

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
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CONSERVANCY QUESTIONS WINDPOWER PROJECT

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has written a letter to the West Virginia Public Service Commission questioning the proposed Ned Power windpower project. In its letter, the Conservancy requested both procedural changes in the way the Public Service Commission evaluates proposed wind power projects and items which the Commission should consider before approving any such project. The letter also endorsed the general idea of wind as an energy source for producing electricity.

In its letter, the Conservancy suggested that the Public Service Commission develop siting criteria for wind power facilities, including such things as visual and noise effects upon certain public lands and upon "recognized special places." It also suggested that the Commission consider the impact of wind power facilities upon endangered species and upon local and migratory bird populations as well as water pollution resulting from roads and other construction activity.

The Conservancy also requested that the Public Service Commission perform its own scientific studies of the ecological effects of a proposed project, including the impacts upon birds. It has been Commission practice to rely upon studies performed by the applicant.

In its correspondence the Conservancy also endorsed in general the idea of wind as a power source without specifically endorsing the projects now pending before the Commission.

The letter appears in its entirety on Page 5.

The letter is the result of extensive discussions by both the Conservancy's Board and members of the Wind Power Committee. As Peter Schoenfeld reports (p. 4) in a style that would make Sgt Joe Friday proud and Hugh Rogers reports (p. 3) in a more reflective style, the Board was neither willing to fully endorse nor to wholeheartedly oppose the proposed Ned Power Project. While Board members expressed universal support for wind power as an energy source, the Board was not willing to ignore potential environmental impacts of West Virginia projects simply because power from wind has always been considered as "green power." Subsequent consultation with attorneys and consideration of the Board's discussions and the concerns raised there resulted in the letter to the Public Service Commission.

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PUBLIC COMMENT WANTED

The question of access to Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge has been locally controversial. Now the Refuge is seeking public comment on its "Compatibility Determination," which proposes rules to reconcile the sometimes-competing uses. Check the web site at <http://northeast.fws.gov/wv/can.htm> or call (304) 866-3858 if the document has not been posted. You can also send email to FW5RW_CVNWR@fws.gov, or write Jeff Shryer, Manager, CVNWR, HC 70, Box 200, Davis WV 26260.

From the Western Slope of the Mountains

By Frank Young, President

A better way?

There are several ways to effect public and corporate environmental policies and practices. We can overtly lobby the legislature and Congress for the laws we would like to see. We can write letters to our lawmaking representatives (a more subtle form of lobbying). We can write letters to public agencies- usually trying to cajole them into doing what the law says to do. We can litigate. We could even engage in civil disobedience. To my knowledge WVHC has never sanctioned the latter.

Several years ago I became involved with the WV Environmental Institute (WVEI). The mission of the Institute is, through open, hopefully honest dialogue with industry, academia, regulatory agencies, citizens and citizen groups, to discuss, debate and solve environmental problems in West Virginia. WVEI sponsors the annual WV Conference on the Environment, usually held in October. A few farsighted folks like Sierra Club's Mary Wimmer and others were founders of WVEI nearly 20 years ago.

Governmental agencies, commerce and industry, and citizen environmental groups expend enormous resources "fighting" each other, often to stalemate, in never ending cycles of finger-pointing, distrust and generally adversarial relationships.

"There must be a better way", Mary and some others thought back then. The Institute struggles along from year to year, hampered mostly by distrust on all sides. Its 20 person or so board of Directors consists of 4 or 5 people each from citizen environmental groups, industry and commerce, regulatory agencies, and from academia. While these ideologically separated WVEI Directors share some personal warmth and guarded respect, an air of "what will my colleagues back home/at the office think about my being elbow to elbow with these people?" permeates the meeting room. (The coal industry long ago withdrew from the WVEI. Go figure.)

Can the WV Highlands Conservancy strive to work with, rather than against at odds constituencies, for mutual benefit?

Our by-laws tell us that our general purposes include "the conservation- including both preservation and wise use- of the natural resources of this state and the nation, and especially of the highlands region of West Virginia". Our history shows that we use a wide variety of advocacy techniques in working toward our purposes. Accounts of our early history show that we courted US Senators and regulators- indeed that Senator Robert Byrd and then Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall attended our first Fall review in 1965!

