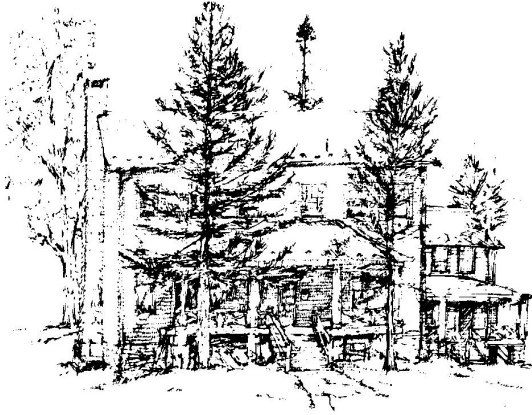
The rain was starting to move in, first as a drizzle and then a pretty constant storm. I looked at my watch and all of the "lingering" had cost us an hour and the weather was not getting better. I was

already soaked from sweating and brushing against the dense vegetation so there was no need to "suit up". We proceeded down the Right Fork Trail, crossed the fork itself and quickly ascended Red Run Trail. Red Run Trail is just another of your everyday woody trails until it starts to flatten out at the crown of the hill. Then it becomes yet another cathedral of Red Spruce rich with an understory of mossy rocks and ferns intersected by streams of crystal clear red (from the tannin of the evergreen trees) water. I hate to keep using the word "cathedral" to describe these knobs but if you've experienced these sights you also know the choice of words to describe it is limited to a very few and cathedral is at the top of that list. We reached Gauley Mountain Trail soon enough and made a left, retracing some of yesterday's steps, until we reached the Bear Pen Ridge Trail. We turned left and proceeded up through a series of false summits, stopped briefly at an Adirondack shelter which appeared in good condition, and proceeded to the crest of the ridge. Dehart and Sundquist weren't kidding when they described this trail as being different from the rest of the trails in the Tea Creek Drainage. The east side is mostly a logging road, very sandy in spots, rollercoasting upward to the top with the above mentioned battle of deciduous vs coniferous vegetation occurring all around you. Once at the very top you sense that you are standing on a very small portion of the Roaring plains - wind beaten rocks - stunted Pitch Pine and Spruce - Service Berry bushes ripe with fruit - open to the skies. And that quickly you descend down an eroded clay trail to a smoother, wider, more gentle RR grade which then takes you down to the Creek.

Once at Tea Creek the fun really began. The rain had stopped but the valley floor was steamy. Furthermore, all of the stream crossings were over the ankles. The Rocks were too slippery for rock hopping, especially with an eager pooch dragging you along. Yes - he once again got the scent of the camp I guess! I decided that since this was the case, and the crossings were numerous and close together AND the trail in between was very rocky, the situation was not conducive to frequent footwear changing. So in I went. After all, it was only water and I had all week to dry my boots out before I did it again. From the junction with the Bear Pen Ridge Trail and the confluence of Tea Creek with the right fork there are 7 crossings. I prefer to hike streams and creeks uphill gaining maximum advantage of views as the water tumbles through rapids and falls. This day found me going down hill. All I can say is I did a lot of turning around in the last 3.6 miles of the trip. This is solitude at its best.

We crossed the right Fork and I was shocked back to reality. Those who are familiar with the area know that there is another shelter right at this juncture. It's the closest one to civilization and thus the one that gets the most abuse. The place was littered with beverage bottles and cans of all types, eight propane bottles, (some not empty) and assorted other human trash. I truly felt like that Native American in the old TV commercials. I pulled myself away before the tear thing kicked in and found myself looking at the biggest, deepest swimming hole in the entire basin. I estimate it to be 30 feet long by 15 feet wide and is probably over 6 feet deep at its deepest end. I can understand why this area is such a magnet to many but I would think that such beauty would create more respect for it, not a total disregard. I'll report it to the rangers but I don't know if that will help any. It surely won't help people like that change the way they treat our environment.

Anyway, shortly after that I purposely by-passed the re-route of the trail that takes you up and over a hill to the Williams River trail and followed the old trail until I found a familiar landmark. There is a concrete RR trestle in the middle of the creek just at the end of the campground. Since my feet were already wet and Joey was a mess I decided we'd do one more creek crossing before calling it a day. I wish I could show you all of the pictures I took on the trip but "The Voice" has its limits. I hope you enjoy this report and the few photos shown here. Maybe you'll join us next year.



