



The Highlands Voice

Since 1967, The Monthly Publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

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Watoga State Park Gets Dark Sky Status!

The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) has awarded Watoga State Park in West Virginia with the official Dark Sky Park status. The adjacent Calvin Price State Forest and nearby Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park also jointly received Dark Sky Park designations as part of Watoga's application due to their close proximity. All are managed by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources.

Watoga State Park will be the center of Dark Sky programming and activities for all three areas. Watoga, Cal Price, and Droop Mountain Battlefield encompass 19,869 acres of public land in Pocahontas County and are receiving the first official International Dark Sky Place designations in the state of West Virginia.

"We welcome Watoga State Park, Calvin Price State Forest, and Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park with open arms, as they now not only represent the state of West Virginia in our Dark Sky

Places Program, but are also raising awareness for one of the largest and darkest skysheds within the eastern United States," proclaimed Ruskin Hartley, IDA's Executive Director.



In order to earn this international honor, the Watoga State Park Foundation's (WSPF) Board approved the pursuit of IDA's certification in 2018. Board members Mary Dawson and Louanne Fatora obtained grant funding to cover the costs of light fixture replacement throughout the entire park. They then engaged volunteer astronomers to take measurements of the quality of their night skies over the course of a full year, held

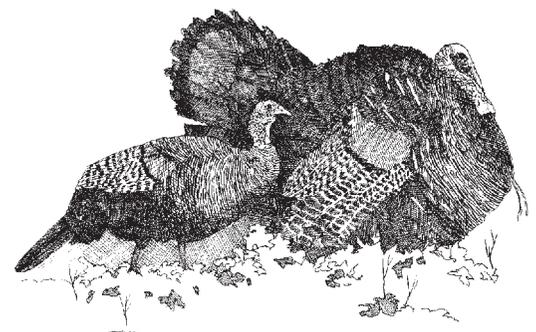
several educational dark sky events, and engaged in a collaborative effort with community partners.

"Watoga State Park Foundation is happy to have been instrumental in the pursuit of the recently approved Dark Sky

(More on p. 3)

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Thoughts from our President

By Larry Thomas

WOW!!! Thanks to everyone who attended our 2021 Fall Review. Although originally planned as an outdoor, in person, event somewhere in the highlands that the Conservancy is devoted to protecting, the Fall Review committee had to make the tough decision to make this year virtual because of the recent uptick of Covid 19.

Thanks to the great presenters for taking the time not only to prepare, but for contributing in making our Fall Review a great success. I know that all attendees enjoyed each and every presentation.

And a big thank you again to the committee - Marilyn, Jackie and Cory - for your fantastic job planning and executing the program, featuring the five great presentations focused on challenging issues that the highlands are facing today. Congratulations for a job well done!

October, as with every other month this year, was another very busy month at the Conservancy and throughout the environmental community.

Mother Nature took her good old time painting the fall canvas on the different elevations throughout the mountains and during each week the leaves were at their peak and putting on a fantastic show drawing visitors from all over the country as evidenced by the license plates seen on vehicles traveling all over the mountains.

The West Virginia Department of Natural Resources Adds a New Natural Area

The Canaan Valley Wetlands and Bald Knob in Canaan Valley State Park have been added to the West Virginia Natural Areas Program. The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources stated, "these two areas have the state's highest concentration of federally listed species and species of greatest conservation need".

This new designation will add additional resources to mitigate potential impacts of the environment, promote the areas for public awareness and education, encourage scientific study, and improve area management.

West Virginia Environmental Council (WVEC) is Preparing for the 2022 Legislative Session

The 2022 legislative session is fast approaching and the WVEC is preparing. WVHC has submitted its list of priorities which are in this order: public lands, off-road vehicle use, water quality, climate change, true transition of communities and clean elections. WVEC will be issuing alerts during the session which can be found at [West Virginia Environmental Council \(wvecouncil.org\)](http://wvecouncil.org).

WVHC Continues to Address the Off-Road Vehicles Threat to Our Public Lands

Researching the effects of the use of off-road vehicles on public lands, preparation of an Allegheny-Blue Ridges Alliance Conservation Hub project [ABRA Conservation Hub \(arcgis.com\)](http://ABRA Conservation Hub (arcgis.com)), a PowerPoint presentation supporting the WVHC, and other environmental organizations positions concerning permitting off-road vehicle use on West Virginia public lands continues. Research includes the negative effects, or impacts to soils, watersheds, vegetation, wildlife and their habitats, water quality, air quality and the creation of socioeconomic implications. Those impacts accrue very quickly and go way beyond interfering with a peaceful atmosphere, a big purpose for creating our public lands. We are

highlighting documented research to illustrate the reason that the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and other environmental organizations believe that it is a bad idea to consider permitting them anywhere on our public lands.

Underground Mine Safety Test Center Near Snowshoe Gets Green Light

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has opted to move forward with plans to buy a 461-acre tract along U.S. 219 straddling the Randolph-Pocahontas County line, where it will relocate its Underground Safety Research Program for miner health and safety.

NIOSH intends to build a 164,000-square-foot underground test facility that would be carved out of a rock formation 500 feet beneath the surface, requiring the excavation of 152,000 tons of rock through boring, drilling and blasting. Two-thirds of that rock would be used on-site for fill.

The underground facility would be lined with reinforced concrete to provide blast-resistance during tests. After such tests, gas and dust would be vented out of the test chamber and later hauled to a landfill. Water would not be involved in cleaning residue from the underground testing, according to the agency.

An above-ground fire suppression test facility would include a filtering system, to remove particulate residue from tests involving combustion. All water and chemical solutions used in firefighting tests would drain into a sump, from which the water would later be recycled and reused on site, and solid residue would be periodically hauled to a landfill.

An estimated 17,000 to 25,000 square feet of above-ground buildings would be constructed to accommodate offices, classrooms and control and storage facilities.

Eastern Golden Eagle: The Appalachian Mountains' Little-Known Apex Predator

Among my favorite bird sightings here in West Virginia is the "Golden Eagle". Recently I attended a presentation by Joel Merriman, the American Bird Conservancy's Bird-Smart Wind Energy Campaign Director. During his presentation, Joel mentioned an article that he wrote and just released "Meet the Eastern Golden Eagle" which can be found here [Eastern Golden Eagle: The Appalachian Mountains' Little-known Apex Predator - American Bird Conservancy \(abcbirds.org\)](http://Eastern Golden Eagle: The Appalachian Mountains' Little-known Apex Predator - American Bird Conservancy (abcbirds.org)). It is a great article that covers:

- Where Do Eastern Golden Eagles Live?
- Where do Eastern Golden Eagles Migrate?
- What do Eastern Golden Eagles Eat?
- How Many Eastern Golden Eagles Are There?
- Are Eastern Golden Eagles Endangered?
- What Threats do Eastern Golden Eagles Face?
- Are Wind Turbines a Threat to Golden Eagles?
- How Do Wind Turbines Impact Eastern Golden Eagles?
- Conserving Eastern Golden Eagles.

Joel provides a magnitude of information and a list of additional resources for those interested in Eastern Golden Eagles.

(More on the next page)

A Little More about Dark Skies (Continued from p. 1)

Park certifications for Watoga State Park, Cal Price State Forest and Droop Mountain Battlefield,” stated John Goodwin, President, Watoga State Park Foundation. “Due to the diligence of two WSPF board members, our many sensitive animal species will live and thrive in their accustomed darkness just as their ancestors did, free from artificial light pollution. Watoga State Park now offers many new educational programs for its guests. Many new opportunities now exist to study the heavens, nocturnal creatures and the newly discovered synchronous fireflies. This is a new and exciting time for the park and visitors. Not only can the park offer activities during the day, but now they can offer activities at night.”

Watoga State Park Foundation and Park staff would like to thank the many individuals and organizations who supported the application for the Dark Sky Park designation.

Who Is the International Dark-Sky Association?