Records of meetings show that the Highlands Conservancy sent many pleading letters to Congressmen, state legislators and regulatory agencies over the years. And we sometimes joined with other organizations in litigation over roads, dams and mining issues. And of course our current litigation with federal agencies involving strip mining, valley fills and clean water issues is making legal history.

It seems that over the years the Conservancy's conservation and preservation techniques generally evolved from mostly courting for support to confrontation and even litigation. Now, no one can credibly deny that strip mine coal operators and cooperating state and federal agencies have so corrupted mining laws and regulations that litigation is absolutely required to try to bring sanity and order to the regulatory scheme.

But not all in commerce and industry are coal operators. And I think that we should not treat folks like we do coal operators unless they act like coal operators.

Maybe we should think some about our early history when we were maybe a bit more charming and little less confrontational, a little more visionary and a bit less militant, and still perhaps were as effective then as we are today.

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The *Highlands Voice* is always printed on recycled paper. Our printer uses 100% post consumer recycled paper when available.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web page is www.wvhighlands.org

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THE VIEW FROM SNOWY POINT

By Hugh Rogers

Seen from Snowy Point, Canaan Valley's northern half is a wetland mosaic unbroken by human landmarks—but those appear in every direction when the climber turns around. To the northeast, the giant Mt. Storm power plant reaches up in tall plumes from its stacks and out in cables strung east, west, and south. Farther north, another smokestack rises beside a coal preparation plant. To the southeast, highwalls bound the Stony River Reservoir. North, east, and south, the grassy "reclamation" of strip mines is obvious. And now, along the western horizon, forty-four wind turbine towers palisade Backbone Mountain. Like all the others, this industrial landmark displays our bottomless appetite for power.

In late October, the Highlands Conservancy's board spent most of its quarterly meeting debating our position on the many proposed wind power projects. Why is this issue so contentious? Why was it so difficult to vote on every motion?

Two years ago, we reached a compromise with the developers of the Backbone Mountain project and necessarily among ourselves. Moving the string of turbines north saved the view from Blackwater Falls State Park and some habitat for endangered species. However, those who support wind power as an alternative to coal did not change the minds of those who resent its increasingly flagrant occupation of the Highlands. The work we had to do on criteria for siting was left undone. Another argument was predictable.

Our president, Frank Young, has been very active on the Wind Power Committee, which negotiated an agreement with Ned Power on its proposal for a "wind farm" on the Allegheny Front east of Snowy Point. The agreement was rejected by the board. (See Peter Shoenfeld's report in this issue.) In last month's *Voice*, Frank had asked, "If an issue-specific, scientifically and legally rational case against windmills can't be made, then why go on interminably trying to litigate against or otherwise oppose them . . .?" He was expressing the frustration of a practical man. In the absence of clearly articulated and verifiable reasons to oppose these projects, the Highlands Conservancy would seem to be a bunch of NIMBY's.

Opponents were equally frustrated. How could some people fail to see that the Highlands around Canaan Valley and Dolly Sods was the wrong place to put hundreds of three hundred-foot-tall towers? For years, the Conservancy has worked to protect the area. We would betray the trust of our members if we agreed to this new threat.

The practical negotiators used maps to show how the visual impact of the turbines would be almost nil in the Valley and on the Sods. The opponents scoffed at this nibbling around the edges. The negotiators showed how we could participate in studies of the impacts on migratory birds and other animals. The opponents said the studies would be too late.

On the question of what other actions we should take, the positions were effectively reversed. Here, the opponents were the

moving parties, asserting that we should protest the permits before the Public Service Commission and possibly in the courts, while the negotiators put their feet down until we had a practical strategy with some hope of success. After all the votes on all the motions, we had reached a stalemate.

If I had to blame someone I'd point the finger at myself. Not that I'm exceptional: somewhat practical, somewhat idealistic, sometimes confused. I have a lot of sympathy for Frank and Peter, who worked hard on the agreement with Ned Power. On a different issue, Corridor H, I wore those shoes and wore out the seat of my pants, preferring to negotiate and get something rather than give nothing and get nothing. Purists have exasperated me too.