The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
presents it'

38th annual Fall Review

at

Cheat Mountain Club

October 23-30, 2003

For over 100 years known as a great place for hunting, fishing and wilderness adventure, the Cheat Mountain Club is a special retreat from the outside world - a gracious, quiet, comfortable lodge that fosters contemplation, good talk, and recreational enjoyment in a place of spectacular natural beauty.

This year, as part of the important work we are doing to protect the Monongahela National Forest, we have decided to dedicate an entire week to our 38th annual Fall Review. In the heart of it all, on Cheat Mountain, on the shores of the Shavers Fork of the Cheat River, we'll have workshops, art, lectures, outings, service projects, dignitaries, music, and a whole lot of fun.

Featuring

Thursday - Saturday Wilderness workshops, outings, meetings and special guest speakers. Learn about our current efforts to have more areas given official Wilderness designation on the Monongahela National Forest. Meet Wilderness activists from all over West Virginia, and long-time activists from all over the nation. Special guests include Doug Scott, Ed Zahniser, Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson, Wilderness Society Vice President Jerry Greenberg. Music by Jim Truman, Joan & Keith Pitzer and others.

Sunday - Tuesday Monongahela National Forest Planning workshops, meetings and outings. The Management Plan for the Monongahela National Forest is being revised. This is the first time since 1985 that we will be able to change the direction of the management of the Forest. Come and learn how the process works and how you can become involved and make a difference.

Saturday & Sunday, Spotlight on Roaring Plains, Meet at the Plains on Saturday Morning for an all day outing, then come on down to the Cheat Mountain Club to join in the festivities Saturday Evening. Sunday evening will feature a Roaring Plains slide show by Jonathan Jessup. Bring your pictures, slides and stories about your adventures at Roaring Plains and share your knowledge of its history. We will also be discussing the ski resort and developments being planned for Mt. Porte Crayon.

Sunday Highlands Conservancy membership meeting beginning at 9am. This is when members get to elect the Board of Directors. The Board meeting begins immediately following the membership meeting. A variety of outings in the Cheat Mountain area will take place on Sunday also.

Lodging

The Cheat Mountain Club sleeps 23 people. There are several guest rooms and a bunk room on the third floor. Cost is \$40/person/night or \$250 for the whole week. Camping is available on location at \$5/person/night.

Hermitage Motel in Bartow (10 miles) has nice rooms for around \$50

Meals

The Cheat Mountain Club is famous for its hearty meals. We'll be serving 3 meals /day. Dinners, \$15, Lunches and Breakfasts, \$8 each. Meals must be reserved in advance.

Contact Dave Saville for more information and reservations. Highlands Conservancy members will be mailed a brochure with complete details and registration form in September. dave@wvhighlands.org or 304-284-9548

Fall Review 2003 Registration Form

Please send us your registration no later than October 18, thanks

	<u>Cost/person</u>		<u>#people</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Total</u>
Registration Fee	\$10.00	X	_____	_____	\$ _____
Breakfasts	\$8.00	X	_____	_____	\$ _____
Lunches	\$8.00	X	_____	_____	\$ _____
Dinners	\$15.00	X	_____	_____	\$ _____
Bed at CMC	\$40/night	X	_____	_____	\$ _____
Total Enclosed					\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Field Trips & Workshops

- Friday
 # _____ Gaudineer Knob
 # _____ Cheat Summit Fort
- Saturday
 # _____ Gaudineer Knob
 # _____ Canoeing Shavers Fork River
 # _____ Roaring Plains Hike
- Sunday
 # _____ Gaudineer Knob
 # _____ Canoeing Shavers Fork River
 # _____ Hiking Cheat Mountain Backcountry

Additional outings to be announced

In addition, the Cheat Mountain Salamander rail-bus has excursions Fri-Sunday 11 am to High Falls of Cheat and at 2:30 to Spruce. \$18 adult

The Durbin Railroad has steam excursions on the Greenbrier River, leaving Durbin at 11:30am and 3pm on Fri. & Sat. and 11:30 on Sunday. \$12