The International Dark-Sky Association established the International Dark Sky Places (IDSP) conservation program in 2001 to recognize excellent stewardship of the night sky. Designations are based on the quality of the night skies, stringent outdoor lighting standards, and innovative community outreach. Since the program began, more than 180 Dark Sky Parks, Reserves, Sanctuaries, Communities, Urban Night Sky Places, and Dark Sky Friendly Developments have received International Dark Sky Place designations.

The International Dark-Sky Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, advocates for the protection of the nighttime environment and dark night skies by educating policymakers and the public about night sky conservation and promoting environmentally responsible outdoor lighting. More information about IDA and its mission may be found at <https://www.darksky.org>.

What It Took to Get There

A Dark-Sky designation does not just happen. It comes at the end of a long process, one that involves lots of data gathering, connecting with supporters, changes to lighting so that the sky remains dark, raising money, etc. etc. etc.

In the August issue of *The Highlands Voice*, Louanne Fatora described some of what she, Mary Dawson, the Watoga State Park Foundation, and their supporters did to prepare the application for Dark-Sky designation.

Now it is possible to see not just the final result—the Dark-Sky designation for Watoga—but some of the work they did there.

It was a lot. The application has information about Watoga State Park, Calvin Price State Forest, and Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park. There are maps, including one showing light pollution. Here are descriptions of the educational outreach Watoga has done and plans to do. There are measurements of light as well as pictures of Watoga, Droop Mountain, and Calvin Price; the pictures alone make looking at the application more than worth it. There are pictures of the light fixtures that are used to minimize light pollution. There are letters of support, including one from the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. There is information about the population of synchronous fireflies that live at Watoga.

You can see the entire application on the website of the International Dark-Skies Association, <https://darksky.app.box.com/s/vbcjobrr9s645cxhvj4o06eixrz4164j>.

Did you know the pronunciation of the expression “No fun at all” and “There are no stars in the sky” in Korean is the same?

More Thoughts from Larry (Continued from previous page)

Fat Bats are Happy Bats

Posted to Electric Power Research Institute Utility Management Group is an interesting article about bat research being conducted found here [Fat Bats are Happy Bats | Energy Central](#).

One of the animal species EPRI is monitoring most closely is bats. These important nocturnal animals are in critical decline across North America. The little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), the Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), and the tri-colored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) have declined by more than 90 percent in the past decade due to the rapid spread of a fungus (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*) which causes White Nose Syndrome (WNS). Research has shown that bats that enter

hibernation with larger fat reserves tend to fare better against WNS. Though they may still experience fungus growth on their bodies, the higher fat reserve means they are less likely to die from starvation as a result of WNS. The article goes on to describe the use of artificial prey patches to bats that enter hibernation with larger fat reserves tend to fare better against WNS. Though they may still experience fungus growth on their bodies, the higher fat reserve means they are less likely to die from starvation as a result of WNS. It will be interesting to learn how this experiment works out.

Enjoy *The Highlands Voice* as we report on other issues in or affecting the Highlands and please stay safe during the start of the holiday season.

With Record Visitation, Dolly Sods Approaches Gridlock

By Rick Steelhammer

With temperatures in the mid-40s and wind gusts strong enough to force visitors to take occasional stutter steps to maintain their balance, there was no doubt last Sunday that fall had arrived at the Dolly Sods Wilderness.

During the previous week, autumn colors had faded from bright red to a rusty purple in the huckleberry-dominated heath lands atop the 4,000-foot-high plateau at the north end of the 17,371-acre wilderness area. On the previous day, a cold, wind-driven rain battered those who ventured here.

Despite the sub-par weather, by 11 a.m. last Sunday, the small parking area here was full, and 129 overflow vehicles, displaying license plates from New Mexico to Maine, were jammed along both sides of Forest Road 75, the rocky, potholed U.S. Forest Service road providing access to the site. The parking situation left only one lane of the narrow dirt road accessible to vehicular traffic, causing drivers traveling in opposite directions to occasionally stop and wait for oncoming traffic to clear before moving forward.

Recently arrived day-hikers and backpackers trekked a quarter-mile or more up the road from their make-do parking sites to reach either the Bear Rocks Trail, which crosses the north end of the Dolly Sods

Wilderness, or trails accessing the adjacent Bear Rocks Preserve.

The latter site, managed by The Nature Conservancy of West Virginia, is a 477-acre tract of sandstone boulders and cliffs topped with wind-swept red spruce trees overlooking the North Fork Valley. The Bear Rocks Preserve and neighboring 727-acre Allegheny Front Preserve, also managed by The Nature Conservancy, were designated a National Natural Area by the National Park Service earlier this year.

“Last Sunday, we had intermittent gridlock here for the better part of the day,” said David Johnston of nearby Dry Creek, as he prepared to greet visitors setting out on the Bear Rocks Trail. Parked cars lining both sides of the road in the Bear Rocks area constricted traffic to one car width in a number of locations, he said, creating one-way traffic through the bottlenecks and occasional stand-offs between drivers traveling in opposite directions over who had the right of way.

“The weekend before that, when the blueberry bushes were at their peak colors, there were similar situations,” Johnston said. On one of those days, Johnston said, overflow parking at Bear Rocks stretched a half-mile down Forest Road 75 from the parking area, stalling traffic for so long “I gave up trying to get here from Blackbird Knob,” a trailhead a few miles to the south.

“Visitation to Dolly Sods has been steadily increasing over the last decade, but has really exploded last year and this year,” Johnston said, due to the arrival of COVID-19 and a trend toward using outdoor recreation as a way to practice social distancing with

family and friends. Visitation has also been spurred by recent stories and images about the appeal of spending time here that appeared in the Washington Post, on YouTube and in other media outlets.

“When I was a kid, my grandma lived in Keyser and we came up here a few times, and I remember it being a very unique area,” said Aaron Peach of Annapolis, Maryland, among the crowd of visitors arriving at Dolly Sods last Sunday.

After watching a number of videos of people backpacking at Dolly Sods in recent years, Peach returned to wilderness area in May for a backpacking trip. On Sunday, he returned for another backpacking loop, this time accompanied by Mark Chomas, a friend from New Hampshire, making his first visit to the Sods.

“Things are busiest here on summer weekends and during the fall leaf season,” said

Johnston, who would know, having spent most of his weekends in recent months greeting visitors at the busier trailheads in the Dolly Sods Wilderness.

Johnston coordinates the activities of 39 volunteers taking part in the new Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards program, created earlier this year to address the effects of record use of the

area. The program came about through a partnership between the Monongahela National Forest, which manages Dolly Sods, and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

Straddling portions of Grant, Tucker and Randolph counties at elevations ranging from 2,500 to 4,700 feet, the Dolly Sods Wilderness offers visitors landscapes more often associated with the American West or Canada than the central Appalachians. In its higher terrain, wide-open expanses of heath barrens stretch across the surface of the rocky plateau, which is dotted with beaver ponds and highland bogs and bordered by segments of red spruce forest. At lower elevations, steep canyons carved by the headwaters of Red Creek and its tributaries shelter dense rhododendron thickets and stands of northern hardwoods.

Dolly Sods and 14 other remote tracts of U.S. Forest Service land east of the Mississippi became part of the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1975, when President Gerald Ford signed the Eastern Wilderness Act into law.

The effort to protect and promote Dolly Sods as a federal wilderness area was among the first tasks taken up by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy following its creation in 1967.

“Since the Highlands Conservancy was one of the leaders in getting Dolly Sods designated as a wilderness area, we have a high interest in increasing our stewardship of the area to deal with



(More on the next page)

More about Dolly Sods (Continued from previous page)

issues that have arisen from high visitation,” said Larry Thomas, the conservancy’s president.

Last spring, Conservancy members and Monongahela National Forest personnel got together to begin planning how the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards program would operate.

“We brainstormed to see what kind of help the Forest Service could use from our volunteers,” Johnston said.

The goal was to help maintain Dolly Sods’ wilderness characteristics and ability to provide opportunities for solitude — two primary reasons for creating federal wilderness areas — in an era of record visitation.

