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The Highlands Voice

The Monthly Publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Volume 39 Number 10 October 2006

GREENBRIER COUNTY, WV --- in the Eye of the Energy Storm

BEECH RIDGE WIND FACILITY - Certification Challenged

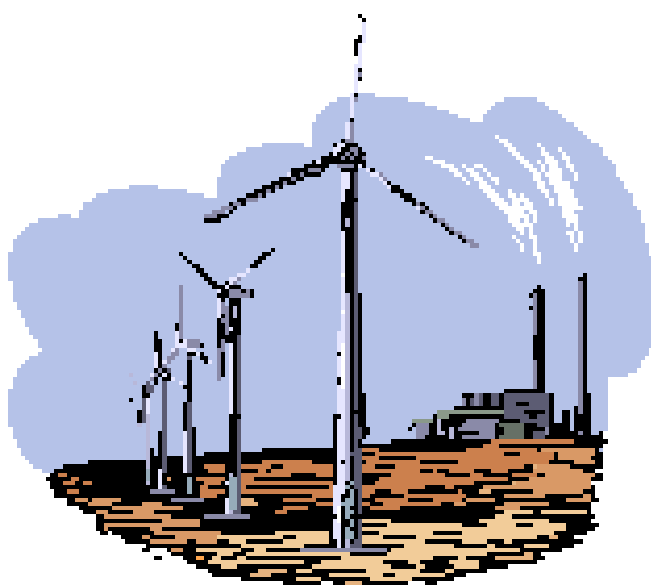
by Frank Young

As we reported in last month's Highlands Voice, August 28th the WV Public Service Commission (PSC) issued an order approving a siting certificate for the much contested Beech Ridge wind farm in northern Greenbrier County. Parties who had opposed that application had 20 days after the PSC ruled to challenge the certificate by asking the Commission to reconsider its action.

Many PSC observers had predicted that whichever of the parties prevailed at the PSC, that the "other side" would challenge or appeal that order. Several parties on the "losing" side have done just that. The Greenbrier County citizen group *Mountain Communities for Responsible Energy* (MCRE), along with several individual interveners against the project, asked the PSC to reconsider its action to grant the certificate.

The primary allegations asserted in the requests for reconsideration are that in its deliberations the PSC failed to comply with its own siting rules by accepting Beech Ridge's allegedly "flawed" maps that contained "glaring insufficiencies", and by accepting an incomplete Cultural Impacts assessment. The challengers further allege that the

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WESTERN GREENBRIER PLANT - Air Permit Appealed

by Cindy Rank

Western Greenbrier Co-Generation (WGC), a limited liability company owned by the towns of Rainelle, Rupert and Quinwood plan to develop a co-generation power plant to burn gob (coal waste) from a large acid producing waste pile.

In April 2006 WV Highlands Conservancy joined more than a dozen other groups in comments to the WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) urging no permit be issued for the WGC power plant until numerous technical flaws were addressed and the permit revised to significantly reduce emission limits. The permit was issued without our concerns being answered.

At the end of May WV Highlands Conservancy, WV Chapter of Sierra Club and Greenbrier River Watershed Association (GWA) appealed the issuance of the permit to the Air Quality Board.

The appeal argues that the DEP did not compel the plant to use the best available pollution control technologies, as required by law; that the permit is unenforceable because some of WGC's pollutants will be monitored inadequately or not at all; and that some auxiliary sources of pollution, such as haul-road emissions, were left out.

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Visit us on the web at www.wvhighlands.org

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From the Heart of the Highlands

by Hugh Rogers

Roadless Rules!

In the long struggle to protect the last wild places on America's national forests, this is a remarkable moment. On September 20, a federal district court judge in San Francisco invalidated the Bush administration's attempt to undo the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The judge held that such a sweeping rule change, affecting tens of millions of acres of federal land, required analysis of its environmental impacts and consultation with other agencies responsible for threatened and endangered species. For the time being, the Roadless Rule has been reinstated.

What does this mean for the Monongahela National Forest? How will the Forest reconcile the Roadless Rule and its new Management Plan? Could the decision affect the future designation of more wilderness areas on the Mon?

A bit of history can help us try to answer such questions. As far back as the 1930's, the Forest Service had designated 14 million acres, mostly in the West, as "primitive areas," and it was from this pool that Congress designated 9 million acres in the first Wilderness Act (1964). The remaining 5 million acres (out of more than 190 million acres) were to be studied for potential additions to the Wilderness Preservation System. These narrow restrictions were politically necessary to gain passage of the bill, but they left millions of acres of "de facto wilderness" in a vulnerable limbo.

Beginning in the late 1960's, citizen activists in West Virginia and elsewhere took advantage of the new law. They went directly to their congressional delegations, and they got permanent protection for some of these areas. The Highlands Conservancy first appears in this part of the story, as Dolly Sods and Otter Creek were included in the Eastern Wilderness Act (1975) largely through the efforts of our predecessors.

Meanwhile, the Forest Service sought to regain control of the wilderness issue by conducting an inventory and selecting only those areas it thought deserved study for further protection. This process, called Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, gave us the term we've used ever since to refer to undesignated potential wilderness. It didn't give us much else—certainly not in the East. The agency had adopted a "purity" definition of wilderness that excluded practically all roadless areas in the East, the South, and the Midwest.

Complaints about such misinterpretations of the Wilderness Act finally prompted the Forest Service, during the Carter administration, to take the second look known as RARE II. More than twenty years later, the RARE II inventory gained the further protections of the Clinton administration's Roadless Area Conservation Rule, which forbade logging and road building on the inventoried area. Before it went into effect in 2001, it was the subject of 600 public hearings across the country and the most public comment in the history of federal rulemaking. The lawsuit challenging its reversal by the Bush administration was brought by, or supported by briefs from, six states and more than twenty conservation groups.

Here on the Mon, the Roadless Rule applied to an updated RARE II inventory, published in November, 2000, that included 21 areas totaling an estimated 181,248 acres.

Coincidentally, the Mon was then due to revise its Management Plan, which would require yet another inventory. The Forest Service explained the difference: "[T]his is not an inventory primarily to determine roadless areas but rather part of a process to determine which of those roadless areas have the best potential for wilderness.

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We're Friends of the Mon ! Protecting and enjoying our Monongahela National Forest

ACTION ALERT

***Forest Service ignores 13,000 public comments in its final Management Plan.
Contact West Virginia's Congressional Delegation and ask them to support wilderness legislation!***

In their Final Monongahela National Forest Management Plan released on September 18th, the U.S. Forest Service has ignored the will of the owners of the Forest it manages by changing almost nothing in their draft plan that was released for public comment in August of 2005.

See the plan online at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/plan_revision/Information/information.htm

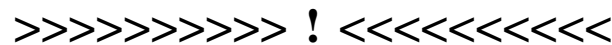
A record number of nearly 13,000 individuals commented on the draft plan, and over 90% firmly rejected the Forest Service's 'preferred' Alternative 2 which recommends only a small amount of wilderness designations to Congress and opens up several of our backcountry areas that qualify for this designation to logging and road building. The public almost unanimously favored Alternative 3 and/or the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition's Citizens' Wilderness Proposal, both of which recommend much more wilderness designation to Congress and protect the most important wild areas on the Mon.

Fortunately, the decision to protect wilderness, which only happens through federal legislation, is in the hands of West Virginia's Congressional Delegation. They need to hear from you that the public's voice is not being heard by the Forest Service and that you want them to introduce legislation that goes above and beyond the insufficient recommendations in the MNF's final plan. Please write a letter to both Senators Byrd and Rockefeller as well as to your Representative who will be key in protecting areas that the Forest Service is ignoring. Be sure to mention areas like Seneca Creek, East Fork of Greenbrier, Spice Run, Big Draft, and the Dolly Sods Expansion, all left out of the Final Plan's wilderness recommendations. The more you personalize your letter, the more effective it will be. Here are some talking points you could include:

- The U.S. Forest Service has ignored the overwhelming will of the public in its final management plan, and West Virginia needs you to fix this situation by sponsoring legislation that will protect all deserving areas as designated wilderness.
- It is critical that we protect not only the areas recommended by the Forest Service, but also areas that the citizens' groups and the public at large have identified as important and in need of protection. Key areas like Seneca Creek, East Fork of Greenbrier, the Dolly Sods Expansion, Spice Run and Big Draft have been ignored by the Forest Service, but must be protected permanently.
- The Forest Service plan does not recommend any wilderness in the Greenbrier watershed, which currently has no designated wilderness and is a source of drinking water for many West Virginians. The 24,000-acre Seneca Creek Area would protect the entire headwaters of one of the best trout streams in the East. And the Dolly Sods Expansion would protect Red Creek's headwaters as well as reduce use pressure on the popular existing Dolly Sods Wilderness.
- Protected public land like wilderness helps diversify and stabilize economies by attracting and retaining new businesses, residents, and a local workforce, in addition to generating travel and tourism, one of the fastest growing sectors of West Virginia's economy.
- Wilderness provides unparalleled primitive and traditional outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, horseback riding, bird watching, whitewater rafting, kayaking, skiing, snowshoeing, and much more. Be sure to mention what activities, if any, you participate in on the Mon.

Please send a letter or email to our Congressional decision-makers today, even if you have written to them about wilderness in the past. One letter copied to the Senators, your Representative and the Governor would be very powerful.

----- See page 9 for contact information and more opinion about wilderness in the Final Forest Management Plan -----



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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.

MCGINNIS AND MCNEEL: Two Quiet Conservancy Blessings

by Dave Elkinton

Long-time Conservancy members will recognize the name of **Helen McGinnis** as a key leader in the movement to gain congressional capital-W Wilderness designation for the Dolly Sods. Recently, she has become involved in researching the eastern cougar, and has authored several *Voice* articles on that subject. She has also been a member of the Conservancy's Board of Directors since 2003.

The first of many printed guides published by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy bore Helen's name as author, "The Hiking Guide and Wilderness Proposal for the Dolly Sods." In a recent interview, she described how she came to love West Virginia and became a guide author and researcher. (See also an excellent article by Helen, and additional comments by Bruce Sundquist, in the January 2005 issue of *the Highlands Voice*.)

Helen grew up in northern California and learned to appreciate the outdoors from her mother. Later in college at the University of California at Berkeley, she was an active member of the Hiking Club. "All I was really happy doing was being out backpacking in the Cascades, the Rockies, and other Wilderness areas in the West," she told me. When she accepted a position at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC, she soon found the local Sierra Club with an active outings program. (Remember that for half of its history, the Sierra Club was a northern California-based outings group, not the international environmental organization it is now.)

Coming to Dolly Sods with a Sierra Club group in the summer of 1968, Helen says it reminded her of her favorite western Wilderness areas, with their open, windswept vistas, yet so much smaller. Why wasn't this too a Wilderness area? Through accident, she discovered the Wilderness Society's office, and more importantly, lunchroom, nearby her Smithsonian office. Over many lunches together she developed a close relationship with Rupert Cutler, Assistant Director, Stewart ("Brandy") Brandborg, Director, and others who encouraged her in thinking about Dolly Sods as a potential Wilderness area. It will be remembered that Rupe was instrumental in organizing the first Fall Review on Spruce Knob, and Brandy was there.