Send registration forms to: **WVHC
 PO Box 306 Charleston, WV 25321**

Tumult on The Mountains

Lumbering in West Virginia 1770-1920
 by Roy Clarkson

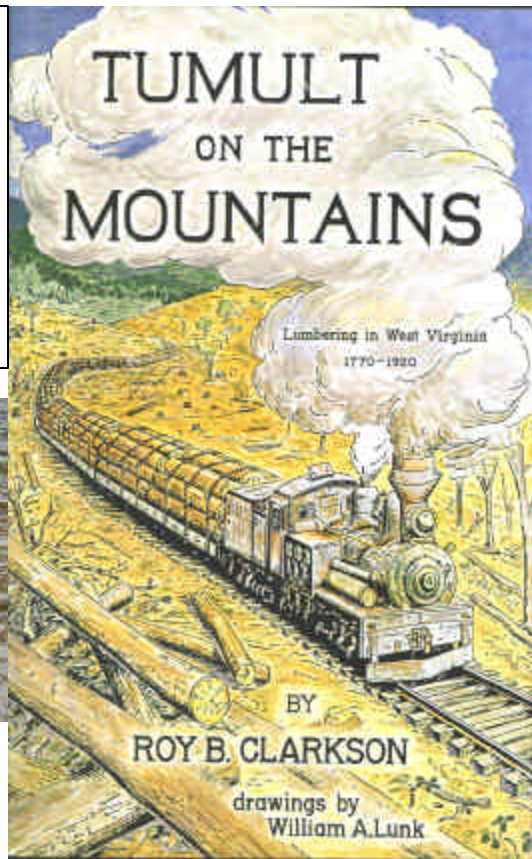
The Highlands Conservancy has a limited number of these books, signed by the Author, Roy Clarkson, below his hand written message; "Keep West Virginia Wild, Wonderful." Roy is a long-time Highlands Conservancy member. Proceeds will benefit the campaign to designate more Wilderness on the Monongahela National Forest.

This book is a must-read for anyone with even a casual interest in West Virginia's forests. Thanks to Roy for this generous contribution to our efforts. Regular retail price on these books is \$30.

We are selling this signed edition of Tumult on the Mountains for \$45. Price includes shipping.



Dave Saville, Chip Chase and JT Sutton enjoy one of the many many whitewater canoeing opportunities the wet summer provided. This was a trip on the Dry Fork of Cheat River.



SENECA SHADOWS AND A BIT OF THE OLD SODS

By Mike Juskelis

Janet Alford, Denizhan Pak, Fulya Pak, Preety Rajbhandari and Mike Juskelis (leader) camped at Seneca Shadows. Fulya and Mike hiked Dolly Sods on the twenty-first.

We drove down to Laneville so I could check out the condition of Red Creek as a result of Isabel. I hiked into the first ford at Little Stone Coal Trail and decided this crossing was definitely going to be a "no go". The water was deep, muddy and swift. I had never crossed Red Creek here before and had no idea what the composition of the creek bottom was at this point. My initial plan for the main hike was to hike up Red Creek to just above Fisher's Spring Run Trail and ford the creek there. I had crossed there before and was pretty confident that although the water would still be a bit high that crossing would be quite doable. We would then continue to Rocky Point Trail, explore the Lion's Head, hook up with the Dunkenbarger Trail, take Little Stone Coal Trail back to this ford and retrace the first 0.5 miles of the Red Creek Trail back to my Dakota. BUT - . What would we do if this ford proved un-crossable? We'd be 0.5 miles from the truck with no way to get back! I had a thought in the back of my head. As we drove across Red Creek, checking out a smoother travel route back to camp than FR19 that Jonathan Jessup had described to me, my thoughts became reality. There next to the bridge was a well-beaten path behind a small pull over on the side of the road. I parked and walked a short distance up the trail. It appeared to switch-back steeply up the side of the hill. My TOPO software showed a trail on this side that linked up with Little Stone Coal Trail called the High Water Trail. There is no mention of it in the MNF Trail Guide and I found no trace of it on the Net. If this were the case - if this trail did what I thought it would do - then we would be OK. I discussed it with Fulya over the campfire that night and we decided to go in on the High Water Trail. If we found Little Stone Coal we would simply do the hike in reverse of what we originally planned. If not we would go back to the beginning and do a different hike.