They came up with a plan to:

- Install registration boxes at trailheads leading into the wilderness area in which visitors would list their names, zip codes, number of people in their group, approximate length of stay and planned trail routes. That information will give Forest Service planners a better handle on visitation numbers and trail use patterns. The Highlands Conservancy paid for the materials to build and install the boxes, and agreed to maintain them and keep track of data recorded by visitors.
- Post Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards at the busier trailheads on weekends to offer visitors information about trail routes and the basics of low-impact wilderness hiking and camping, and to encourage those entering the wilderness to sign the trail register.
- Have the volunteers conduct solitude monitoring surveys along specified trails by counting the number of hikers and campers they encounter during each of the two-hour monitoring hikes.

The first group of Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards went through a Forest Service training session in July.

“For many visitors to Dolly Sods, it’s their first time in a wilderness area, and they don’t realize it’s not just another section of the forest,” said Julie Fosbender, natural resources specialist for the Monongahela National Forest, who joined Johnston in greeting visitors to the Bear Rocks Trail last Sunday.

“Among other things, we encourage people to stay on existing trails and use existing campsites, instead of creating new ones,” Fosbender said.

Those arriving at the trailhead were offered maps of hiking trails in the Dolly Sods Wilderness, which list and explain the seven basic principles of “Leave No Trace” back-country travel on the reverse side. To minimize impact, backpackers are urged to limit their group size to a maximum of 10; refrain from camping within 200 feet of trails or streams; keep campfires small, using existing fire rings and pack out all litter and leftover food.

“I try to engage everyone in conversation after explaining that we’re working in partnership with the Forest Service to serve as a resource for people entering the wilderness,” Johnston said.

“I encourage people to sign the trail register, then I try to get some idea of what trail routes they’re planning to take, and offer suggestions if they’re open to hearing them,” he said. “If people don’t seem prepared for the weather conditions, I’ll suggest shorter, or more sheltered, alternative routes.”

No one has to sign the trail register or speak with the wilderness stewards.

“I had some trepidation about the reception we’d get when we first started doing this,” Johnston said. “But people have uniformly been willing to talk and seem to be appreciative of us being here.”

The trailhead stewards program is scheduled to end for the season by the end of October, when the wave of visitation is expected to ebb. Gates to the Forest Service roads leading to the most popular trailheads will be closed for the winter starting on Jan. 1.

“The trailhead Stewards will be back next season,” Johnston said.

Next year, he said, volunteers may tackle an inventory of campsites and a survey of trail conditions, and possibly begin trail maintenance work under Forest Service supervision.

“Dolly Sods is a unique and exceptional area, no doubt about it,” Fosbender said. “But it has a carrying capacity, and everyone who visits it has an impact, no matter how well-intentioned or skilled they may be.”

She said impact could be reduced by people discovering there are countless other unique and remote areas to explore in the 919,000 acres of the Monongahela National Forest. They include seven other wilderness areas with a combined area of nearly 100,000 acres, plus the Seneca Creek Backcountry and the Cranberry Backcountry.

“Maybe people could visit Dolly Sods and then try some of the other places before returning,” Fosbender said.

If visitation to Dolly Sods continues on its current trajectory, a permit system could become a management option, she said.

“I’ve met a lot of really nice people here,” said Wilderness Steward Frank O’Hara of Keyser.

Despite record visitation levels, “people are friendly, they keep their dogs on leashes and there’s very little litter. And if you get just an eighth of a mile off the trail, you can still have solitude,” he said.

“People love it here,” O’Hara said. “I guess the big question is if it’s going to be loved too much.”

Note: This first appeared in the *Charleston Gazette*.



Book News

All We Can Save Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis, Edited by Anana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine K Wilkinson (One World, 2021; www.oneworldlit.com/books)

Reviewed by Cynthia Ellis

Strong women have been part of our organization's history. They have played important roles, as supporting and major figures. They have lent their talents to our issues throughout our years of efforts.

In our recent past we have co-hosted events---focused on the availability of clean water---which revolved around and attracted numbers of women.

Some of us will remember sitting in a large circle, at a meeting that was an outgrowth of those conferences, in which attendees opened up about the stresses of being environmentally active and of the strain of the hard work, both by staffers in organizations and by volunteers.

We were moved to see one of our allies, widely noted for her preparedness and her cogent comments, striving to express the toll taken by the work. Tears slid down her cheeks and dripped from her chin as she gulped out the words, "I'm just SO tired!"

That friend will certainly recognize other kindred persons, dealing with similar emotions, in the book *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*. In it anyone can find an abundance of exactly those three elements, in a variety that avoids both the saccharine and the bitter.

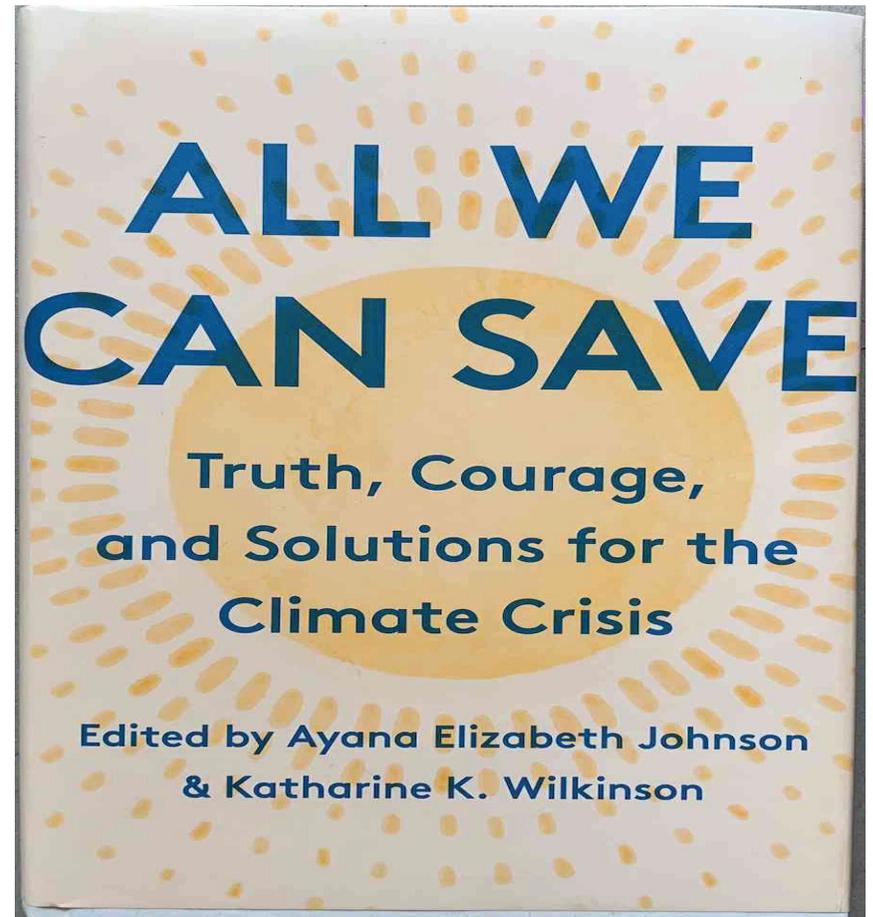
Editors Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katherine K. Wilkinson have tapped the resources of 41 essayists, 17 poets, and one illustrator; they have chosen wisely. The occupations listed in biographies of those contributors are truly wide-ranging. They include:

Reporter, author, activist, attorney, biologist, entrepreneur, organizational leader, poet, policy expert, performer, climate scientist, artist, journalist, Guggenheim fellow, regenerative farmer, National Climate Advisor, teacher, social science researcher, environmental engineer, landscape architect, healer, seed-saver, mother, organizer, cartoonist, audio producer, chief of staff for the White House Domestic Climate Policy Office, former EPA regional administrator, teenage climate activist, and ecologist.

There are also women with tribal connections to the Creek and Ojibwe nations...and to West Virginia. Mary Anne Hitt is national director of campaigns at Sierra Club; she lives here, and is a member of WVHC.

