

## **BOARD REJECTS WINDPOWER AGREEMENT**

### ***By Peter Schoenfeld***

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy held its annual membership and quarterly board meetings in Canaan Valley, Sunday, October 20, at the conclusion of the Fall Review. The business of the membership meeting was the election of officers and directors. President Frank Young, Senior Vice President Judy Rodd, Vice President for Federal Affairs Peter Schoenfeld, Vice President for State Affairs Carroll Jett, and Secretary Hugh Rogers were re-elected to two-year terms. No nominee for Treasurer was available at the time of the meeting, but President Young has since appointed Bob Marshall. Five directors-at-large were elected to two-year terms: Julian Martin, Bill McNeel, Bob Gates, Don Gasper, and Pam Moe-Merritt. Jonathan Jessup was elected to fill the un-expired one-year term vacated by Rafe Pomerance. The Board meeting was dominated by discussions of wind power. The Wind Power Committee (Frank Young, Carroll Jett, Peter Schoenfeld, Judy Rodd, Linda Cooper) had been responding to two pending applications to the WV Public Service Commission (PSC): A 200 turbine project on Allegheny Front by NedPower, and a 30-40 turbine project northeast of Snowy Point by Dominion Resources.

NedPower had offered the Highlands Conservancy an agreement, the main points of which included: (i) eliminating the southern-most mile of the project, (ii) a joint committee to design turbine lighting to minimize bird, bat, and viewshed impacts, (iii) additional jointly supervised avian studies, monitoring and pre-construction mitigation design, and (iv) work with landowners toward development of hiking trails accessing Stony River Reservoir. This agreement had been negotiated by committee members Young, Jett and Schoenfeld, but was opposed by Rodd and Cooper who instead favored intervention before the PSC. An organization of nearby landowners, Friends of the Allegheny Front, has already filed to intervene.

The board rejected the proposed agreement by a vote of 11 to 4 (with one abstention). Instead, resolutions were passed making the following points:

1. WVHC does not support permits for wind power projects that would degrade scenic vistas from Canaan Valley, Dolly Sods, Seneca Rocks, Spruce Knob and other special places in West Virginia.
2. WVHC insists that no permits be issued for wind power projects until siting criteria are in place including viewshed analysis and full environmental impact analysis.
3. The Wind Power Committee and the Executive Committee were authorized to intervene in both the Ned Power and Dominion cases after the Wind Power Committee consulted with legal counsel about further strategy.

As reported in this issue, President Young has written a letter to the Public Service Commission on siting criteria and expert analysis of wind power. Several other organizations have sent similar letters.

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The board took no action specific to the Dominion Resources application, which they have put “on hold,” pending completion of studies and resolution of siting uncertainties. Friends of Blackwater, led by Rodd and Cooper, has filed an intervention in this case. Other business included reports from the Legislative Committee, the Public Lands Committee, and the Timber Reform Research Project.

Legislative Committee chair Bob Marshall reported that priorities for the 2003 Legislature will be logging, water quality, and coal issues as they arise.

For the Public Lands Committee, Bob Marshall and Dave Saville reported progress on the Wilderness, National Forest management planning and Cheat Canyon issues. The Highlands Conservancy, the WV Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society will jointly hire a Wilderness Coordinator. The Forest Service received more than 700 comments on the first stage of their work on a new management plan. Nearly all are favorable to our positions. A WVU Student Sierra Club member has begun work on Coopers Rock and Cheat Canyon issues.

Judy Rodd announced the report, “Timbering and Flooding in Fayette County, West Virginia,” just completed by our Timber Reform Research Project and available on our web site.