The next morning Fulya and I parked the truck behind the Wildlife Manager's cabin, crossed the bridge and started our adventure. The early morning fog was burning off and a hint of a blue sky peeked through. If we could pull this off the Lion's Head Vista was going to be exceptional. We switch-backed steeply up the hill, quickly gaining about 400 feet of elevation. At the top we found ourselves on either an old RR grade or lumber road. It was heading in the right direction. (A note to other potential users of this route - beware of stinging nettles. They were in bloom and easy to spot on this trip. Fortunately Fulya was wearing jeans and I had elected to wear my convertible hiking pants.) At first the road was flat but soon began a gradual descent. It seemed to end at a swampy area and a stream which was blocked by a beaver dam. We retraced our steps a short distance and walked down the bank of the road and crossed the stream below the dam. We bushwhacked out to the creek and went down stream looking for landmarks that I had spotted the previous day. In about 15 minutes I saw a stream on the opposite side that I

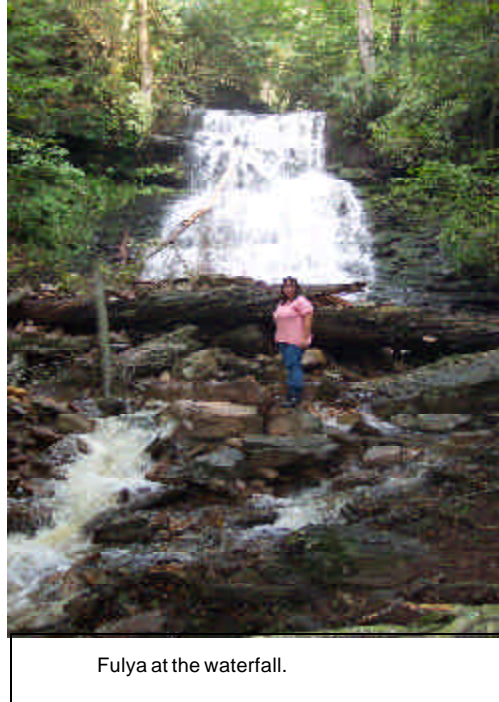
knew was below the Little Stone Coal Trail. We reversed our direction and soon found ourselves following the remnants of the old road across the bog. We were high and dry for the most part although things were a tad weedy and rocky for a bit. We soon found ourselves on a high creek-side shelf perfect for camping. We worked our way out to the creek and continued upstream and found it - first the large rock cairn on the opposite bank and then the trail sign on our side of the creek. We walked into the woods to the stream crossing and took

a well-deserved break, patting ourselves on the back for the successful completion of our first adventure. It cost us an hour but I had allowed two hours for "adventures" anyway.

We began the long ascent up Little Stone Coal Trail, amazed by the roaring power of that stream. Perhaps Isabel had given us something good after all. I took a photo of the first small waterfall as we walked by. As the trail got steeper the stream got louder. It was obvious we were close to a really big waterfall. We could see bits of it through the trees. The bank was high and slippery here but the opportunity probably wouldn't present itself again. I was unaware of it at the time but Fulya was equally enchanted by the waterfall. She apparently possesses the same sense for adventure as I. We quickly deposited our packs against a rock and began picking our way down the slope. We eventually made it to the bottom. We were astounded. We had to shout to speak to each other. After several photos and several minutes of just standing there with our mouths open we scrambled back up the bank, grabbed our gear and proceeded on our way having completed adventure #2.

We found the Dunkenbarger Trail and it's terminus with the Big Stone Coal Trail with no problem. As we proceeded downstream to hook up with the Rocky Point Trail the familiar roar of another waterfall grew in intensity. We could see it through the Rhododendron. This time we didn't even think about it. We dropped our packs and soon found ourselves standing on a shelf between two falls. The entire height may have been as big as the first falls but this one had more power. As we stood in awe we noticed that all of the water at the top was being pushed through a chute no more than four feet wide. No wonder the sound was deafening. I think this must have been adventure #3. We again climbed out of the gorge and resumed our walk. We provided some direction to some backpackers who were looking for the Big Stone Coal trail and soon found ourselves walking alongside and under the snout of the Lion's head. I had missed the "Easy" way up to the summit!!!! We found a cairn marking a very weak trail and started up the side of the rock outcrop. I wanted to retrace our steps along the trail but Fulya suggested that since we were already there and halfway to the top that we continue on. We continually probed the rocks, back tracked a little and continued to our left until we got behind the rocks and found an easier scramble to the top. OK, so this is adventure #4.

It was time to rest our legs from all that mountaineering and



Fulya at the waterfall.