Hitt's "Beyond Coal" essay is in the "Advocate" section. Other divisions are Root, Reframe, Reshape, Persist, Feel, Nourish, and Rise. There is almost too much to recommend to describe. There are reminders of the past; some focus on indigenous rights and environmental racism. There are tips for being a climate justice activist, and tips for How to Take Care of Yourself, and introductions to the ideas of "plant reciprocity" and "seed dispersal mutualism."

Essay titles are diverse; such as "Why It's So Urgent," "Ode to Dirt," and "Dear Fossil Fuel Executives."



Quotes are forceful. Here are a few.

- "The message from the school strikes is that a great many young people are ready for this kind of deep change."
- "Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."
- "Where can we live and where must we leave?"
- "More than 90 percent of our time is now spent indoors..."

And the poems! They sing!

Last month's Voice featured a review of "Organizing to Win." Perhaps that reviewer and other opponents of the Rockwool factory in Jefferson County could find strength and solace in the essays in "All We Can Save."

As for those of us in the Water & Women circle...after a while in that gathering, we knew it was time to end, and to accept hugs, to dry tears...and to get up and fight some more.

Join Now !!!

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Senior		\$15		
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Other		\$15		
Regular		\$25	\$35	\$50
Associate		\$50	\$75	\$100
Sustaining		\$100	\$150	\$200
Patron		\$250	\$500	\$500
Mountaineer		\$500	\$750	\$1000

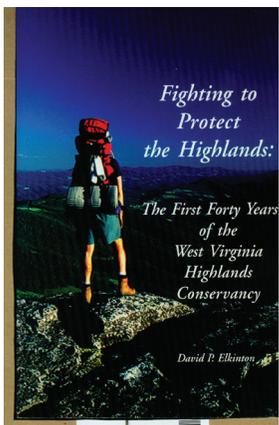
Mail to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321

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

You may also join on-line at www.wvhighlands.org

GET A GREAT HISTORY BOOK

For the first time, a comprehensive history of West Virginia's most influential activist environmental organization. Author Dave Elkinton, the Conservancy's third president, and a twenty-year board member, not only traces the major issues that have occupied the Conservancy's energy, but profiles more than twenty of its volunteer leaders.



From the cover by photographer Jonathan Jessup to the 48-page index, this book will appeal both to Conservancy members and friends and to anyone interested in the story of how West Virginia's mountains have been protected against the forces of over-development, mismanagement by government, and even greed.

518 pages, 6x9, color cover, published by Pocahontas Press

To order your copy for \$15.95, plus \$3.00 shipping, visit the Conservancy's website, wvhighlands.org, where payment is accepted by credit card and PayPal.

Or write: WVHC, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Proceeds support the Conservancy's ongoing environmental projects.

SUCH A DEAL!

Book Premium With Membership

Although *Fighting to Protect the Highlands, the First 40 Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy* normally sells for \$15.95 plus \$3.00 postage. We are offering it as a premium to new members. New members receive it free with membership.

Existing members may have one for \$10.00. Anyone who adds \$10 to the membership dues listed on the How to Join membership or on the renewal form will receive the history book. Just note on the membership form that you wish to take advantage of this offer.

Tell a Friend!

If you have a friend you would like to invite to join the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy just fill out this form and send it to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.

Person you wish to refer: _____

Address: _____

Email _____

Your name: _____

Filling out the form, etc. is, of course, the old school way of doing things. If you prefer, just email the information to Dave Saville at WVHC50@gmail.com.

The way it works: Anyone you refer gets *The Highlands Voice* for six months. At the end of the six months, they get a letter asking if they want to join. If they join, we're happy. If not, then maybe next time.

Send Us a Post Card, Drop Us a Line, Stating Point Of View

Please email any poems, letters, commentaries, etc. to the VOICE editor at johnmcferrin@aol.com or by real, honest to goodness, mentioned in the United States Constitution mail to WV Highlands Conservancy, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.

Fall Review: Lots of Smart People Saying Lots of Interesting Stuff

By John McFerrin

The 2021 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Fall Review was virtual this year because of covid but that didn't stop us from having lots of interesting presentations.

Dave Johnston started off with a little bit of Wilderness Act history, a little history of Dolly Sods, and a discussion of the work of the Wilderness Stewards program at Dolly Sods.

Dolly Sods has gone from being an area abused by timbering and forest fires to being one of the most popular Wilderness areas in the Eastern United States. Dave talked about the route it took to get to this point and offered some ideas about what has led to the growth in the number of visitors.

The Wilderness Stewards program is, at least in part, a response to the explosive growth. It is a partnership between the United States Forest Service and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

The program has two main components: education and data collection. While it is easy to see growth in the number of visitors, the Forest Service does not have complete data on historical use. The Wilderness Stewards program placed registration boxes at most of the trailheads. It is maintaining the boxes and collecting the data, which it shares with the Forest Service.

The Wilderness Stewards program also provides trailhead greeters who meet visitors, offer guidance on trails to take, leave no trace practices, and other information that will both make the visit more satisfactory and make it less damaging to the Wilderness.

Dave was followed by a presentation from the Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative (CASRI), made by Katy Barlow and Todd Miller. They both work for The Nature Conservancy and are assigned to CASRI.

CASRI's vision is to restore Red Spruce to its former range. Historically its range was somewhere between 500,000 and one million acres. Now it is 50,000 acres.

One of the barriers to achieving this vision is climate change. The most pessimistic view of climate change is that the climate will change so much that red spruce habitat will disappear from the Central Appalachians.

CASRI is preparing to deal with this through diversity, both in the habitats it fosters and in the trees it plants. The idea is that more diverse habitats and trees will be more resilient. In a diverse landscape with genetically diverse plants, it is more likely that there will be variations that can adapt to a warmer climate. While CASRI is known and often thought of as a tree planting organization, what they really want to do is restore ecosystems.

After the CASRI presentation, Tim Cronin came and brought us hope. He is a fellow at the Center for Energy and Sustainable Development at the West Virginia University College of Law.

For most of its history, and certainly for the last century, West Virginia has been guided by the idea that this alternative energy stuff was all well and good but if we wanted to have a real economy we had to base it on coal or, more recently, natural gas. The attitude was that birds and bunnies were sentimental fluff; coal kept the lights on.

His message was that it does not have to be that way and, in fact, we are already set on a course away from that. Both First

Energy (parent of Mon Power and Wheeling Power) and American Electric Power have committed themselves to carbon neutrality by 2050. It is unlikely that this is soon enough to support an all out effort to slow climate change but that is still the direction we are headed.

His presentation was entirely economic. From the data he and his organization have collected, it appears that an economy based on renewable energy will produce more jobs and electricity at a cheaper price than an economy based on coal and natural gas. He kept trying to read the Zoom room and saying things such as "this group is probably more interested in the environmental aspects" but he was really all economics. From cost to jobs to economic development, his data shows that renewable energy is the way to go.

Rick Webb talked about the Appalachian Blue Ridge Alliance Conservation Hub, particular its mapping system. The Conservation Hub collects a plethora of information about areas and proposed projects and presents it on a series of layered maps. By clicking on different factors that someone wanted to see, a person can make the map show that information. If someone wants to see the Candy Darter's historic range, the map can show that. If someone wants to see the Candy Darter's current range, the map can show that. If someone wants to see an aerial photograph of a site, a click on a dot on the maps leads to an aerial photo of that spot.

Rick used these maps to talk about the Candy Darter. He displayed a map of the Monongahela National Forest that showed all the proposed Forest Service projects. The map also showed Candy Darter habitat. Almost all of the habitat is on the National Forest. How the Forest is managed will determine whether the Candy Darter survives. With the sedimentation that will be the cumulative impact of all these projects, Rick is not optimistic. We will see.

We topped off the presentations with the keynote address by Katie Fallon. She is the author of books about the Cerulean Warbler and about vultures as well as numerous essays. She was one of the founders of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving wild birds through research, education, and rehabilitation.

