

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

It was a wintry day in Elkins as the Board met for its winter meeting. Jim Solley reported to the Board that we are cruising right along in our plan to offer the hiking guide on CD. The CD would include the text of the current hiking guide plus color, printable maps as well as information on the Allegheny Trail and on the Wilderness Coalition's proposal for more wilderness areas in the Monongahela National Forest. While there is no finished product to show, Jim thinks the CD will be complete soon. We plan to offer it through the *Highlands Voice* and on the website initially as a kind of test marketing before offering it through our usual network of suppliers. Twenty first centuries, here we come.

Treasurer Bob Marshall reported that we are doing OK financially. We spent more than we took in for program expenses but that is acceptable since program is where we do our valuable work. We did better on administrative expenses than we had expected.

Administrative Assistant Dave Saville reported that he had been working hard during the past few years to solidify our estimates of memberships. Past estimates had included some complimentary trial memberships, some people who were behind in dues but still on the list, etc. He now has the list pared to the point that membership totals reflect actual dues paying members.

We are going to do a mailing to lapsed members, inviting them to return.

We had an inconclusive discussion of accepting advertising in the *Voice*. Some thought it would junk it up; others thought it would be a source of revenue. We resolved this by doing what all bodies do when they don't know what else to do: appointed a committee to consider it.

The public lands committee reported that we are going forward with our wilderness proposal and that it is likely that a bill will be introduced this year. The Forest Service expects to have a draft of its management plan out this spring. The alternatives it is considering are on its web site.

The wind power committee reported on the status of various proposals. A common thread in the pending proposals is that it appears that there is some difficulty getting financing for the projects. Apparently the bat kills at windfarms were unexpected and have thrown the companies (not to mention the bats involved) for a loop. The West Virginia Public Service Commission has recently published siting rules; public comments are due by February 18.

The highways committee reported on the intersection of its areas of concern with that of the Blackwater Canyon committee. As part of the mitigation to be provided for Corridor H, the Department of Highways was supposed to improve the rail trail that runs down Blackwater Canyon. But Allegheny Wood Products owns half of the trail and wants to make a logging road out of it. Since it is impossible to improve a rail trail while simultaneously making it into a logging road, nobody knows what to do. Corridor H Alternatives and the WV Department of Highways are doing alternative dispute resolution to see if it is possible to work this out.