By the time Helen moved to State College, Pennsylvania in 1974, Dolly Sods, Otter Creek, were moving toward Wilderness status, culminating in the enactment of the Eastern Wilderness Areas Act in January 5, 1975. Meanwhile, other special places in the highlands were under threat from developers. Helen played a key role in the early 1970's in researching and photographing the Canaan Valley, first to develop the

Conservancy's position, then in preparation for hearings on the Davis Power Project. The proposed upper reservoir of that pumped-storage power project would have created a 500-acre lake near Dolly Sods, in an area known as the Dobbin Slashings.

I should not have been surprised to learn that in her 20-year absence from West Virginia, and was living in Mississippi, where she became active in the Sierra Club of Mississippi. There she researched and authored another hiking guide. Her motivation, she told me, was to foster an appreciation of Mississippi as a natural area. It seems to me that Helen has always wanted to share her love for the outdoors with others through the printed word.

Another disciple of the printed word is **Bill McNeel**, a fourth generation editor of *the Pocahontas Times* in Marlinton, and a board member of the Conservancy, first elected in January 1979. His bio in that month's *Voice* notes that he had been active in the campaign to create the Cranberry Wilderness Area, speaking at both House and Senate hearings, and local hearings as well. He even attended the signing of the Cranberry bill by President Ronald Reagan.

Bill grew up in Charleston, but returned to visit family in Pocahontas County often as a youngster. His grandfather, Calvin Price, Editor from 1906-1957, was an outspoken advocate of conserving the forests of West Virginia. He was an early supporter of the creation of the Monongahela National Forest, and became a long-time friend of Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the US Forest Service, an appointee of President Theodore Roosevelt, himself a hard-fighting public land advocate. Cal saw past the timber boom periods to a time when the natural beauty of the highlands would be appreciated by visitors and local families alike. For his vision Cal was honored by the creation of the Calvin Price State Forest, nestled between Watoga State Park and the proposed Spice Run Wilderness Area. Rick Steelhammer's article in *the Sunday Gazette-Mail* of July 9, 2006, called the Cal Price "perhaps West Virginia's wildest state forests."

Bill has remained a dedicated, behind-the-scenes member of the Highlands Conservancy through many years, serving on various committees, but seldom in the spotlight. I inquired if his association with the Conservancy had ever created local conflicts, since various proposals for Pocahontas County, like dams, timber restrictions, and even Wilderness, might not be popular with his readers. He replied in his usual low-key manner, explaining that there was always a segment of the community behind his position, and when final decisions were rendered, everyone learned to abide by them.

Looking ahead, Bill identified several issues that he predicts will continue to challenge the Conservancy. Topping the list was development, including second homes, permanent residential growth, and tourism development. Certainly no rural county has experienced any more proportionately than Pocahontas has, as confirmed by my recent visit to Snowshoe. With 55% of Pocahontas County owned by federal and state government, Bill sees a level of protection there, but pressure on private land will only increase. The revenue benefits to the county are certainly significant however. Interestingly, because most of the high peaks are government owned, wind power may not be the issue in Pocahontas as it is becoming elsewhere in the highlands.

(continued on page 5)



Helen at Dolly Sods a few years ago.

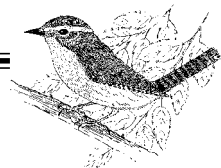
(this picture appeared in the January 2005 VOICE.....photographer unidentified)



photo by Dave Elkinton
Bill in front of the Pocahontas Times

Although a dues-paying member of various other environmental organizations, Bill has only been active in the Conservancy. He attributes that to its mission, preserving the highlands, and to the fact that meetings are easier to get to. He is highly complimentary of the Conservancy's effectiveness due to the focus on a limited region, the ability to garner support from users from nearby states, and especially the hard working nature of Conservancy activists. "We've been blessed with people who love the highlands," says it all. One might add that Helen and Bill are two of those blessings.

Note: Dave Elkinton can be reached at daveelkinton@hotmail.com, and welcomes comments and information as he continues his research and writing on the Conservancy's first forty years.



From the Potomac Valley Audubon:

An invitation to a conference on regional wind energy concerns:

Wildlife and Utility-Scale; Wind Energy Development of the Central Appalachians within Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia - the Risks and Trade-offs

December 2, 2006 at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania (about three hours from the Eastern Panhandle)

Cost of attendance: \$35 for advance registrations; \$45 at the door.

This Wildlife and Wind Energy Conference was organized to present accurate, objective, state-of-the-art information on this topic in a public forum aimed at an audience consisting of the general public, print and electronic media, governmental officials, non-profit organizations, wildlife and scientific experts, and wind energy companies.

You may access information about this conference on the following Department of Geography, Kutztown University web pages: <http://www.kutztown.edu/acad/geography/wildlifeconf.htm>

FOR MORE INFORMATION please contact via e-mail: Donald S. Heintzelman at dons@enter.net

Speakers Available !!!!!

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

(Hugh on Roadless - continued from page 2)

Therefore, criteria related to wilderness attributes are part of the inventory process . . ."

As one would expect, the final outcome of this latest inventory was a smaller total acreage—but it was not simply a matter of winnowing the 2000 inventory of roadless areas. The whole forest was remapped with ever-more-sophisticated digital systems, and in the end a potentially eligible 326,539 acres was boiled down to 18 Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) totaling 143,234 acres. Both the 2000 Roadless Rule inventory and the 2006 IRA inventory appear in Appendix C of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Plan Revision.

Now the Forest Service has picked four IRAs to recommend to Congress for wilderness designation. There has been plenty of criticism of that decision, but what concerns us here is preservation of all wild roadless areas until Congress, now or in the future, can make an independent judgment on their suitability for wilderness. On that matter—more important, in the long run, than the current recommendation—two positive things may be said: (1) in the revised plan, all the non-recommended IRAs were assigned to Management Prescriptions that do not allow logging, drilling, or other forms of "development;" (2) the reinstated Roadless Rule will protect many areas that did not make the IRA list.

How much land are we talking about? At first blush it might appear to be the difference between the 2000 inventory and the IRA's, roughly 38,000 acres. But it turns out to be larger than that. Remember, the two inventories were said to be guided by different criteria. For example, Big Draft—one of our Wilderness Coalition's proposals—did not appear at all on the earlier list but showed up as an IRA. East Fork of Greenbrier grew from 7,160 acres covered by the Roadless Rule to 10,153 acres as an IRA. But many other areas, such as McGowan Mountain (bordering Otter Creek), Little Allegheny Mountain, and Falls of Hills Creek, having temporarily lost the protections of the Roadless Rule, were moved to Management Prescriptions that *would* allow development.

The figures are on page C-116 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Forest Plan Revision. In the alternative chosen by the Forest Service, 51,000 acres of these inventoried areas were allotted to Management Prescription 6.1, "Wildlife Habitat Emphasis," and 1900 acres to MP 3.0, "Vegetation diversity." We could add part of the 10,764 acres placed in MP 4.1, "Spruce and Spruce-Hardwood Restoration," since that prescription also permits some logging. Thus, reinstatement of the Roadless Rule will preserve between 53,000 and 63,000 additional acres on the Mon.

How long will that protection last? The Bush administration could appeal, of course, although the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, the next step from the District Court, has already decided a related case in favor of the Roadless Rule. All bets are off if the case ever reaches the Supreme Court.

Or the Bush administration could comply with the decision, conduct the necessary environmental review, and try to put their policy into effect again. According to James Lyons of the Yale School of Forestry, a former Clinton administration official who helped draft the Roadless Rule, "it will take them plenty of time. It took us eighteen months." Time's up in January 2009.

A BETTER PLAN FOR THE MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST

~~ *Some Implications of Long-Range Forestry on the MNF* ~~

(this is the second of two articles about forestry assumptions in the Forest Plan
the first appeared in the August September 2006 issue of the VOICE)

by Bruce Sunquist

Anticipated Effects of Long-Rotation Forestry on the MNF:

Transforming the MNF to a forest of roughly equal areas of each age-class of sawtimber with a rotation age of 1.3 to 1.5 centuries would involve huge changes in almost every aspect of whatever values the MNF provides. In a way, the transformation could be seen as a middle ground between two views. About 70% of Americans want an infinite rotation age on national forest timber. The USFS seems fond of low-productivity, low-value, taxpayer-subsidized, low-habitat-diversity, limited-aesthetics forestry characterized by a rotation age of roughly 90 years. There is a huge gap between these two views, so this middle ground needs to be contemplated carefully.

Aesthetic values are more important to Americans than the USFS imagines. Demographics Magazine once did a study of the migratory trends of Americans in recent decades. The usual economics-related trend of a migration to the south and west was obvious. Only one other trend could be identified from the data – a migration from amenity-poor regions of the US to amenity-rich regions. If the MNF grows increasingly amenity-rich, we may wind up suffering a loss of amenities in the inholdings, i.e. a replacement of the current rustic, rural charms of the region by more urban environments of tasteless McMansions with all the charm of a Detroit suburb. So the net aesthetic benefit might not be as great as we envision.

When trees get to be about 70 years old they start producing mast, creating food for wildlife like deer, bear, wild turkeys and others. As they grow older they produce more mast. Older forests can produce as much plant protein as the same area of agricultural grain. The fraction of the forest producing mast would increase. So the MNF of tomorrow would have more deer and other species dependent on mast and its protein.

Sawtimber grown on short rotations (e.g. 70-90 years) results in a tendency for the next generation of trees to start out as stump sprouts, significantly reducing the value of the next harvest and causing stem diseases. Harvesting sawtimber in a more mature state results in more regeneration from seeds, which eliminates stump sprout problems. Growing sawtimber on long rotations also results in larger biomass inventories per acre. This reduces atmospheric CO₂ and hence reduces global warming via the greenhouse effect.

The whole dynamic of forestry changes with a switch to long-rotation forestry. Practices like thinning, fertilization, and other “intensive” forest management practices (practices not economically viable under short-rotation forestry) now become viable. This make long-rotation forestry even more profitable that one would have estimated initially.

“Enhanced-aesthetics” forestry on the MNF with about a quarter of its area in forest “cathedrals” at any one time could create all sorts of problems for MNF managers. Visitor load increases would require lots more trailhead parking lots, wide roads, more trails, more trail maintenance, more conflicts between different categories of trail users (conflicts that are already creating problems for the MNF), more restaurants, motels and an endless array of other urbania – perhaps even cable cars to the top of North Fork Mountain and Roaring Plains or Red Creek Plains, and a huge ski resort running to the top of Mt. Porte Crayon and sucking all the water out of the Dry Fork for snow-making. And what are

all those people going to think about wind turbines on the MNF?

Forest “cathedrals” on the MNF would have greater value than most people realize. Hidden away from the roads and trails of the MNF is lots of scenery that is among the most spectacular in West Virginia. Being able to roam anywhere in the cathedrals without the need for established trails (or the need to build or maintain them) would broaden the range of visitors to this spectacular scenery. Increasing use of GPS would quickly make the locations of this presently concealed splendor known to all via the Internet.