While birds are declining for many reasons, she focused her discussion on climate change. Climate change often means loss of habitat. It can mean range shift, with birds found at one latitude moving north as the climate changes. This is particularly disastrous for birds which are already in northern climates; there is no place for their ranges to shift. Climate change also affects food availability. Birds have evolved with food that is available on a predictable schedule. If climate change makes that food unavailable the results could be disastrous.

Climate change could also lead to more fires and droughts which harm birds as well as more mosquito borne disease.

Birds have always had the ability to adapt as conditions changed. The difficulty with the climate change we are now experiencing is that the climate is changing faster than birds can adapt.

(Keep going; more on the next page)

Trees and Climate Change

By John McFerrin

By now the science is clear: trees have an enormous impact upon climate and can be an important tool in mitigating climate change. In West Virginia, nobody is the boss of more trees than the United States Forest Service. Because of its management of the Monongahela National Forest, the Forest Service has more to say than any other institution on how all those trees are managed.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has now joined in efforts to urge the Forest Service to use its role in managing the Forests as a tool to combat climate change.

The basic relationship between forests and carbon dioxide is straightforward. As plants and trees grow, they take in carbon from the air and store it in wood, plant matter, and under the soil. If it were not stored in the forests, it would remain in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas causing climate change.

The effect can be substantial. Each year since 2000, forests are estimated to have removed an average of 2 billion metric tons of carbon from the atmosphere. In the United States, forests remove an amount of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere equivalent to about 13 percent of the nation's human-made carbon dioxide each year. This "carbon sink function" of forests is slowing climate change by reducing the rate at which CO₂, mainly from fossil fuel



burning, builds up in the atmosphere.

The Monongahela National Forest is only the teeniest fraction of the total forests that are collectively slowing climate change. At the same time, all climate change is the cumulative result of a multitude of actions, each of which makes a tiny contribution. The Monongahela National Forest contains 921,000 acres of mostly forests. It is enough to make a difference.

The Monongahela National Forest is managed, as are all National Forests, according to a Forest Plan. It sets how the Forest is to be managed, including goals of the management. The Plan for the Monongahela National Forest was issued in 2006.

The Plan was updated in 2011, including the addition of material on how the Forest Service would address climate change. The 2011 changes did not call for any changes in how the Forest was managed. The changes that were made to the Plan were the addition of descriptions of how what the Forest Service was already doing could have an impact on climate change. There was no suggestion that the Forest Service should do anything different.

Now the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has begun suggesting that it is time to do something different. It often comments on projects that the Forests Service is planning. In those comments, the Conservancy has begun requesting that, in evaluating the proposed project, the Forest Service consider the effects of the project on carbon sequestration, the part of any project which has an impact upon climate change.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has also joined the West Virginians for Public Lands in a letter to the Forest Service suggesting that it modify the Forest Plan so that it reflects the latest climate science. Only by doing so can the management of the Forest reach its potential as a tool to mitigate climate change.

So if the Forest Service started managing its Forests in a way that combats climate change, what would that look like? Like all climate science, it's complicated.

As a general matter, it would mean not logging old forests while letting young forests mature. For any project the Forest Service considered it would involve considering any emissions from equipment used, any carbon lost from waste material, loss of carbon through soil disturbance and vegetation changes, the use made of any wood produced, how mature forests and new growth sequester carbon, and any other changes in carbon sequestration, including sequestration in the soil.

More about the Fall Review (Continued from previous page)

Ms. Fallon ended her talk with a sort of tutorial on living a bird-friendly life, something that is more important now than ever when climate change is putting pressure on birds. She included such things as drinking shade grown coffee, using less fertilizer, not mowing the lawn so closely, and supporting local and organic farms.

But there's more. The day was not all stuffing our heads with information. Between sessions Jackie Burns led us in a few yoga moves. Since it was on Zoom, some of us followed along; some of us snuck away for a snack; some just stood up and walked around. It all got us out of our chairs so it was all good. During the dinner break we had a short videotaped message from Senator Joe Manchin. He said he appreciated the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and the work it did in preserving the scenic beauty of our state.

Sloth: Deadly Sin or Environmental Virtue?

Now that fall is here, many of us are feeling a nagging urge to get off the couch, shut down our Zoom calling, and get out there and rake some leaves.

But is that a good idea? Not according to the National Wildlife Federation. Here are its thoughts on the matter:

Traditionally, leaf removal has entailed three steps: Rake leaves (or blast them with a blower) into piles, transfer the piles to bags and place the bags out to be hauled off to a landfill. Yet, increasingly, conservationists say these actions not only harm the environment but rob your garden of nutrients while destroying wildlife habitat. The alternative? “Let fallen leaves stay on your property,” says National Wildlife Federation Naturalist David Mizejewski.

Leaves in Landfills

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, leaves and other yard debris account for more than 13 percent of the nation’s solid waste—a whopping 33 million tons a year. Without enough oxygen to decompose, this organic matter releases the greenhouse gas methane, says Joe Lamp’l, author of *The Green Gardener’s Guide*. In fact, solid-waste landfills are the largest U.S. source of man-made methane—and that’s aside from the carbon dioxide generated by gas-powered blowers and trucks used in leaf disposal.

For gardeners, turning leaves into solid waste is wasteful. “Fallen leaves offer a double benefit,” Mizejewski says. “Leaves form a natural mulch that helps suppress weeds and fertilizes the soil as it breaks down. Why spend money on mulch and fertilizer when you can make your own?”

Removing leaves also eliminates vital wildlife habitat. Critters ranging from turtles and toads to birds, mammals and invertebrates rely on leaf litter for food, shelter and nesting material. Many moth and butterfly caterpillars overwinter in fallen leaves before emerging in spring.

Need one more reason to leave the leaves? “The less time you spend raking leaves,” Mizejewski says, “the more time you’ll have to enjoy the gorgeous fall weather and the wildlife that visits your garden.”

Note: This material was written by Laura Tangley and appears on the website of the National Wildlife Federation.



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Mon National Forest Hiking Guide

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the new edition of the treasured guide to every trail in the Monongahela National Forest features brand-new topographic maps and Kent Mason's gorgeous photos, all in color.

The Guide has been updated with the cooperation of National Forest District Rangers and Recreation Specialists to reflect changes in the past ten years:

- * newly designated wilderness areas
- * new trails near campgrounds and sites of special significance
- * a new complex of interconnected trails on Cheat Mountain
- * rerouted and discontinued trails
- * ratings for difficulty, scenery, access to water, and much else

The definitive guide to the Mon adds a wealth of information about history, wildlife, and botany; safety, preparation, and weather; horseback and mountain bike riding and cross-country skiing; as well as sources of further information on the Forest and its environs.

The Monongahela National Forest has long been known as a 'Special Place'. The hiking, backpacking, and cross-country skiing opportunities it provides are among the best in the eastern U.S. New wilderness and backcountry trails have been added to the outstanding areas we have appreciated for decades – Otter Creek Wilderness, Dolly Sods Wilderness, Flatrock Plains, Roaring Plains, Blackwater Canyon, Spruce Knob, North Fork Mountain, Shaver's Mountain, Laurel Fork Wilderness, Cranberry Wilderness -- and there are lesser-known gems to be found in between.