(Continued on p. 15)

Seneca Shadows Hike (Continued from p. 14)

take in the tremendous sights from our high vantage point. After 20 minutes I checked my watch. It was 2:00. If we made it to the Red Creek ford by 3 or 3:30 we would be in like flint but first we had to find an easier way off of this rock pile! It took us an hour to climb up here and got pretty beat up doing it. It would help things a lot if the descent was a lot easier. As we turned to leave I spotted a small cairn and then another - and another - all parallel and close to the woods on our right. We followed them easily and wiggled through a chasm in the rocks and onto a well-worn trail engulfed by Rhododendron and pine. We soon found ourselves back on the Rocky Point Trail about 0.3 miles behind where we began our assault of the Lion's Head and right there in front of us was a cairn - blocked by a fallen tree. No wonder we missed the turn off! Fulya suggested we build another cairn in front of the log. We did so and proceeded onward. Whoever named this trail "Rocky Point Trail" was the king or queen of understatement. For almost its entire length



The Lion's Head

you are basically walking along a train track with the tracks and ties removed. To me it was the most grueling part of the outing. Fortunately it was short lived. We made it to Red Creek as planned and crossed it with no problems. The rest of the hike was uneventful

although the waterfalls along the high reroute of the trail were probably a little more impressive than usual because of Isabel. We stopped briefly at each one but pushed on, sensing the end of the trail. We descended to the intersection with Big Stone Coal Trail. The MNF trail guide showed a quick descent BUT down stream from this intersection. It was obvious that the book was wrong. Still it looked like the trail just stopped at the base of a hill. Two backpackers were camped there and pointed out where the trail sort of went up a sorely eroded bank. We followed their tip and soon found ourselves on a real trail. In hind site it's probably good that we did the hike in reverse order than originally planned. There were cairns marking this portion of the trail coming from the opposite direction but they stopped abruptly at the top of the hill. It would have taken some time and head scratching to figure the route out.

We found ourselves back at the Wildlife Manager's Office exactly at 5:30. The rest of my night was

spent showering, supping on Hot Roast beef and Mashed Potatoes at the 4 U Restaurant (See my August trip report - Dolly Sods.) and sitting by a raging fire with Janet and the dogs, sipping on hot, freshly brewed coffee. Folks, it doesn't get any better than this!

BLACKWATER CANYON UPDATE

By Judy Rodd

On Thursday, September 25, 2003, Friends of Blackwater presented 3,025 colorful postcards from West Virginian citizens to Ed Hamrick, Director of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. Each postcard nominated the Blackwater Canyon as West Virginia's most "Special Place."

Hamrick accepted the postcards (a stack several feet high) at an Open House and Reception at the Friends of Blackwater offices in Charleston, at Asbury Methodist Church. Hamrick praised the Friends of Blackwater and its supporters for their ongoing work to protect the entire Blackwater Canyon.

Judy Rodd, FOB director, said, "We are also taking this opportunity to recognize the leadership of Governor Bob Wise in creating the 'Special Places Initiative,' which gave an opportunity to citizens to express their love for West Virginia's natural heritage. We are especially pleased that the Blackwater Canyon was the top nominee."

Fifty people attended the Charleston reception, including many who have worked on the Blackwater Campaign since 1997. There was a book signing by Margaret Calwell, mother of Charleston labor lawyer Stuart Calwell and author of "Speak to the Past: A Memoir Fat With Words," a history of Calwell's growing up in the town of Davis, in Tucker County. In her memoir, Calwell remembers swimming under Blackwater Falls and worries about the fate of the Canyon.

There was also an exhibit of historic Tucker County photographs, covering turn-of-the-century boom times, the CCC era, the work of artist Porte Crayon and ecologist/artist Anna Hess, and documents from the 1898 landmark State Supreme Court equal rights case from Coketon. Refreshments and door prizes, and a visit by a costumed West Virginia flying squirrel and 2-spotted skipper butterfly (played by Holden and Elaina Pomponio/Russell), added to the festivities.

The postcard delivery culminates the two-year campaign to nominate the Blackwater Canyon as West Virginia's most Special Place. This is one of several recent and ongoing campaigns being spearheaded by FOB — including the current campaign to keep the Blackwater Canyon hiking/biking Trail from being turned into a logging road. Ten thousand comments have been sent to the Forest Service in this effort. Due to this pressure, the Forest Service has agreed to do a full Environmental Impact Statement study of the effects of allowing a logging road right-of-way on this public trail.