As the day-to-day environment of Americans grows increasingly crowded and urbanized, the appeal of the MNF cannot help but grow, whether it sticks with a rotation age of 80-90 years (roughly USFS policy) or decides to go with 130+ years. So much of what is foreseen above is going to happen anyway; there is no escape. In fact, the context gets even worse. The chip mill industry has been expanding rapidly in the South and is moving northward. These cellulose fiber producers, by their own admission, don’t constrain themselves with ethical issues like sustained yield forestry, and they optimize their yields with 40-or-so-year rotations (Think forests with all the habitat diversity and aesthetic appeal of a corn field.) This is a lot lower than even the commercial sawtimber industry with its rotation age of roughly 70 years. So over time, even an 80-90-year rotation on the MNF cannot help but look better and better with each passing year to urbanites of the Middle Atlantic region.

Our vision of the MNF rolling in cash selling high-grade logs at \$6000 per tree instead of 50-year-old pallet lumber trees at a few tens of dollars each may also be challenged. Allegheny National Forest (which is claimed to be the only profitable national forest in the US) already sells trees at \$6000 each (even without long-rotation forestry), and it now has all sorts of problems with timber thieves. And how soon would it be before MNF managers hear: “What do you mean you’re going to cut down our cathedral?” The fundamental problem with long-rotation forestry in the eastern U.S. is that the economy based on growth of timber sales receipts would be paralleled by the economy based on growth of scenery-seekers and recreation seekers. A bigger bone implies a bigger fight over that bone. The problem is that most scenery- and recreation seekers would likely continue to believe that they should not have to pay the MNF for the skyrocketing costs, to the MNF, of accommodating forest visitors and recreationists in massive, and ever-increasing, numbers. To better understand even the current sad consequences of this self-serving belief, check out some of the over-used trails in Dolly Sods Wilderness. Something will probably have to give on that issue – eventually.

Someone once computed that if every national forest visitor paid \$2/ day to the USFS (a small fraction of the total cost of visiting a national forest), say by a cheap-to-enforce windshield-sticker system, the USFS would be rolling in cash. The right of forest visitors and recreationists to membership in some sort of middle-class welfare state needs to be examined. If you can afford \$50 for gas for a national forest visit plus \$200 for hiking boots, \$150 for a tent, and \$300 for a sleeping bag etc. etc. you probably should accept the argument that you don’t

(continued on page 7)

Join Now !!!

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Membership categories (circle one)

	Individual	Family	Org
Senior	\$15		
Student/	\$15		
Introductory/			
Other	\$15		
Regular	\$25	\$35	\$50
Associate	\$50	\$75	\$100
Sustaining	\$100	\$150	\$200
Patron	\$250	\$250	\$500
Mountaineer	\$500	\$750	\$1,000

Mail to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy PO Box 306 Charleston, WV 25321

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

(A Better Plan part 2 - continued from page 6)

qualify for free maintenance on the trails you use in your visit. Free passes to national forests should be limited to those who can show that they would have difficulty affording national forest visits without financial help. The issue of national forest visitors paying for their passes has come up in the past, but it was always intermixed with peripheral issues that made the idea justifiably unpopular. What is needed is a simple, peripheral-issue-free decision on fees for national forest visitors.

Even More Context: MNF managers will inform you that some areas on the MNF have poor growing conditions that are unsuitable for long rotation forestry. Why bad growing conditions would be better for short-rotation forestry than long-rotation forestry is beyond this author. The exact opposite seems more logical. If this exception is allowed, there should be a good definition of "poor growing conditions" so that their locations can be laid out on USFS maps, and so that independent auditors could keep MNF managers honest.

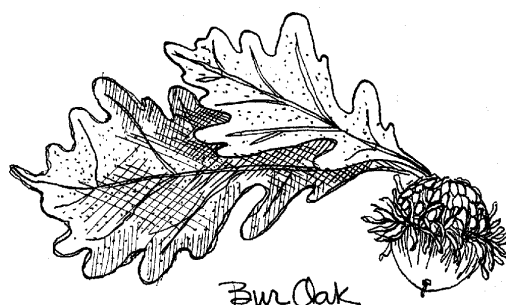
Also, globalization is bringing with it an ever-expanding array of imported tree-killing invasive species that make the lives of foresters increasingly miserable. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture didn't have the nerve to ask China to remove a pest from the wood pallets used to import Chinese goods into the US. So the US stands to lose its maple trees. This sort of issue makes the risks of long-rotation forestry increase even faster than the risks of short-rotation forestry. There might be a fix for this. With increasing tree age, forest floors opens up, making it increasingly feasible for narrow-wheelbase vehicles to go into old-forest areas and pluck out a dying tree or a cluster of dying trees (as 8-ft. logs). Since old-growth trees carry increasingly large price tags, the economics of such a procedure improve with tree age. This strategy is not economically feasible in young-growth forests of cheap trees and dense understory.

Author's Note:

Views expressed here do not represent the official position of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

For a large review of the global literature on forestland degradation and related issues, visit the author's web site at:

<http://home.alltel.net/bsundquist1/>



Six Hawks

by Betsy Reeder

*The day I need to cry I can't.
 Find instead my backyard patch of grass,
 Stretch likewise flat
 An afternoon sky for my tent top
 And wait.*



*One crow crosses,
 A gull, miles from water,
 Martins circle like dragonflies over a summer pond
 A moody cloud targets me,
 Dampens cheeks and chair and spots my glasses.*

*I remain stubborn.
 I wait.*

*Boiling overhead, a smudge of something appears
 Looms and changes shape
 Like the shadow of chaos.
 There they are,
 Ejected from invisibility:
 Six hawks.*

*They skate south without wing-strides,
 Pulled by a current made not of air,
 South.
 Late summer.
 Go south.*

*Six broad-winged hawks.
 Careless loops carry them higher,
 A seeming delay without intent...
 Then drawn again on a plumb line
 South.*

Dead straightaway south.

*Guatemala beckons,
 Argentina, Brazil,
 Thousands of miles they know a way I can't imagine,
 Surrendering to it, vanish.*

*I blink at the empty place of exit
 Then rise and fold the chair,
 Having gotten what I came for.*

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LAUREL CREEK - A Rugged Stream in Big Draft

by Bob Handley



photo by Bob Handley

A pool on Anthony Creek
Laurel Cr comes in at the lower left corner

The Big Draft Proposed Wilderness Area (PWA) is 5,300 acres of rough Monongahela National Forest (the Mon) land five miles north of White Sulphur Springs, WV near the southern end of the Mon in Greenbrier County. It is one of the six PWA's in the Greenbrier Valley. The Greenbrier Valley includes three of the five Mon offices, more than a quarter of the Mon's acreage, but currently has no established Wilderness.

I live about 20 minutes from the western edge of Big Draft so it's pretty handy. There are 14 miles of maintained trails that include the Blue Bend Trail that's on the National Register of Historic Places. That trail and the Anthony Creek Trail provide great access for fishing along much of Anthony creek that runs for five and a half miles through the PWA. In addition there's a well-established mile of trail abandoned by the Mon and many more miles of old abandoned log roads that are present in most hollows. Being one of the curious type though, I spend a good bit of my hiking time off of even the old log roads.

In the fall of 2004, Dave Cowan – a caver friend – and I hiked into the upper end of the Laurel Creek watershed following mostly old log roads. Laurel Creek has a total of five miles of streambed and nearly three square miles of watershed – all but about 30 acres totally within the PWA boundaries. Trying to follow the stream out of this upper area was blocked by what appeared to be an impenetrable rhododendron thicket. The stream in this area had

only a slight gradient but the Anthony Creek topo indicated that the stream grade increased on down stream. That meant to me the possibility of white water and some interesting photo-ops. We would hike in via the old log roads to hopefully bypass the block and then bush whack on down stream to Anthony Creek and then follow established trails to the Greenbrier River bridge. We would have to ford Anthony Creek (a 90 foot wide ford) and in the fall of 2004 the creek seemed to be high, so, I hesitated.

Finally in late July of 2006 I crossed the Anthony Creek ford on a scouting hike prior to siting the Southern Group's (WVWC) early August Wilderness meeting. On that hike I crossed the lower end of Laurel Creek and on my way out I met a fellow who seemed pretty familiar with the area. He told me of a 20-foot waterfall near the end of Laurel Creek. On our Rahall hike, this same fellow was at the Blue Hole (Anthony Creek) where we had stopped to swim. He told me then the fall was only 10 feet high.

On our Wilderness meeting hike we went up Laurel Creek and found a three foot fall that was nice – but no cigars. One of our group said he had been all the way up Laurel Creek on an old log road and hadn't noticed anything special. I questioned his "all the way up" statement and whether he had seen any waterfalls. He was sure he had been to the upper part and NO he hadn't heard any waterfalls – but the creek was almost dry??

The next weekend (13 Aug06) - sort of on-the spur-of-the-moment decision – I called Dave Cowan and he agreed to go with me up Laurel Creek – on the creek. About 200 feet above the three foot fall we found the 12 foot fall and one of the most rugged, boulder strewn little streams that I've ever seen. It couldn't have been much better in a dream (except in a dream there would've been a lot of water). Some sections of the boulder-choked stream had at least a 15 to 20 degree gradient. Further up stream another section had big boulder dams with a pool below each one – maybe a half dozen of these in a row. It only lacks water to be spectacular.

I wanted to go up to the upper part of the creek that I had been into before to confirm whether or not the log road from the lower end made it all the way up. Dave and I pushed, scrambled, crawled, cut, and broke our way

through near endless rhododendron thickets that started when the creek gradient lessened. This finally got to Dave and he split south to the top of Greenbrier Mountain and the South Boundary Trail (TR 615). I pushed on, finally giving up the creek bottom for the steep north bank but did get to a familiar trail. We had planned to go back down the old log road that had been described last Sunday but it didn't exist beyond where the Laurel started and the canyon walls became quite steep. We finally got together again on TR 615 (after much confusion) - the trail had no diamonds or blazes - no marks of any kind. We started off the mountain shortly after 7 PM (thankfully on the right trail) and made good time until we got to the steep downhill sections. Dave has trouble going down steep hills - lots of pain in his knees. So, he backed down - not very fast. He's had a good bit of practice at this so not surprisingly he had little trouble. I followed and tried to warn him of obstacles or sharp turns. All went well till it got dark. I pulled a small LED headlamp out of my pack and that saved the day. Finally down on the Anthony Cr. Trail we rested and then headed for the ford - not fun after dark with only a small light. But we made it across in stages with out getting very wet. It was sure a relief to get back to my truck.

I'm preparing to return later during a flood, but that's another story.

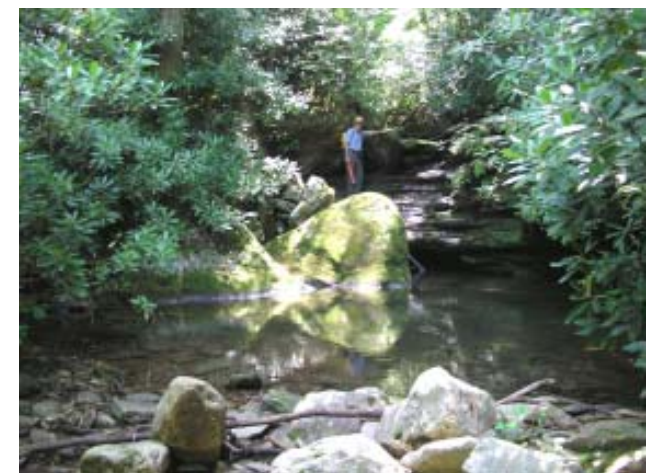


photo by Bob Handley

Dave Cowan by the Laurel Creek waterfall.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: For those of you who think you've seen this picture before, --- you did. It also appeared in the August-September issue of the VOICE, but was so dark Bob and I thought you might like to see it in a different light.)