Profits from the sale of these guides support a wide variety of worthy environmental projects for the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

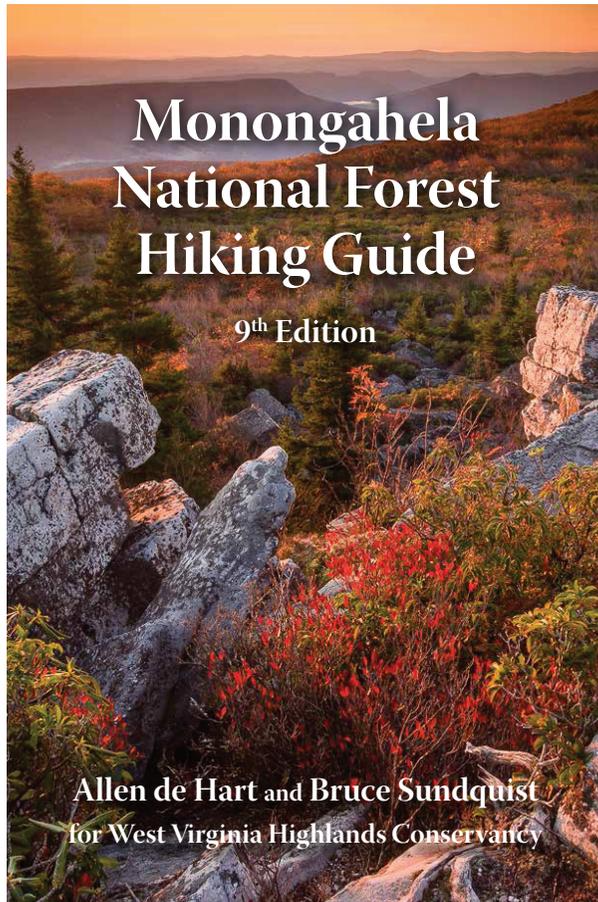
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The Highlands Voice: It's Not Just for Reading Any More

The Highlands Voice is the main way that the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy communicates with its members. But we would like to communicate with more than our members. We have a valuable perspective and information; we would like to communicate with everybody. We still offer electronic delivery. If you would prefer to receive it electronically instead of the paper copy please contact Dave Saville at WVHC50@gmail.com. With electronic delivery, you will receive a link to a pdf of the Voice several days before the paper copy would have arrived.

No matter how you receive it, please pass it along. If electronically, share the link. If paper, hand it off to a friend, leave it around the house, leave it around the workplace. It's not just for reading. It's for reading and passing along.

BUMPER STICKERS

To get free *I ♥ Mountains* bumper sticker(s), send a SASE to P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. 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.)



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NIOSH Comes to Mace, West Virginia

Cindy Rank

When is a mine not a mine?

Apparently when it's a hole in the ground carved out of rock to look and act like a mine but used for research purposes rather than production of a product such as coal or limestone.

Let me back up a bit.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), is proposing to provide the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) with a new underground safety research facility in Mace, West Virginia, that would allow full-scale mine experiments and research that accurately simulates an underground mine.

To fulfill the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Congress created an enforcement branch, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and a research branch, NIOSH. While the Occupational Safety and Health Administration—under the U.S. Department of Labor—is the main federal agency charged with the enforcement of safety and health legislation, NIOSH—administered by CDC—is responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illnesses and injuries. Specifically, the mission of the NIOSH Mining Program is to eliminate mining fatalities, injuries, and illnesses through relevant research and impactful solutions.

NIOSH, and the Bureau of Mines before them, had operated an Underground Safety Research Program at the Lake Lynn Experimental Mine (LLEM), a former limestone mine a short distance north of the West Virginia border in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, from the 1980s until 2013, when a roof fall hindered research and its owner declined offers to renew a long-term lease or for CDC/GSA/NIOSH to buy the land.

CDC began a search for a suitable location to relocate a NIOSH research facility that would allow for full-scale mine experiments and research that accurately simulate an underground mine.

After a long and laborious process and considering several other locations, CDC focused on 461 acres of land in West Virginia and began the process of gathering information about the site for the required Environmental Impact Study (EIS).

Since the *Voice* reported on the proposal, (May, 2019; February, 2020, and January 2021) there have been public hearings, revisions, and a Final EIS was issued in July 2021. The FEIS examined the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development including impacts from noise and vibration; geology topography, and soils; water resources; utilities and infrastructure; and biological resources-vegetation and threatened and endangered species.

On October 21, 2021 CDC issued its Record of Decision that it would proceed with the acquisition of property at Mace, WV.

The property is located to the east of US 219 starting near Mingo Flats in the north to a little south of Mace and extends east and south from the Randolph County community of Mace to a border with Snowshoe Mountain Resort's Silver Creek section in Pocahontas County. A segment of the tract also borders the Monongahela National Forest, and contains an inactive right-of-way for the state-owned West Virginia Central Railroad.

Access road and surface facilities (offices, parking area, etc.) will be in Randolph County. The underground research facility will straddle the County line between Randolph and Pocahontas.

Referencing the rough map that accompanies this article, the proposed purchase and development area is outlined in red [for online

viewers] and fairly identifiable even in black and white hard copy.

The roughly 164,000 Gross Square Feet (GSF) underground safety research facility (i.e., basically a carved out underground area to replicate several types of underground mining), is depicted on the map as a rectangular shape in yellow.

Above-ground facilities include parking, preparation and office space, storage and control facilities (17,000 to 25,000 GSF) are depicted on the map as two baseball diamond shaped areas - one large and one small (blue online). These facilities sit on 5.5 acres. A fence, and improved existing gravel access road add several additional acres of disturbed area bringing the total to about 12 acres.

Underground tests would be conducted twice a week in the underground facility and focus on new technologies to improve the health and safety of the Nation's underground mining workforce. (e.g., studies and research on mine explosions, mine seals, mine rescue, ventilation, diesel exhaust, new health and safety technologies, ground control, and fire suppression.)

The actual construction of the site with all the invasive sights and sounds that accompany construction activities – i.e., trucks, worker traffic, blasting, drilling, digging - is expected to take four or five years.

Once constructed, the routine operation phase would include a dozen full time employees driving to work during regular daytime hours of 7a.m. to 5 p.m. with additional staff visiting for occasional group conferences and meetings perhaps twice or more a month.

During the review process, there have been many objections and questions from local citizens, environmental groups, the Pocahontas County Commission, and Snowshoe Resort. Concerns have centered on noise, traffic, individual water wells/supplies, water resources in general – of particular importance due to the Karst geology of the area, the location of caves, and headwater streams of the Tygart and Elk Rivers.

The Final EIS attempts to answer some of these concerns but many of those answers continue to exist in a fuzzy, non-committal zone requiring more detail and additional information, commitments, and permitting to come.

A couple notable changes are:

Trucks Reduced truck traffic on Rt 219 during the 4-5 years of construction is outlined in the FEIS. – Originally some 3/hour and maybe an AVERAGE of 16/day were expected during the initial phase of construction to transport the mined rock to an operating quarry 15 miles south. As a result of public comments and concern regarding the potential impacts from truck trips, this assumption has been revised. Plans now include the ability to utilize 1/2 to 2/3 of the rock on site for site preparation and for road surfacing as well as being able to store the remaining rock on site in order to limit the number of trucks/day. CDC anticipates materials hauled off-site would occur evenly over the four-year construction period, resulting in an average of 10 dump truck trips per day.

Fencing An eight-foot-high fence was originally planned to encircle the entire 461 acres. Fencing will now be limited to lining the ~ 1.5 mile newly expanded 20 ft wide access road, and the surface facility areas somewhat centrally located in the northern section of the 461 acres.

Water Nearby residents rely on individual wells – always at risk of loss, diminution, or pollution when blasting and earth disturbance is done nearby.

(More on he next page)

More about NIOSH (Continued from previous page)

An aquifer test (pump test) indicated that drawing water in the project area did not influence the water levels in monitoring wells. While this test indicated a lack of connectivity, it was not 100% conclusive. As a mitigation measure and “in an abundance of caution and to address public concern”, CDC included extension of the public waterline from the Pocahontas Public Service District from Linwood which gets its supply from Shavers Lake atop Snowshoe Mountain that also enables Snowshoe’s snow making capabilities.

CDC would seek the funding and authority to extend the water line as a first step in the process. But there certainly are no guarantees at this point.