The Friends of Blackwater has 8,000 supporters throughout the region, employs 3 full-time and 2 part-time people and one Vista volunteer. For more information contact FOB at 501 Elizabeth St. Charleston, WV 25311. Phone: 304-345-7663, or e-mail at info@saveblackwater.org. The FOB website is www.saveblackwater.org.

OUR READERS WRITE

Dear Editor:

I was amused by a Gazette reader who complained that "obviously, this is a liberal newspaper, and apparently I'm a conservative person."

We are very lucky to have a newspaper as courageous as the Gazette. If the conservatives had seen the long line at the State Fair subscribing to the Gazette they would know what an important paper we have in West Virginia.

Just recently I learned via the Gazette that an extremely rich church in Charleston has purchased the home of Omni Productions at 1117 Virginia St. E. for \$235,000 just so they could demolish it for another unsightly parking lot for bi cars.

One wonders if even one of these Christians knows that the famous film maker Robert Gates produced "In Memory of the Land and People" in the 1970's in an attempt to save a few of the mountains and historic structures being destroyed by the rich and super-rich in 2003.

Has George Bush corrupted even West Virginia?

Jack Frazier
Peterstown, WV

Dear Sirs,

My name is Denver Mitchell and I am writing this letter because I am concerned about how the coal companies are raping our land and tearing up our mountains. I think it is a shame that the people in the valleys aren't fighting against this more. When we went to grade school, we were taught that anytime you move the vegetation off the mountain tops, it's going to cause flash flooding in the low lands. I can't understand why these people are issuing permits to the big corporations like Massey Energy and not making them take responsibility for our water ways and streams. Sure as I am sitting here, there are going to be lives lost because of mountain top removal.

I'm not against a man working but there is a right way and a wrong way of doing things. I hope that the people in the valleys will wake up to what is happening or they may just wake up to realize their families will be floating in the creek with an ocean of water. We know that one big tree will absorb around 50 gallons of water.

I hope you read this letter in good faith. Please do not throw it away.

Denver Mitchell
Wilkinson, WV

Dear Editor:

In the August 17 Gazette-Mail there is an article about the First Presbyterian Church having acquired the properties of 1117 and 1119 Virginia Street East, and that they intend to bulldoze them to provide additional parking for their church. While this may have found approval with the first-floor landowners who will be reaping windfall profits from this proposition, they may have overlooked those who live above in these buildings. I am one of these.

I have lived and worked on the third floor of 1117 Virginia Street East for 35 years. This wonderful building has provided me with workspace for doing work in photography, stage lighting, and film and video production. My films and photographs have received many awards. Assembled over the years, it is a jigsaw layout of productive space. Next door I have had many friends happily live in the second floor apartment. The last one left bitterly. To turn these twin buildings into a flat land parking lot for what, 40 cars, is a travesty. They would spend \$12,000 to \$15,000 per parking space. You can park at least 16 cars here now.

Is stewardship one of the church tenets? With a little love and responsibility these two fine buildings could have an even longer life. Too many older East End buildings, some very beautiful, have been torn down. These two twin buildings should have been restored to their former utility so they could contribute to Charleston's future with productive working and living space. I believe that tearing down useful historic buildings for flat land parking is wrong - and First Presbyterian Church, my Christian neighbors, you know better.

Robert F. Gates
Charleston, W. Va.



STILL TIME TO COMMENT ON DRAFT EIS FOR MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL STRIP MINING

The comment period on the draft Environmental Impact Statement on mountaintop removal/ valley fill coal mining has been extended 130 days, from August 29 to January 6, 2004. You are free to comment that you like or don't like the alternatives presented, talk about the draft Statement, tell your own experiences with mountaintop removal, or anything else.

The Draft is 5,000 pages long although you can get a general idea of what is in it from the Executive Summary which is less than twenty pages. You can find the Draft and the Executive Summary at www.epa.gov/region3/mtntop/eis.htm. If you choose to tackle the entire 5,000 pages, you should first go to <http://www.groundsforchange.com> for necessary supplies.

The EPA will also accept comments via e-mail at mountaintop.r3@epa.gov. You can also send written comments to:

Mr. John Forren, US EPA (3ES30)
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103