We're Friends of the Mon ! Protecting and enjoying our Monongahela National Forest

Who Decides About Our Wilderness?by Dave Saville

The Monongahela National Forest stitches together much of West Virginia, reaching from near Lewisburg north into Preston County. "The Mon" works for all of us: as a source of timber, but also as a fountain of clean water, a haven for wildlife, and a recreational paradise drawing hikers, hunters, anglers, and family campers from far and wide, setting our small town cash registers ringing. The Mon is also where we preserve West Virginia's wilderness heritage, areas like Otter Creek and Dolly Sods which offer quiet sanctuaries of nature for human refreshment beyond the end of the road.

The just-completed Forest Service planning process was an opportunity for the public to weigh in about our desires for the future of the National Forest. Some 13,000 people submitted comments. Sadly, the agency ended up making mostly cosmetic changes to its draft plan, sending what amounts to a "we knew best all along" message. Worse, in explaining his decision the regional forester in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, flatly misrepresented what the public said.

To "explain" why they added not a single acre to their initial wilderness recommendations, the Regional Forester wrote that "Wilderness is a polarizing issue for the public." Repeatedly insinuating that public opinion was sharply divided, he noted that "Many people wrote in, describing their favorite potential wilderness areas, and I know they will be disappointed not to find these areas..... recommended. Other people will be disappointed that any areas are being recommended at all." And, again, "many people were concerned about how wilderness would affect access to public lands. Some felt that it would further restrict their access, while others wanted to see areas better protected from motorized access."

This clever wording suggests public opinion on protecting more wilderness in West Virginia was all over the map. What he carefully does not report is that, in fact, over 90 percent of the 13,000 public comments wanted more wilderness preserved than the agency draft proposed. Ninety percent is a landslide in anyone's book!

Fortunately, deciding what West Virginia lands will be preserved as wilderness is not up to a Forest Service official in Wisconsin to decide. Instead, the historic Wilderness Act of 1964 provides that our elected representatives in Congress will make this decision. The Forest Service has made its recommendation—but so can every one of us. As it did in protecting our beloved Otter Creek, Dolly Sods and Cranberry Wilderness areas, it seems Congress will have to once again step in and protect the areas that the Forest Service has failed to. Wild wonderlands like Seneca Creek, Spice Run, and expansion of the Dolly Sods Wilderness will be preserved—if we all call and write our U.S. senators and representatives.

In voting for the 1964 Wilderness Act, Senator Robert C. Byrd, Jr. observed that opponents of wilderness preservation "seem to consider the chances of exploitation or further development of remaining areas of wilderness better under administrative determination." This new, deeply flawed and unresponsive Monongahela plan proves Senator Byrd's wisdom in insisting that wilderness will be more surely preserved through legislation.

Please send a letter to our Congressional decision makers today. Their contact information is listed here. One letter copied to the Senators, your Representative and the Governor would be very powerful.

(See the *ACTION ALERT* on page 3 for more information and how to access the Final Management Plan on line.)

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3954
Fax: 202-228-0002

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-6472
Fax: 202-224-7665

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall II
2307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-3452
Fax: 202-225-9061

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
2302 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-4172
Fax: 202-225-7564

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
1431 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-7856
Fax: 202-225-7856

Governor Joe Manchin III
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, E.
Charleston, WV 25305
Toll Free: 1-888-438-2731



Forest service must protect our wilderness

I was truly disappointed to learn about the Forest Services final management plan for Monongahela National Forest (Sept. 20) and even more angered by the comments of David Ede.

It is clear that the Forest Service paid no attention to the thousands of comments in favor of more wilderness protection. The Mon belongs to the people of the United States, and people do come from across the country to visit such special places as Seneca Creek, East Fork Greenbrier, Spice Run and Big Draft.

Protected public land like wilderness helps our economy by attracting and retaining new businesses, residents, and generates travel and tourism, one of the fastest growing sectors of West Virginia's economy.

And even if wilderness brought **no** business, it is very important that we preserve wild places for our spiritual and physical health. We can't continue to blow up our mountains and fill in our streams and expect to have a future.

I urge our leaders in Congress to work together to permanently protect the areas disregarded by the Forest Service. If we act now to protect wilderness we ensure that it will always be there for our future generations. Lets leave a wild legacy!

Julian W. Martin

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BIG RUN STREAMWHACK

August 19-20, 2006 by Susan Bly

Streamwhacking is not for the faint or delicate of disposition, and so was taken on by two seasoned bushwhackers. Streamwhacking involves following a stream to see what challenges the stream may hold. Relatively little loss of elevation provides no thrills for the chill seeker, but if you toss in a mountain and marinate with boulders, now you're talking adventure.

Judy Smoot joined me on Friday evening for camping in the Olson Tower area. On Saturday, we loaded our daypacks and backpacks and rode 2 1/2 miles down FR 18 to a campsite near Big Run. After setting up tents and hanging



ing bear bags, we rode our bikes down to the Limerock trail and parked.

We hiked 1.6 to the first tributary and had lunch below an old sign indicating that FR 18 was 2 miles above us and the Blackwater River a 1/2 mile below us. This sign is so old, that it lists the abandoned Flat Rock Run trail. Neat to see memorabilia.

Popped over another rise and encountered Big Run itself. From there it was all uphill to the forest road. Let the fun action begin! Boulder scrambling is a live-in-the-moment sport, in that you are looking for hand holds on the boulders, scouting out routes around unsurpassable obstacles, assuring your footing in the water and popping up over a rock to behold a waterfall. Your mind cannot wander as you must concentrate on the here and now. It brings life down to its simple elements.

Our first episode involved finding a set of waterfalls hidden below the trail crossing of the Limerock. These are well worth exploring and viewing. During the ascent, we encountered a few cascades here and there. The water level was down from its usual level, which was actually a good thing for us as it gave us drier rocks to cling to. Avoid moss green and grayish rocks as they spell disaster to a misplaced foot. A feature of low water is the white streaks of foam in the more still pools of water. They formed arabesque and circular paisley patterns. We rested here and there, enjoying the coolness of the shade and little dips into the water.

Just before climbing the banks to FR 18, we paused for two more waterfall shots. As Judy was sitting along the road changing from

her water shoes to hiking boots, I gazed absently up the road towards our campsite. What should waltz across but a 250-300 pound bear? He had come out of the stream above us and was going over into some rhodies to eat more grubs. My heart raced a bit faster. I was glad we had a clean campsite or else our tents would have been shredded. Judy went a bit ahead of me, as she wanted to see the bear. I on the other hand could care less about ursine observations. We could hear him scooting around in the underbrush, bent on extracting calories from the environment.

The second days hike involved riding our bikes down to the Limerock again and parking as before. We descended nearly the entire length of the trail to the Blackwater rail trail. After crossing Big Run, stinging nettles had become fruitful and multiplied. As I was foolishly wearing shorts, my legs were being filleted alive. At first, not knowing the extent of the fields, I danced and stepped high through them. Once the stings settled in, the fury at such creatures took hold of my being. We went on a rampage, swinging cudgels of oak and striped maple branches. We whacked a path clear through this oasis of pain and emerged scathed on the other side. I really don't know how mountain bikers stand the pain of pedaling through these and the stunted greenbriers along the first section of trail. I personally would rather stumble through greenbriers than walk through stinging nettles.

Just before the end of the Limerock, we descended Flat Rock run to the Blackwater rail trail crossing. An older Monongahela hiking guide listed a 20-foot must-see waterfall. Well, an earthquake, frost upheaval or some erosional force had cracked a 15 foot section of rock askew and wrecked the once scenic waterfall. Bummer.

We ate lunch and finished just ahead of the small shower that started falling through the leaves. We hightailed it to the railroad underpass and watched ripples of water dance along the massive bottom of the corrugated steel pipe. The other end dropped off into space towards the Blackwater River but some overhanging slots were present.



Curiosity drove me to the other side where I gazed down on a continuation of the rippling stream flowing downhill on the corrugation before dumping itself into empty space.

After the shower was over, we continued up the rail trail to Big Run. After some considerations, I followed the stream 1/2 mile up to the confluence with the Limerock and met Judy at a later location and time. Streamwhacking is one of the last ways to explore the Monongahela and I'm glad we were able to view the beauty laid before us.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Pictures are of Judy and Big Run waterfalls

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OTTER CREEK

by Mike Juskelis

August 26-28, 2006. Man, have I missed the Mon! We were supposed to explore parts of the Cranberry Wilderness in June but a pretty serious weather front caused us to cancel the trip. This time the weather was more agreeable. Gadget Girl, Short Stack, Dr. Mud E. Boots and myself all met at the Condon Run trailhead and began our trek into the Otter Creek Wilderness by noon under blue skies.

Over the past 5 years I have managed to hike all of the trails in this venue except those in the southwestern corner, namely the Yellow Creek and McGowan Mt trails and the far upper section of the Moore Run Tr. The latest edition of the MNF trail guide noted that the McGowan Mountain Trail had been made difficult to follow by storm damage in recent years. Eric Sherada shared his GPS data, map and knowledge gained from his '05 trip with me so I decided to go for it.

As we started down Otter Creek Trail we noticed that the creek was barely flowing and all of the side streams were dried up. Things had been pretty dry recently and it looked like the famous waterworks we've become accustomed to would not be too grand this time. We turned north onto the Yellow Creek Trail and then went right onto the McGowan Mountain Trail. Most of the first day's miles were on old railroad grades with only a few steep sections so we were able to make good time. Near the top we passed through some enormous boulders. It seemed as if some greater power had left their building blocks out. Before we knew it we were walking through the upper bogs of Moore Run full of cotton grass at its peak. We stopped for a photo op and I glanced at my trusty GPS. I was relieved to find that we were less than 0.25 miles from familiar trail. The waypoint that I had loaded for the lower "hidden" bog was right on so we paid a quick visit to it before proceeding to our base camp.

We reached our first night's destination, a two level campsite tucked away at the end of the Moore Run Trail before the creek crossing, by 5:00 P.M. The skies were still blue but we refrained from playing in the creek and went about setting up our tents and securing our gear. As we were eating our dinner the rumble of thunder could be heard in the distance. We managed to finish up and got the bear bag

hung just as it started to rain. It was only 7:00 P.M. but the precipitation grew heavier and soon drove us into our tents for the night. As we lay in our tents we could hear not only the heavy pelting of the raindrops on our flies but the increas-

ing volume of the creek as well. (The famous Otter Creek waterworks would be putting on a show for us tomorrow after all.)