Unanswered questions and unfinished business remain surrounding:

- Impacts to karst and caves, always a mystery, remain as inconclusive as one might expect.
- Corps permitting for culverts along the improved road, permits for crossing streams, specific construction/storm water permits, groundwater protection plans (no mention of these anywhere), Best Management Practices to be implemented, etc., etc. all remain for future definition.
- The decibel level of the ventilation fan may not interfere with visitors to Snowshoe, but it remains to be seen what impact it may have on the quiet communities nearby

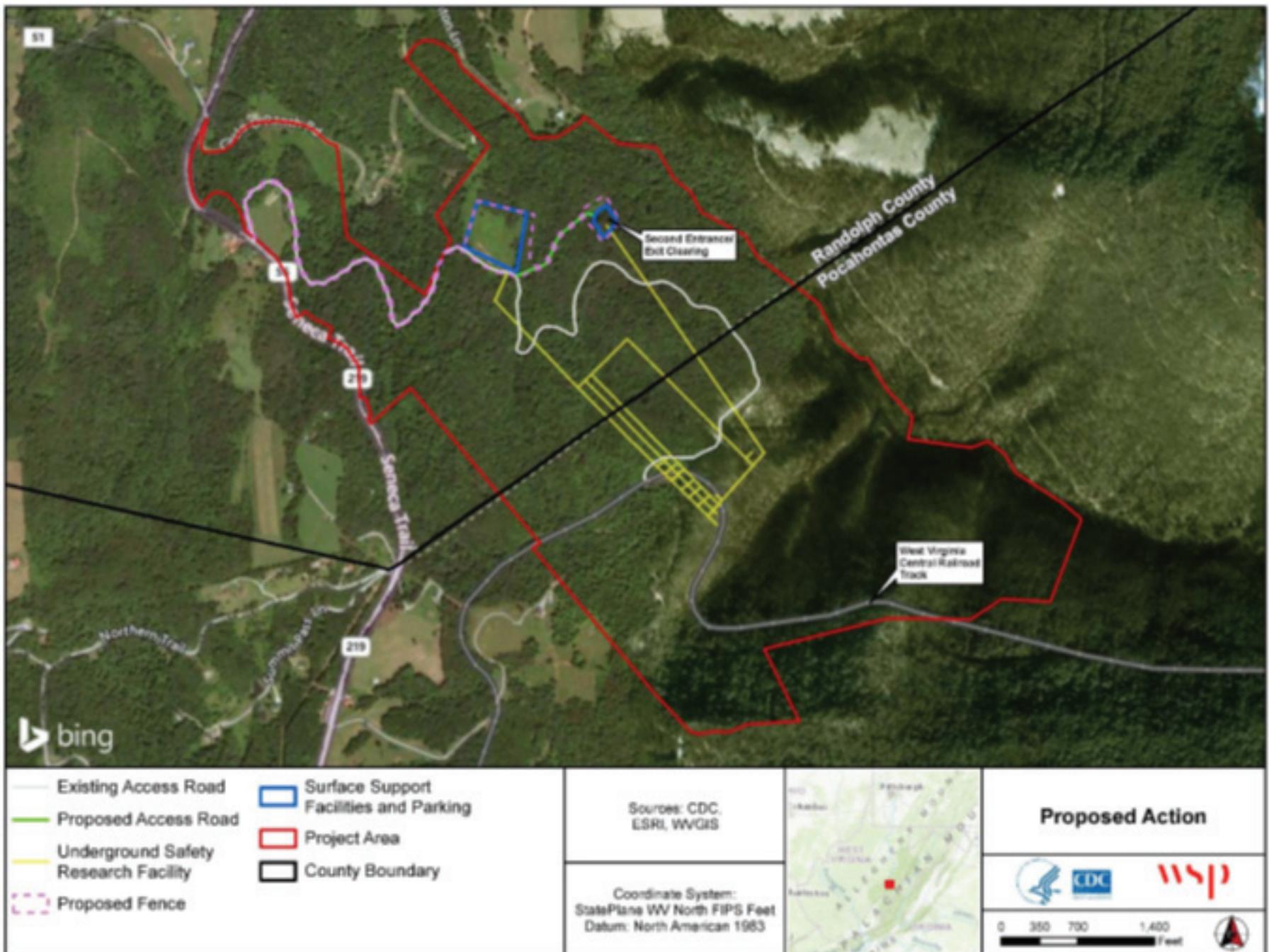
- Documents indicate that discussions are ongoing with WV Department of Environmental Protection as to how digging this hole fits or doesn’t under the purview of the DEP mining program but the documents reviewed don’t indicate resolution of the question.

- Guarantees about water line accessibility and cost to residents who choose to hook up are not fleshed out in the documents pertaining to this phase of the project.

While its true that no document can tie down every last little detail, there is still a lot of fuzzy wording and somewhat evasive answers about what is to come and how much still needs to be done before actual construction can begin.

Bottom line as I see it, is that this is only the beginning. Because so much is yet to be finalized beyond this initial step, it’s difficult to predict just when the construction might begin.

 For more detail refer to:
<https://www.regulations.gov/document/CDC-2018-0057-0065> [FEIS - Volume I]
<https://www.regulations.gov/document/CDC-2018-0057-0066> [FEIS - Volume II]
<https://www.regulations.gov/document/CDC-2018-0057-0067> [Record of Decision]



Bird Protections Back Where They Started

By John McFerrin

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that it will cut the malarkey and go back to protecting migratory birds the way it always had. It will go back to the interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which it had always had and enforce it accordingly.

Background

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is the United States' effort to implement a 1916 treaty between the United States, Mexico, and Great Britain (agreeing on behalf of Canada) to protect birds that migrate among the three countries. The treaty was later expanded to include Russia and Japan. It prohibits pursuing, hunting, taking, capturing, killing, or attempting to do the same migratory birds, their nests, or their eggs.

For a century everybody--agencies, the birds, the public, everybody--assumed that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act protected birds from all killing, whether specifically intended or not. Going out and intentionally killing a bird was, of course, prohibited. Doing something such as destroying habitat that also resulted in the deaths of birds was also prohibited, even if the primary purpose of the habitat destruction was something other than killing birds.

Proposed changes

Beginning in 2017 the Fish and Wildlife Service set out to change the way the law was interpreted. It started off with a legal opinion, issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service's lawyer, saying that only actions that have as their goal the killing of birds would be prohibited. Actions that had another purpose but resulted in the deaths of birds would not be prohibited. Shooting a migratory duck would be prohibited; causing its death by draining wetlands would not be.

Opinions don't last; regulations do. A different administration could change it. To make its interpretation more durable, the Fish and Wildlife proposed a regulation saying that the Act only prohibited the killing of migratory birds when that was the goal of the activity.

The regulation removed protection for migratory birds from the only real threats they face. Although there are rare exceptions, we don't routinely and deliberately kill birds. There was a time when migratory birds were hunted for their feathers but times have changed. There was a time when four and twenty blackbirds might be baked in a pie but the nursery rhyme reflects the eighteenth century, when it first appeared in print.

Instead of being hunted for their feathers or baked in a pie, the threats birds face are modern ones--oil pits and spills, high-tension power lines, communications towers, etc. Birds can die when they land on an uncovered oil waste pit that appears to be typical pond, or run into an unseen power line. According to studies, power lines kill up to 64 million birds a year. Communications towers are estimated to kill up to 7 million birds per year, and uncovered oil waste pits account for up to another 500,000 to 1 million bird deaths every year. Data on wind turbines are harder to come by, but current estimates are approximately 234,000 bird deaths a year.

The regulation made the Fish and Wildlife Service less effective in addressing these threats. Although the regulation was briefly in effect, in its latest action the Fish and Wildlife Service has abandoned it. It lasted longer than an adult Mayfly but not by that

much. As things turned out, its life was shorter than the attorney's opinion.

What just happened

The Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that it has abandoned its efforts to change the interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It will go back to assuming that the Act prohibits not only the killing of birds when that is the goal of the activity but the killing of birds when the killing is the result of, but not the purpose of, the activity.

In the course of announcing this change of interpretation, the Fish and Wildlife Service also summarized its enforcement policies. As the Service pointed out, migratory birds face so many hazards that it could not take enforcement action in every situation.

The Service indicated that it would probably not take enforcement action when a member of the public was doing otherwise legal activities and accidentally killed a migratory bird. Neither would it take enforcement action when a person or entity was following what the Service calls "beneficial practices."