The next day saw the rain gone and the sun trying to come out. We ate a leisurely breakfast and prepared for a 9-mile day hike. Those familiar with this first creek crossing knows that it is wide and usually shallow. Overnight it had risen about 2 inches making it necessary to don our sandals/stream shoes to make the ford. After crossing we switched footwear and proceeded up the Possession Camp Trail. This is yet another railroad grade that passes through some wonderful Hemlock groves and waterfalls. Possession Camp Run was really running down the side of the mountain fast and hard. We took a long break at the junction with the Green Mountain trail before beginning our descent back to the creek. Oddly, this trail seemed a little steeper and rockier than the last time we hiked it. Fortunately we were traveling without packs so made good time to the first creek crossing. We decided to have lunch here. Our initial plan was to wait until we arrived at Moore Run before partaking in the coolness of the creek but the deep wading pool behind a rock proved too much of a temptation. First I, and then GG, found ourselves immersed in the refreshingly cold creek. Try as we may we couldn't coax the others to join us.

After lunch we continued our trek along the creek, taking in all of the falls and chutes, too numerous to count. This section of trail between this last crossing and Moore Run had a couple of difficult blowdowns across it this year. Now there were even more. Some were some very big, complex tangles of multiple trees. As



Pam, Ellen and Gary wonder "What could have bored that round hole through all that rock?"

we approached the first of these tangles we met a USFS Ranger (The first I have ever seen in the wilds!) with notepad in hand. He was performing a trail damage inventory so he could schedule crews to come in and make the trail safe again. Hopefully he will make it happen!

We stopped at Moore Run and laid about the rocks for a while before continuing on to camp. A light mist created a little increase in our pace but proved to be non-threatening.

I think we all ate early that night and some set about collecting firewood. It looked like there was going to be a campfire, rain or no rain. Surprisingly, as the last stick of Birch fizzled out to a dim ember the rains started again. This time it was 8:30 and everything was secure. We reluctantly called it a night and listened again as the volume of the creek increased even more.

The next day we arose to a humid environment but the rain had ended. We were able to enjoy one last camp-side meal before stashing our wet gear into our packs. (I hate it when it feels like you are carrying more weight at the end of a trip than at the beginning!). We said goodbye to the wilderness and began a pretty easy 4-mile hike (with slightly heavier gear) back to our cars. We had all agreed to share a lunch at the infamous Alpine Hotel before parting ways but we arrived back at the trailhead at 10:30. O.K. ... let's do breakfast instead! I never knew Sausage Gravy and Biscuits could taste so good!



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West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

To join us for any of these outings, please sign up with the trip leader, who can give you more information. Their contact information is listed at the end of the trip description. Please contact the trip leader and reserve your spot. In doing so, you may learn critical details about the outing. For instance, all available spots may be taken or the trip leader may cancel an outing if an insufficient number of people have signed up.

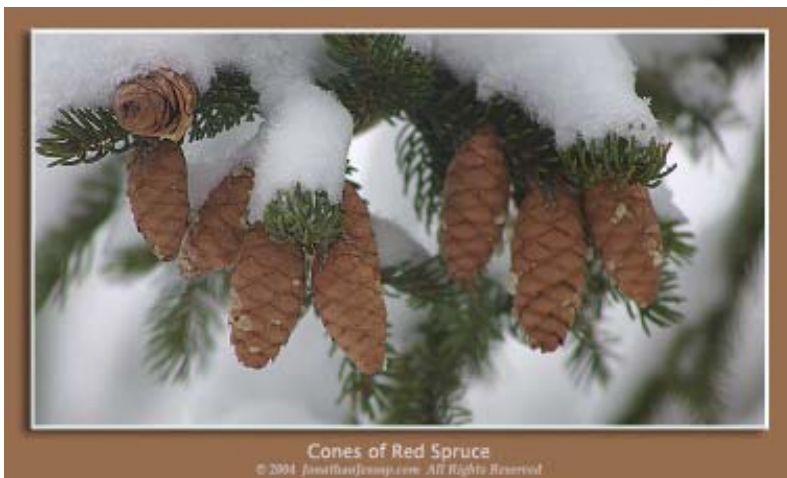
Our outings vary greatly in difficulty, scenery and type. Groups average between five and ten people, though we have as many as twenty people on some outings. Lower group numbers tend to provide a better experience for everyone. Trip leaders exercise a great amount of flexibility as far as leadership style, foul weather rescheduling, daily route, etc. Please be considerate and follow his/her instructions.

If you would like to lead an outing please contact Dee, Outings Coordinator at dee.quaranto@gmail.com

Open Dates: 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 lunch for a picnic on Larry's mountain. Call in advance to schedule.
JM: Julian Martin (304) 342-8989; martinjul@aol.com

October 7-9: Cranberry Backcountry. MNF Backpack Hike approximately 30 miles through this scenic area. **MJ:** Mike Juskelis (410) 439-4964; mjuskelis@cablespeed.com

October 8: Big Draft – Anthony Creek – Laurel Creek. Explore off trail areas of Anthony Creek and newly discovered rugged parts of Laurel Creek Waterfalls. Easy to moderate hike – 4 to 5 miles, mostly flat. Must ford Anthony Creek but rock hoppers may be able to stay dry. Meet at 11 AM at MNF parking at Anthony Village 4 miles east of Frankford, WV. **BH:** Bob Handley (304) 497-2276 gbrbat@ntelos.net



Cones of Red Spruce
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Calling All Coneheads

October 14 & 15: We need red spruce cones. As part of the Highlands Conservancy's red spruce ecosystem restoration efforts, we have been providing local source red spruce seedlings to agencies, conservation organizations and land owners for use in restoration and reclamation projects. It is important that we use local source seedlings to protect the genetic integrity of our indigenous trees. Our red spruce have evolved through the centuries to be perfectly adapted to the local growing conditions such as soils, moisture, climate, associated plant and animal species, elevation, etc.

Red spruce is not a species commonly grown by commercial nurseries. While trees might be available to be custom grown, the only commercial seed source for these trees is from Nova Scotia. A northern maritime area, we would not want to introduce trees from there to the inland mountains of West Virginia.

Using some of our collective knowledge, experience and expertise acquired from our balsam fir conservation work, we began collecting red spruce cones, for seed, in 2001. Since then, we have had grown nearly 100,000 seedlings, all of which have been planted back in the West Virginia Highlands, where they originated.

Unfortunately, red spruce are not reliable cone producers. As our initial cone collections' yield of seed is nearly depleted, 2006 has finally brought an abundant cone crop. The past 3 years there has been almost no cones available. So we are working this year to gather as many as we can while the pickins are good.

So, how do you do it? — With the help of the red squirrels! Since the cones are in the highest reaches of the most mature trees, most are out-of-reach, even for extension ladders. The squirrels cut the cones down from the trees to build winter caches. So the task of collecting them involves wandering around in spruce country until you find a tree with a lot of squirrel activity. These trees are easily recognized by the large

(continued on page 13)

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MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST HIKING GUIDE

by Allen deHart & Bruce Sundquist

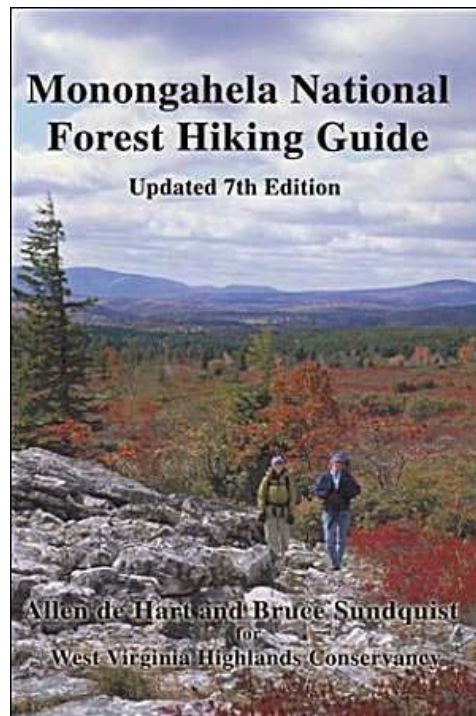
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(Cones - continued from page 12)

amounts of cones and cone parts scattered beneath them. The squirrels shred the cones into pieces as they extract the seed. Then you get on your hands and knees and pick up the cones. Simple as that!

Beware!!!! The cones are sticky. Very Sticky! In fact, this is the easiest way to tell if the cone is fresh, i.e. this years crop. Since the ground in spruce forests is often littered with cones, a search image must be developed to identify the fresh cones, which are the only ones that will have viable seed in them. These cones will often be green or light brown, and tightly closed. They often appear almost frosted with resin.

If you would like to help gather cones, perhaps live in the highlands, or are planning a hike, we would appreciate your help. We use rubber gloves on one hand and plastic grocery bags. Take some along with you next time you're in spruce country and maybe you'll see a lot. Maybe not. It's really hit and miss. If you're not prepared to pick them up yourself, but come across a bonanza, let us know and perhaps we can go there to collect them. Do you know of a blown-down or wind thrown spruce with cones on? — or developments that are cutting or bulldozing spruce that might make cones accessible for picking?

If you would like to put some extra effort into helping us, and want to gather cones on Forest Service lands, permits are required. We have worked out all the details so individual volunteers have a quick, painless process to get a Forest-wide cone gathering permit. These permits allow cone gathering in most areas of the Mon, excluding research natural areas, wilderness and botanical areas.

[Contact Dave Saville at daves@labyrinth.net for details about the permits, if you would like to help, or Kent Karriker at the Forest Service, 304-636-1800 for a permit.]



"Having Land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want"..Andy Warhol

We're Friends of the Mon ! Protecting and enjoying our Monongahela National Forest

WILDERNESS WEEK in Washington DC

by Mark Jennings

When THE HIGHLANDS VOICE asked me to share my experience at Wilderness Week, two thoughts came to me.

Make no underestimation. First, about the broad import and the timeliness of wilderness designation: land use in West Virginia will be one of the big debates during the next decades.

Second, there is developing, an opinioned, vocal and diverse body of voters capable of achieving critical mass around this issue and other environmental matters. Increasingly it will alter the political landscape here.

These days I spend my time photographing forest interiors. One day I was lucky enough to talk through open car windows with a friend I met on a deserted Forest Service road. Frank Gifford told me that he wanted to start a group that would do what it could for wilderness creation in the southern Mon.

Frank and Bonnie Gifford of the Gesundheit! Institute in Pocahontas County hosted and helped organize the first gatherings of the Southern Mon Wilderness Group. I attended. In time I saw the group give voice to the opinions of a good cross section of Mon users, but simultaneously I saw that, as so often is the case with local grass roots efforts, momentum depended solely on the stubborn work of a very small number of people.

This circumstance led me to ask myself the famous questions, "If not me, then who?" and "If not now, then when?"

One Saturday I walked through the primeval dusk of the Big Draft bottom, and two days later I found myself in intimate and earnest conversation with senior congressional staffers. We looked at the future of Big Draft.

"Talk to your children about sex. Everyone else does." read a billboard in Washington, D.C. a few years ago. Imagine one that goes "Talk to your politicians about wilderness. Everyone else does."

The West Virginia delegation to Wilderness Week did not meet any "everyone else" types, but during talks with staff I heard stern references to "other constituents" and frequent cautionary phrases like "It won't be easy." accompanied by knowing looks.

This and more led to believe that typically "other constituents" a.k.a. "everyone else" types, although small in number, stand about 8' tall, have unlimited resources, time and connections, work ceaselessly, and are persuasive and good looking. They must be long-lived, and definitely they can make huge impacts on politicians and staff.

"Other constituents" are known, of course, to be at least very wary of wilderness, and reportedly many of them do not want any more of what they perceive to be a threatening monster capable of eating up the forest and possibly little children and whole subdivisions.

Staffers and politicians, on their side, appear to have a long memory of the deep needs and fears of these extraordinary beings. With these matters the former are sometimes more generally familiar than they are with our own humble and simple petitions.

The cheerful parting advice of one particularly powerful and supportive staffer went straight to our hearts, "Keep those cards and letters coming in."

We and our allies have been all about cards and letters from the start - 13 k e-mails, letters and faxes to the Forest Service alone and an unknown number to Congress itself - and naturally this simple advice must have had, we suspected, a message below the surface.

Our group struggled with a specter: "8' tall, hard-working and well connected. It will take an army to go up against that." We had a political analyst among us, fortunately. During his stint with the Cub Scouts he had learned that what the big, the powerful and the few succumb to most often is an overwhelming bunch of little people who know what they want.

There exists, however quietly, a vast army in the churches, schools, town councils, civic organizations, tourism boards, chambers of commerce, county commissions, and clubs of the region. It has a letter writing, e-mailing and faxing capability of irresistible power. Its ranks do not gladly file into book signings or benefit theater performances. They do, however, welcome guest speakers. Some of us have already found much unexpressed support for wilderness within this army. It should be mustered and deployed. This force can rival the few, the powerful, and prevail.

Do you think you'll win them with a firm handshake and a steady eye? Do you remember the movie MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON?

Forget all that. John Wayne movies are not like actual combat either.

You have decided at last to go to Capitol Hill. The Wilderness Week staff has been waiting.

Over two days I counted seven podium talks by eleven speakers and heard topics ranging from the history of wilderness creation, through the protocols of meeting members of congress, to recently researched facts and figures about the effects of wilderness on business and economy.

You know your local issues. These talks are necessary prep for your debut on the Hill. The Wilderness Week staff is prepared. You will be too.

Capping days one and two were evening receptions, one casual and relaxed at a Capitol Hill bar and complete with a few friendly congressional staffers interested in getting to know us better. The second was dress-up and in the cavernous foyer of the Rayburn House Office Building.

This latter party attracted hundreds to a chamber ensemble and harangues by a number of pro-environment politicians of both parties. Included was our own formidable Nick Rahall.

Wilderness week is in part a college. A college is a community of scholars, and students learn as much from each other as from the faculty. Here is a delegation with the fascinating story of a Hill visit that went wrong. Did you get the one about how a committee member can tweak a proposed bill so it will be introduced in a preferred committee rather than in another? Something seems to be moving in staffer Smith's head. You talk with him on Wednesday, don't you?

Those breakfast and lunch, hotel lobby and elevator ride conversations, and those lingering talks over dinner are important.

The days are long, averaging 10 hours each on the two full days that the West Virginia delegation attended. 10 hours from hotel lobby nose counting in the early morning to the last post-debriefing debriefing over dinner.

In between you subway a little, walk a fair amount between 3 or 4 afternoon meetings on the Hill, and eat hurriedly per opportunity.

Mostly you sit and talk and talk, and talk some more. Carefully and politely. Very carefully. Good posture and diction. Excellent eye contact and sincerity.

Politicians and staffers are professional talkers -and listeners- and a lot rides on what is said and not said, and how it's said or not said. It's chess. No lectures, anguished pleas, righteous indignation, impassioned grandstanding or heroic debate.

It's just good solid exposition, questions, answers and speculation, all in the service of persuasion and compromise.

This is the way it's done the world over. Always.

It is hard work and you leave with respect for what the pros do all day. Their next meeting is in five minutes with United Pinwheel Attendants Union staff

Yours is in a half-hour on the other side of the Hill in a Senate office

(continued on page 15)

We're Friends of the Mon ! Protecting and enjoying our Monongahela National Forest

a second view:

OH MY ACHING FEET !

(or "A Walk Through the Halls of Congress")

By Carla Kesling

You hear many people speak of the "Halls of Congress", but let me tell you about the streets and sidewalks outside the "Halls of Congress"—THEY ARE EXTREMELY HARD!!! But I must say, every ache and pain my feet have suffered was well worth the trip to lobby for more Wilderness areas in the Monongahela National Forest.

My husband, Randy, and I are members of Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited and actively participate in chapter activities. We also enjoy hiking and photographing the great outdoors, especially in the Monongahela National Forest. It was through these activities that we became involved with The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition and its goal of the addition of more Wilderness areas within "The Mon" than are currently being proposed through the Monongahela National Forest Plan.

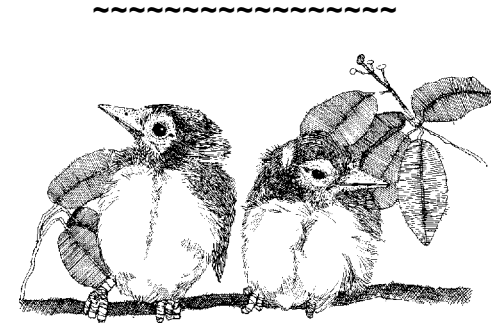
In June, we attended the Wilderness Workshop at The Mountain Institute near Spruce Knob. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn how to be more effective in attaining Wilderness status for more of our beautiful mountain areas. Through attending this workshop we met some of the most dedicated advocates of this cause. We were then asked to participate in Washington, DC, with the lobbying during Wilderness Week. Randy was unable to make this trip, but we both felt it was important that one of us participate.

September 10th arrived very quickly. The first function was a reception that evening at The Wilderness Society. I was amazed at the number of people from all over the country that were part of the week; approximately 135 people were expected! We met there again the next morning to learn more strategy for our visits to our Congressional representatives' offices. Then it was on to Capitol Hill for my very first lobbying meeting, which was with Bridget Bunner in Alan Mollahan's office.

Since Bridget is new to her position with Congressman Mollahan, Mary Wimmer (WV Chapter of Sierra Club) and Dave Saville (WV Highlands Conservancy) gave her an overview of the meaning of Wilderness areas and how the Wilderness Coalition determined which areas of the forest would be prime areas for this designation, which can only occur through an act of Congress. One of the ways these areas were selected was through several years of studying the Monongahela National Forest and the traditional uses of the various areas that we are championing. Dee Quaranto (WV Highlands Conservancy) spoke to Bridget about coming to West Virginia from New York and staying in the state because of her love of these mountains, which allow her to pursue her interests in backpacking and hiking. She has stayed for over 27 years. Then I explained how important it is for me as a native West Virginian that these areas are preserved in as pristine a condition as possible. My own family has been utilizing the Monongahela Forest as far back as I can remember with fishing and hiking. We are still taking advantage of the current Wilderness areas and want to see more areas designated Wilderness for our future generations to enjoy. Matt Keller (WV Wilderness Coalition) and the rest of us thanked her for taking the time to meet with us and conveyed the importance of support from Congressman Mollahan for more Wilderness areas.

Tuesday afternoon we had meetings with Clay Crownover in Senator Rockefeller's office and with Franz Wuerfmannsdobler in Senator Byrd's office. What an amazing experience this was; to be able to let our elected officials know exactly what we, their constituents, would like to have happen and that we want their full support! Being able to do this in person, with our own personal viewpoint, is something more of us should do.

As I am writing this, it is a week later, my feet have fully recovered, and I realize how much easier it is to walk the "Wild Mon". I also realize how much better I feel now that I have walked the "Halls of Congress" in order to try to ensure that there will be many more walks in the "Wild Mon" for us and for all the generations to follow.



(Mark Jennings continued from page 14)

building. Better amble a little faster, past the Supreme Court and protestors with conspicuously taped mouths.

Inevitably, and maybe improbably to some folks, the neighborhood gets to you. Congressional office buildings are impressive, monumental and sometimes beautiful. They have first class design and materials. The government has not skimped with our money and wants everybody to know it.

The people, you think, look more purposeful than ordinary office workers and visitors. They are, after all, making history. Then you think for an instant, that in some small way you are too, and you hurry a little more, erect.

An extraordinary thing happened during our first day on the Hill. Our leadoff meeting, in Nick Rahall's office, was an encouraging warm-up. Then, during the second, with Byrd senior staffer Franz Wuerfmannsdobler, John Manchester, Al Johnson and I hit stride, and soon the four of us reached clarity of respective positions and a reassuring amiability.

Franz's concluding and quiet "Would you like to meet the Senator?" was a thunderclap. No one moved or spoke for a moment. Maybe we three gurgled and pointed. No one will ever know, but Franz disappeared and then soon reappeared, saying simply, "Let's go."

You cannot avoid feeling that you are somebody during your first ride on the underground tram that connects the buildings of the Capitol complex. Franz got us through with nods and a few quick words.

Tiger Woods hasn't been here.

At the door of the Senator's second office, under the Capitol building itself, Franz deftly sheds us for five minutes. We try to talk about Capitol building history.

The massive doors open and shut noiselessly, admitting Franz to our petty discussion. I looked at the impossibly gleaming hallway floor as Franz says that he doesn't know the key to our unanswerable question.

He smiles. He motions us through one of the big double doors, which is now wide open. Looking over the shoulders of the others I see Senator Byrd standing alone in the middle of a very large office. He is smiling.

It is difficult to go on. Such remarkable impressions came to me during our exceptionally privileged conversation with the Senator that to relate them would exceed the scope of this article. Most of them do not directly touch the matters of wilderness creation in the Mon.

Here it is enough to say that to our grateful ears Senator Byrd stated that he would work toward legislating for more wilderness on the Mon! than the Forest Service has recommended.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Elections Overshadow Interim Sessions

by Don Garvin

Legislative Interim sessions this year have been slow and deliberative. It is, after all, an election year, so controversial issues seem to have been purposefully shelved for the time being.

Actually, most of the talk between legislators in the back rooms and hallways has focused on political candidates and the upcoming elections. Even membership on some Interim committees was actually juggled to provide political "cover" for members facing tough re-election campaigns.

Thus far, Interim committees have had few topics on their agendas of interest to Voice readers. Most environmental issues have been assigned to Judiciary Subcommittee B, which has had presentations on the ownership of coal bed methane gas and on the need for funding for cleanup of old underground storage gasoline tank sites. No legislation has been proposed on either of these matters as yet. This committee also has not yet taken up two other issues on their agenda – the bottle bill, and underground injection of coal sludge.

The Joint Legislative Oversight Commission on State Water Resources, chaired by Sen. John Unger and Del. Corey Palumbo, will receive DEP's final report on the quantity and use of West Virginia's fresh water resources by the end of the year. Meanwhile, the Commission is receiving monthly staff presentations on various elements that might be included in a statewide water resource conservation plan. The West Virginia Environmental Council is watching this process closely (as is the Chamber of Commerce, of course).

The Department of Environmental Protection has filed a slew of new rules that the legislature will have to deal with next session. These rules must first go through the Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee, chaired by Del. Virginia Mahan and Sen. Joe Minard.

The committee attempted to move two of the DEP rules at their September Interim meeting. However, proposed rule 33CSR9 on the use of "filtrate" from drinking water treatment plants (otherwise known as sludge) was a problem. First of all, DEP had agreed to some major changes in the proposed rule that were not yet in writing. Secondly, the committee heard comments from both WVEC as well as industry opposing some of the provisions of the rule. So the committee voted to hold the rule over.