The Fish and Wildlife Service maintains a website (www.fws.gov/birds/management/project-assessment-tools-and-guidance/conservation-measures.php) where it lists practices that people and companies can use to avoid deaths of migratory birds. It contains links to different categories: Buildings, Glass & Lighting, Communication Towers, Coal-bed Methane, Hunting & Fishing, Electric Utility, Fluid Mineral Practices, Mining Claim Markers, Outdoor Lighting, Transportation, Vegetation Management, and Wind Energy. Companies doing otherwise legal activities who are following such beneficial practices are unlikely to face prosecution.

The Service would tend to take enforcement action where the activity is otherwise illegal. It would also take enforcement action where the deaths of migratory birds was foreseeable and "beneficial practices" are not used.

Getting off the merry-go-round

The Fish and Wildlife Service has taken a long trip over the past five years just to end up back where it began. There is a possibility that Congress will fix things so that future trips are unnecessary.

Congress could address this through the Migratory Bird Protection Act of 2021, now pending. That Act would make clear what the Migratory Bird Treaty Act does. It would make clear that the Act prohibits more than purposeful actions to kill birds. It would prohibit actions in which the bird deaths result incidentally from other activities which do not have killing birds as their primary goal. It would, in other words, restore the historic interpretation of the Act.

The Migratory Bird Protection Act of 2021 is not exactly blazing through Congress. It was introduced in July, 2021. It was assigned to a committee but has never been taken up. It has 75 sponsors (none from West Virginia). There is no related bill in the Senate.

Board Highlights

By John McFerrin

Even though we had spent the previous day Zooming with the speakers for the Fall Review (well worth it, see story on p.), we climbed back into our little Zoom boxes for both the Annual Meeting and the quarterly Board meeting.

The only business conducted at the Annual Meeting was the election of officers and of Board members at large. We normally elect officers in even numbered years and half of the at large Board members every other year. Last year the covid cautiousness that cancelled the Annual Meeting threw us out of whack. This year we affirmed half of the at large Board members to serve until 2022 and elected the other half to serve until 2023. The current officers will continue their service until 2023. We are now back in whack.

We added two new at large Board members. One is Luanne McGovern. She has been a member for about twenty years and describes herself as excited to serve. She lives in Charleston but has property in Tucker County.

The other new Board member is Susan Rosenblum. She has been a member since the 90s. She moved to the Elkins area and, except for a time in Pittsburgh, has lived around there ever since. She lives in Canaan Valley and has a cabin in Shavers Fork.

After a couple of preliminaries, we kicked off the quarterly Board meeting with a report from Program Director Cory Chase. Even though he talks to President Larry Thomas every day, the Board as a whole does not get to hear what he is up to. It was nice to hear.

He is helping with the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards, including logging data into a spread sheet. He has updated our logo, helped plan the Fall Review, overseen revising the message on the back of the I (heart) Mountains sticker, spiffed up our presence on Facebook, prepared some updated graphics for our website, and worked on a PowerPoint presentation on All Terrain Vehicles on public lands.

Membership Secretary Dave Saville reported that membership was looking up. We are not all the way through the year yet but he thinks we will show a growth in membership for the year.

The Treasurer's Report was as it should be: boring. Money coming in; money going out. Paying our bills about as we expected.

Frank Young reported on the activities of the West Virginia Environmental Council. He was happy to report that for the first time ever the money to pay a lobbyist would be in the bank before the lobbyist began working. In the past WVEC had often hired a lobbyist on faith, counting on raising the money before it was time to pay the lobbyist.

Frank also reported that the WVEC was still soliciting ideas about its legislative priorities for next year. Larry will be sending in ideas from West Virginia Highlands Conservancy very soon.

Perry Bryant reported on climate change. From all we know, there is still much legislative turmoil. It appears that the Clean Electricity Payment Program has been dropped from the Build Back Better proposal. It would have reimbursed utilities for investing in clean energy and penalized those who did not. The proposal to impose a fee on methane emissions is still up in the air. There is still \$550 billion in the Build Back Better proposal, more than any other single category. With the Clean Electricity Payment Program gone there are few requirements to move toward clean energy but incentives remain.

Internationally, things are still touch and go. Perry shared a graph showing the concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere over time. It showed carbon dioxide emissions going steadily upward before the Paris accords. After the Paris accords it levels off. With the Glasgow commitments to be made next week it really starts to go down. It still is not projected to go down enough to keep warming to less than 1.5 degrees centigrade below pre-industrial levels.

Bottom line: this is hard and we need to be doing more.

Cindy Rank reported that we are still pursuing some ongoing litigation. She also reported on the NIOSH facility that was approved near Mace. It is the subject of a story in this issue (p.).

Kent Karriker reported on the work the Public Lands Committee was doing to monitor proposed projects on the Monongahela National Forest. There are seven projects, all in various stages of review.

Dave Johnston reported on the Wilderness Stewards which are active at Dolly Sods. The program is going great. They have gathered a lot of data on how many people are using the Wilderness area, how long they are staying, etc. They have provided a lot of information to users.

What he really wants is more help. There are about twenty volunteer stewards but there are a lot of trailheads to cover. It is unrealistic to expect these twenty people to cover as many trailheads as there are. Anyone who wants to help should contact Dave Johnston at dollysodsstewards@gmail.com.

Hugh Rogers reported that even is the project goes forward it is still a hard no to the current alignment, which crosses Blackwater Canyon. He noted that there has never been a carbon accounting on the project; the concrete, the disturbance, the tree cutting, etc. will all have a carbon cost. Corridor H Alternatives intends to suggest that a carbon accounting be made part of any environmental impact study.

Become a Wilderness Steward!

Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards do not need to have any special experience or expertise. There is no specific time commitment required; some people may live close and be available more often, but even those who only visit occasionally are welcome to participate as their schedule allows. We recommend and encourage all volunteers, especially the Trailhead Stewards, to take two online courses on the basics of the Wilderness Act and Leave No Trace awareness. Volunteers will be provided with inperson training by the Forest Service and resources to use at the trailheads. WVHC will provide each volunteer with a WVHC T-shirt and cap to help identify them to visitors.

To receive a volunteer application or for more information, contact Dave Johnston at dollysodsstewards@gmail.com.

HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY BOUTIQUE



- ▶ The baby shirts are certified organic cotton and are offered in one infant and several toddler sizes and an infant onesie. Slogan is “I ♥ Mountains Save One for Me!” Onesie [18 mo.]---\$25, Infant tee [18 mo.]---\$20, Toddler tee, 2T,3T,4T, 5/6---\$20
- ▶ Soft pima cotton adult polo shirts are a handsome earthtone light brown and feature the spruce tree logo. Sizes M-XL [Shirts run large for stated size.] \$ 25.00, 2XL \$26.50

To order by mail [WV residents add 6 % sales tax] make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Online Store, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

The same items are also available at our on-line store: www.wvhighlands.org

T- SHIRTS

White, heavy cotton T-shirts with the **I ♥ Mountains** slogan on the front. The lettering is blue and the heart is red. “West Virginia Highlands Conservancy” in smaller blue letters is included below the slogan. Short sleeve in sizes: S, M, L, XL, and XXL. Long sleeve in sizes S, M, L, and XL. **Short sleeve** model is \$18 by mail; **long sleeve** is \$22. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax. Send sizes wanted and check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy ATTEN: Online Store, WVHC, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.



HATS FOR SALE

We have West Virginia Highlands Conservancy baseball style caps for sale as well as I ♥ Mountains caps.

The WVHC cap is beige with green woven into the twill and the pre-curved visor is light green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy logo and the words West Virginia Highlands Conservancy on the front and I (heart) Mountains on the back. It is soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure.

The I ♥ Mountains The colors are stone and red. The front of the cap has I ♥ MOUNTAINS. The heart is red. The red hats are soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure. The stone has a stiff front crown with a velcro strap on the back. All hats have West Virginia Highlands Conservancy printed on the back. Cost is \$20 by mail. West Virginia residents add 6% tax. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Atten: Online Store, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306