It has been normal practice in previous years that most of the DEP rules are dealt with in the final monthly Interim session. We are told that this will likely be the case again this year. As I said above, there are a ton of these DEP rules this year. WVEC has already commented on some of the proposals during the agency's public comment process.

Two of the rules will significantly impact clean water in West Virginia. The first of these is the water quality standards rule package, which contains the Category B2 trout stream list. Industry folks hate this water quality category, because it gives trout streams higher protections than drinking water standards. The second is the antidegradation rule, which contains the Tier 2.5 stream list. Industry folks hate the Tier 2.5 designation because it limits their ability to degrade this state's most pristine waters.

Even if the Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee passes out both these rules as proposed by DEP, the fight over clean water is destined to be a major environmental battle in the 2007 Legislative Session beginning in January.

(Don Garvin is a WVHC board member and Legislative Coordinator for the West Virginia Environmental Council.)

NET METERING --

Coming Soon to West Virginia ?

by Frank Young

The answer appears to be "Yes"- and perhaps within less than a year.

Many of us felt considerable disdain for the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAAct), with its strong emphasis on fossil fuels and comparatively little emphasis on renewable energy sources.

But a little noticed part of EPAAct required state utility regulatory agencies to initiate general investigations into if and how each state might want to implement "net metering" and "smart metering" standards. In May of this year the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC) initiated a now fast moving investigation (Case No. 06-0708-E-GI) into offering customers net metering and smart metering.

"Net metering" basically means that a homeowner or small business owner can install his or her own electricity apparatus to generate power (wind turbine or solar panels, for example), and when that apparatus produces more electricity than the owner consumes then that excess electricity is fed into the power company's system, and the customer's account would be credited for that excess amount.

"Smart metering" means that the cost of electricity from a power company is based on the time of use- usually meaning that electricity consumed from the power grid costs more at the power company's "peak load" demand times, and less at certain "off-peak" load times. Smart metering is available on a consumer voluntary basis to American Electric Power customers in West Virginia. The state Public Service Commission (PSC) is expecting that other WV power companies will soon have voluntary "smart metering" tariffs built into their rates.

Parties to the case (called interveners) include the state's several commercial electric utility companies, the Commission's engineering and legal division staff, WV Citizen Action Group (WVCAG), WV Environmental Council (WVEC), and the Consumer Advocate Division (CAD) of the PSC, and a dozen or so individual interveners.

The major parties to the case have reached a tentative consensus on the primary issues, and net metering may look as follows:

- * Available to residential and general service customers
- * Limited to renewable energy generating sources
- * Up to 25 KW (25,000 watts) capacity
- * Full retail credit for all kilowatts returned to the grid
- * Credits carried forward on a rolling 12 month balance
- * "Smart metering" optional to all customers

But these are only tentative consensus issues, as the Commission will hold a public hearing on the matter on October 10th and 11th, and will accept briefs and comments until November 15th.

You can still offer comments about net metering / smart metering (Time of Use Rates) that you would want to make to the Commission.

Send comments to:

Sandra Squire, Executive Secretary
WV Public Service Commission
P.O. Box 812
Charleston WV 25323

-- Refer to Case No. 06-0708-E-GI; General Investigation into the Net Metering, Smart Metering and Interconnection standards.

-- Please suggest to the PSC that it implement net metering that at a minimum includes the six "bullet points"(*) listed above.



“KEEPER OF THE MOUNTAINS” FOUNDATION

by Frank Young

Keeper of the Mountains Foundation (KOTM) was created to fund efforts to preserve and foster the values of mountain culture, and especially to preserve Kayford Mountain in southwestern West Virginia from destruction by mountain top removal coal mining.

Larry Gibson's family has lived on or near Kayford Mountain since the late 1700's. More than 300 relatives are buried in the family cemetery on Kayford Mountain. That cemetery used to be on the lowest lying part of the mountain pass. Visitors looked “up” to the mountain peaks that surrounded it. But eighteen years after the “mountain top removal” project began, Kayford Mountain is now the highest point of land around. It is enveloped by a larger than 12,000 acre pancake in what was previously a mountain range. Since 1986, the slow motion destruction around Kayford Mountain has been continuous- 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Photos are provided compliments of Vivian Stockman and OVEC

TOP PICTURE: The wooded area in the lower part of the picture is what's left of Kayford Mountain. The single line of homes in the lower part of the picture are the only families that remain on the mountain. Larry Gibson's is located at the far right of the picture. The upper two-thirds of the picture is a view of the 12,000-plus acre Catenary Samples mine as it looked in January 2006.

PICTURE ON THE RIGHT: What's left of Kayford Mountain from another angle. The homes can be seen along the spine of the mountain running from the center of the picture and off to the lower right. The Gibson family cemetery that many of us visited during Spring Review is located on the rounded edge of wooded area in the upper right quadrant of the picture. Part of the Catenary Samples mine is at the bottom of the picture and portions of the formerly Princess Beverly mines wrap around the cemetery in the upper half of the picture.

KOTM Foundation supports ongoing efforts to tell the story of the destruction of Kayford Mountain and the surrounding communities. The 50 acre tract Larry occupies atop Kayford Mountain includes a natural “bowl” that begs to be hammered into an open-air amphitheater. KOTM Foundation wants to design and build that theatre and make it a center for the display and celebration of mountain culture. Its ambition is to inspire a “band of brothers and sisters” to come camp on the mountain, and contribute the sweat, muscle and imagination to make this idea a reality.

No picture of any size can convey what it means to be encircled by this kind of destruction. KOTM Foundation regularly hosts public officials, students, journalists and other interested citizens who have not witnessed a mountain top removal project in person.

Kayford Mountain is located near Cabin Creek, approximately 35 miles southeast of Charleston, West Virginia, and is accessible from Exit 79 on Interstates 64 & 77. Kayford Mountain is a 45 minute drive from Yeager Airport or the State Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia. KOTM Foundation will be happy to give you, your class or other group a tour of the area. It can be reached by email at larry.gibson@mountainkeeper.org, or by phone at 304-542-1134.

KOTM Foundation's “On the Road Again” program arranges ongoing speaking engagements at colleges, universities, churches, public seminars and membership groups. The list of places its “road show” has visited continues to grow. Your tax deductible gift of \$50.00 will provide this road show another tank of gasoline, and make another trip possible. You can make this valuable contribution now through Pay Pal by going to the web at: www.mountainkeeper.org, or by writing to: KOTM Foundation P.O. Box 96 Dawes, WV 25054.



BROCHURES

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has joined with the Sierra Club, Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Voices, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, Keeper of the Mountains Foundation and Christians for the Mountains 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, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314.

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

BUMPER STICKERS

To get free **I [heart] Mountains** bumper sticker(s), send a SASE to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton road, Charleston, WV 25314. Slip a dollar donation (or more) in with the SASE and get 2 bumper stickers. Businesses or organizations wishing to provide bumper stickers to their customers/members may have them free. (Of course if they can afford a donation that will be gratefully accepted.)

Also available are the new green-on-white oval **Friends of the Mountains** stickers. Let Julian know which (or both) you want.

(Beech Ridge Wind - continued from page 1)

PSC failed to properly consider the impact of the project on communities within the local vicinity of Beech Ridge, and that it did not fairly appraise and balance the interests of the public, the general interests of the state and local economy, and the interests of the applicant, as state law requires.

The MCRE request for reconsideration strongly suggests that MCRE will appeal the PSC's order granting the Beech Ridge certificate to the state Supreme Court of Appeals, "if necessary". MCRE challenges the PSC's assertion that Beech Ridge "substantially complied" with the mapping requirements of PSC's siting rules.

MCRE states, "If necessary, MCRE intends to request on appeal that the Commission's order be vacated and remanded with directions that the Commission make appropriate findings of fact and conclusions that Beech Ridge "substantially complied" with the siting regulations."

Further, MCRE challenges the PSC recognition of Beech Ridge's assertion that its facility is needed to meet the multi-state region's need for renewable energy resources. In pre-filed testimony Beech Ridge's project manager had stated, "The project will contribute to fulfilling the expending demand for renewable generation in the PJM Marketplace, where several states have or are developing renewable portfolios".

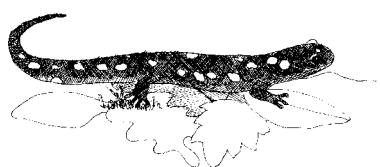
But in its challenge to the PSC order, MCRE says, "The West Virginia legislature has not announced a renewable energy policy, nor does West Virginia require utilities to supply energy from renewable resources." MCRE goes on to say that the legislative intent is expressed in its statutory charge to the Public Service Commission to, among other things, "(3) Encourage the well-planned development of utility resources in a manner consistent with state needs and in ways consistent with the productive use of the state's energy resources, such as coal".

In sum, MCRE asserts that, "the Commission exceeded its jurisdiction when it improperly considered the policies of other states and the need for sources of renewable energy in the region and weighed those factors against the interests of the citizens of West Virginia. It is clear that the renewable energy provided by Beech Ridge will be enjoyed by, and will fulfill the policies of, other states within the region serviced by PJM (regional power grid operator). It is equally clear that all of the negative impacts of this project will be endured by the citizens of West Virginia."

But in a footnote to its request for reconsideration, MCRE says, "To be clear, MCRE is not an advocate for the use and consumption of fossil fuels. MCRE proposes development of more efficient uses of existing energy sources consistent with protecting West Virginia's economy and environment. MCRE opposes this project because it seeks to prevent the destruction of yet another West Virginia mountain ridge for the purpose of providing a marginal amount of energy to consumers in other states."

The Beech Ridge siting certificate issued by the PSC includes 18 preconstruction and construction certificate conditions, and 11 general operational phase certificate conditions.

But the battle over the PSC consideration of the Beech Ridge wind farm has been long and heated, and it promises to get even longer. Until the statutory "Petitions for Reconsiderations" and the almost certain appeal(s) to the state Supreme Court run their course, those 29 certificate "conditions" will be virtually meaningless.



(Western Greenbrier Co-Gen Plant - continued from page 1)

"This plant has the potential to emit about 5 million pounds of pollutants per year," said Joe Lovett Director of the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment who represents us in the appeal.

Forty-ton trucks will haul coal gob from the abandoned heap near the small town of Rupert to the plant in the nearby small town of Rainelle. The waste ash from the plant will be hauled back to the gob site where it will be spread in an effort to neutralize acid runoff, according to the plan WGC submitted to the state. "We calculate there will be one coal truck every five minutes," Lovett said.

Readers of the VOICE may remember our involvement in opposing a larger co-gen plant proposed by ANKER coal at the Tenmile minesite in Upshur County. As with that proposal, the Greenbrier facility promises to eliminate a troublesome acid producing gob pile. As enticing as that idea may sound, other issues involved with the power plant itself - and the waste generated by the process, must be considered when balancing the tradeoff.

I was unable to attend the appeal hearing at the end of August, but I asked Jim Kotcon of the Sierra Club who attended part of those meetings and partnered with us in the earlier discussions with ANKER, just how the Greenbrier proposal compares with the co-gen plant previously proposed for Upshur.

Jim responded with the following. "The Upshur Energy project was to be a 450 MW facility. The WGC proposed project is approximately 92 MW, so it is less than 1/4 the size. WGC also proposes to use an 'Inverted Cyclone' configuration. They claim that this is a smaller footprint, and this is used to justify the federal subsidy as an 'innovative new Clean Coal' technology.

"However, according to engineering consultants, this is a relatively minor technical modification to the basic fluidized bed boiler design. It's hard to see this as demonstrating anything really new and it appears that the federal support (\$107 million) for WGC is mostly a way to heavily subsidize another coal-fired power plant.

"Other than that, the fuel specs are very similar, fluidized bed boilers are quite flexible and can burn a wide range of fuel types, from waste coal to run-of-mine coal, or even tires or hazardous waste.

"The air pollutant emissions of the Upshur and WGC projects would be quite similar. Fluidized bed boilers tend to be lower in sulfur (SO2) and nitrous oxide (NOx) emissions, but would likely be higher in particulates than conventional pulverized coal boilers unless there are additional pollution controls installed. That may have been debatable in 2002, but in recent years I have not seen any permits for fluidized bed boilers that do not also propose additional NOx, SO2 and particulate controls.

(continued on page 19)

--- HATS FOR SALE ---

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has two models of caps for sale.

One is khaki and the pre-curved visor is forest green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy in gold above the *We [heart] Mountains* slogan. The heart is red; and lettering is black.

The other model is tan with a muted green pre-curved visor. The front sports the lovely, in color, logo that appears on the VOICE masthead. Beside the logo is "West Virginia Highlands Conservancy" in green. The lower back of the hat has the *We [heart] Mountains* slogan.

Pictures of both appear on our website www.wvhighlands.org. Both are soft twill, unstructured, low profile with sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure. Cost is \$12 by mail. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to Julian Martin, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321

Pendleton County Update on Liberty Gap Wind Facility

Despite hundreds of letters supporting the West Virginia Public Service Commission's July 24 decision to dismiss Liberty Gap LLC's application for the Jack Mountain wind facility, the PSC decided to give the company another chance.

Liberty Gap, a subsidiary of U.S. Wind Force, seeks a state siting certificate for a 50-turbine industrial wind facility along several miles of Jack Mountain, abutting the border with Virginia's Highland County, along with a 200 kilovolt transmission line to carry the power to a substation in Franklin.

In its latest order, the PSC is granting Liberty Gap's petition for reconsideration under certain conditions.

- Liberty Gap is to file a statement confirming its agreement to extend the decision period by 120 days, until March 16, 2007.
- Liberty Gap is to pay the travel expenses, including lodging, for FOBPC consultants to travel to Pendleton County and conduct a site visit, as the company offered to do.
- Liberty Gap is to revise the release as described in its petition for reconsideration.
- Liberty Gap is to finalize site visit arrangements with FOBPC consultants by a certain date.

The PSC stated, "These conditions will remedy the Commission's concern that Liberty Gap's actions prevented the presentation of relevant information to the commission at hearing." However, it noted, "While the commission is not reversing its determination that Liberty Gap's conduct preceding dismissal was unreasonable, the commission concludes that by meeting the above conditions, the harm caused by Liberty Gap's conduct will be mitigated to the point that a fair litigation of the application can occur. In view of the considerable resources expended by all parties to date in this case, the case should proceed to a decision on the merits, provided the conditions above are met."

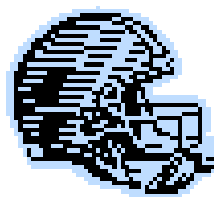


(Western Greenbrier Co-Gen Plant - continued from page 18)

"The real problem with waste coal burners is that they are burning waste coal. This is coal that was considered too dirty (too much ash) to burn efficiently in conventional boilers, which is why it ended up in the gob pile to begin with. As such, the combined volume of the mineral ash and the limestone from the fluidized bed process results in combustion by-products with a volume that is 30-80 % of the original fuel. The WGC plant, and some of those proposed in PA, claim that they will "clean up" those old gob piles, but then they haul the ash back, and they end up with an ash pile that is 80 % of the volume of the original gob pile. Most people would agree that this is really not much of a clean up.

"Furthermore, because of the high ash content, some of the better pollution controls don't work as well, so the NOx and SO2 emissions are higher on a BTU basis than those emitted from some new conventional boilers such as the proposed Longview plant in Monongalia County."

Similar to promises that accompanied ANKER's proposed co-gen plant in Upshur County, WGC promised some additional "eco" perks like making woodbrix from the ash, using heated effluent for a fish farm and ecopark. According to Margaret Janes of the Appalachian Center these add-ons are now "a distant memory" and we're left pretty much with the power plant.



EDITOR'S NOTE: There was a great deal of discussion and debate about naming the Marshall - West Virginia Football game the "COAL BOWL" .

One of my favorite commentaries on the issue was this letter written by Denise Giardina that originally appeared in the Charleston Gazette.It is reprinted here with her permission.

NOW that **The Game** is over, let's talk about **The Name**.

First, let me establish my credentials as a football fan. One of my earliest memories is of attending high school football games in McDowell County. I keep my cable TV mainly because I want to watch football.

And I am a rabid supporter of both WVU and Marshall. I have tapes of Marshall's national championships, of the first Marshall-WVU game, and of West Virginia's win in the Sugar Bowl. I root for both teams, though when they play one another, I must admit to bleeding a bit green.

I watched several games on the first day of the season, but I couldn't bear to watch the "Friends of Coal" bowl. That's because I believe the "Friends of Coal" are the Enemies of West Virginia. A more appropriate name would be Fiends of Coal.

Who are the "Friends of Coal"? Not coal miners. Just the opposite. This organization is simply coal companies, with a slick new name.

And what is the record of the "Friends of Coal"? Over the past 120 years, they have accomplished the following:

- Stolen much of the state's land and put it off limits to ownership by residents.
- Kept coalfield residents in appalling living conditions and deprived them of civil liberties.
- Destroyed jobs and ensured that the state's economy will remain at the bottom of national charts.
- Killed over 100,000 of the state's miners, and maimed countless others.
- Most recently, killed the miners at Sago (ironically while the WVU football team was playing the Sugar Bowl at the same time).
- Infected countless miners with black lung, even while denying them compensatory benefits.
- Fought tooth and nail, all along the way, against improved safety conditions.
- Destroyed a major portion of West Virginia's mountains, the state's most valuable asset.
- Corrupted the state's political process.

Given all this, the most appropriate venue for a game hosted by the "Friends of Coal" is not Morgantown or Huntington, but Hell.

Why did the representatives of our major state universities allow this game to be taken over by an industry that has been so divisive to our state? Can you imagine naming the game "The Democrats Bowl" or "The Republicans Bowl"? Of course not, for that would mean that a major portion of the state's population would be left out either way.

Or would we allow organizations to buy naming rights and present us with the "Pro-Choice Bowl" or the "Right-To-Life Bowl"? Of course not, for either way people would be offended or excluded.

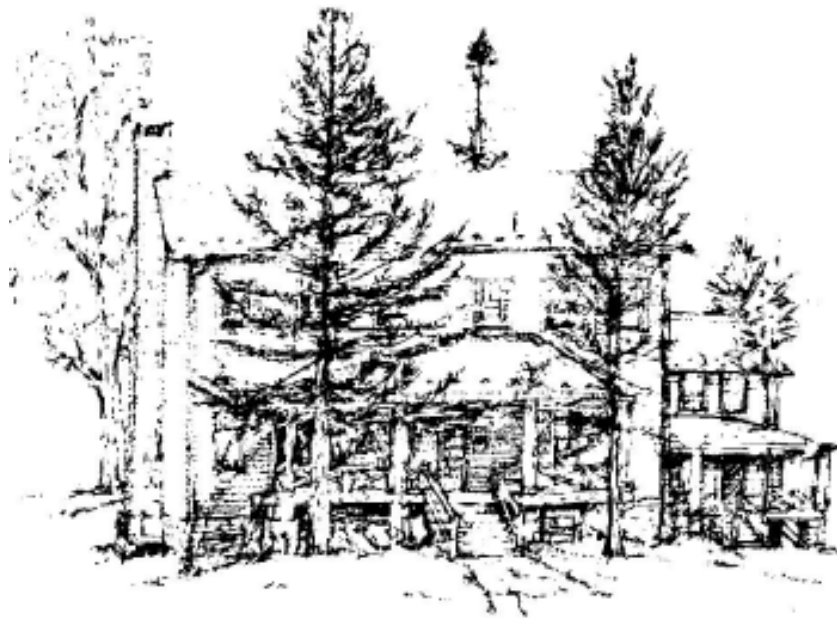
Why then were coal companies allowed to buy naming rights (for a pittance, by the way) and capture an event that should belong to all the people of this state?

Next year's game will be played in Huntington. I beg Dr. Stephen Kopp, the president of Marshall, to intervene and return this game back to all the people of West Virginia. I'd like to watch next year.

Giardina is the granddaughter and niece of coal miners and the author of "Storming Heaven" and "The Unquiet Earth."

*The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy presents
it's
41st Annual
Fall Review
at
Cheat Mountain
Club*

October 19-22, 2006



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.

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.

Program details are still coming together. Tentative itinerary:

October 19, Thursday: Afternoon check in, evening programs and social.

October 20, Friday: Guided outings to special locales like Gaudineer Knob, Greenbrier River Trail, collect red spruce cones, take a ride on one of the area's excursion rail roads. Fly fish along the Shavers Fork, read a book by the fire. Following dinner we'll hear a presentation on area history and red spruce from **Dr. Kenneth Carvell**, retired WVU Forestry professor and well-known author and historian.

October 21, Saturday: Wilderness workshops most of the day with special guests and presentations. Saturday evening, following a banquet dinner, we'll hear from Mon Forest Supervisor, Clyde Thompson (invited) and a presentation by Wilderness author and historian **Doug Scott**. All this followed by music from **Tanglewood**, a premier string band from Morgantown.

October 22, Sunday: We'll have more guided hikes, including visiting proposed wilderness areas on Cheat Mountain and East Fork Greenbrier. The Highlands Conservancy Board of Directors meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m.

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**Lodging**

Space in the CMC Lodge is limited, first come, first serve.

-----Double occupancy rooms beds are \$40/night

-----Beds in the 3rd floor loft (one king, 4 singles) are \$25

(Cost of rooms in the Lodge includes breakfast)

Camping is available on the grounds: \$5.00/person.

Bed and Breakfast in Durbin Visit [www.destinationdurbin.com](http://www.destinationdurbin.com)

**Meals**

Breakfast for folks not staying in the lodge: \$5.00.

Lunches (bag lunches available): \$8.00.

Dinner \$20.00.

Student/low income honorariums/scholarships available.

Learn more about Cheat Mountain Club. Visit:

[www.cheatmountainclub.com](http://www.cheatmountainclub.com)

**Scenic Rail Excursions**  
*Cheat Mountain Salamander  
Rail bus runs along Shavers Fork River  
11 am daily to High Falls of Cheat  
2:30 pm daily to Old Spruce*  
  
*Durbin Rocket  
Steam train along the Greenbrier River  
11:30am and 3pm daily  
1-877-686-7245 for reservations*

*For more information  
and reservations,  
Contact Dave Saville  
[daves@labyrinth.net](mailto:daves@labyrinth.net)  
304-284-9548*