But I'm not gung-ho for wind power. In the editorial I quoted above, Frank wrote of "a strong sentiment from our members and our board for renewable energy sources to replace the coal fired electrical power sources we so despise." Unfortunately, wind isn't replacing anything, it's only adding another source to supply our gluttony. The more we generate, the more we'll use. The same thing happens with water: when public water is extended to homes that had their own wells, average consumption triples. When I look at the towers on our skyline, I think of plug-in toothbrushes, shoe polishers, dishwashers, security lights, TV's in every room (I could go on). Wind won't help us unless it's part of a radically different energy policy.

I also share the opponents' frustration in expressing their objections. Beyond protecting birds and bats, we have spoken only of "viewsheds." What a mincing word. I think there's another reason, harder to get at, that we see three hundred-foot-tall towers as insults to our mountains. It's a spiritual as well as an aesthetic matter: in their gross disproportion, they assert human corporate dominion over the body of nature. But that spiritual value won't prevail—for the most part, won't even be recognized—in this aggressively unnatural society. Some practical people will see it as a word game.

According to an October 5 article by Jim Balow in the *Charleston Gazette*, the federal Department of Energy has estimated the potential for wind power in West Virginia at 5,000 megawatts. The turbines going up now can generate 1.5 megawatts. We could be looking at 3,333 towers. Wind power costs significantly more than coal power, a premium some purchasers are willing to pay for "green" power. That's our leverage. If it isn't "green" it won't sell. Can we keep it "green?" We'd better resume negotiations. At the same time, we'd better address the Legislature on siting criteria. We need a law more specific than, or in addition to, a ridge protection act.

Snowy Point, a Zen garden of white sand, stones, and rock islands at the tip of Cabin Mountain, ten miles north of Dolly Sods, is not on public land. Its view is not our business in the same way as the view from Dolly Sods or Canaan Valley or Spruce Knob. But all our views are bound to change.



GOOD STUFF FOR FREE

To get a free **I (Heart) Mountains** bumper sticker(s), send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Rd., Charleston, WV 25314

MORE GOOD STUFF (also free)

The Sierra Club, Citizens Coal Council, Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Focus(Kentucky), Big Sandy Environmental Coalition(Kentucky), Kentuckians For The Commonwealth and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy have put together a new brochure entitled "Mountaintop

Removal Destroys Our Homeplace STOP THE DEVASTATION!" For a copy send a self addressed stamped envelope to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314.

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

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.

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.

Coming Attractions

Bob Marshall agreed to act as chair of the committee to work on the Spring Review. He and Dave Saville will recruit volunteers to help. One possible site under consideration is the Cheat Mountain Club which is close to a potential Upper Shavers Fork Wilderness. The review is now scheduled for April 25-27, 2003. This will include the spring Board meeting.

The winter Board meeting will be January 25, 2003. Summer Board meeting and fall Review will be July 19, 2003, and October 17-19, 2003, respectively.

New Treasurer On Board

At the time of the Membership Meeting, we had not yet found anyone willing to accept the nomination as treasurer. Since the meeting, Bob Marshall has volunteered (more or less) to serve as treasurer. He will serve until the next annual Membership meeting in October, 2003. Welcome aboard.



Speakers Available!

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

LETTER TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

November 1, 2002

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

RE: Case No. 02-1189-E-CN, Ned Power Mt. Storm LLC

LETTER OF CONDITIONAL SUPPORT OF WIND POWER

Dear Ms. Squire:

We write to have our support for wind power and our concerns about this and other similar wind power project applications considered by the Commission.

But first we thank both the Commission and Ned Power, LLC, the applicant in this case, for allowing the WV Highlands Conservancy an extension of time in which to consider an intervention.

In regard to wind power applications that come before your Commission, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy offers the comments contained herein.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a 35 year old citizen organization whose purposes include the conservation- including both preservation and wise use- of the natural resources of this state and the nation, and especially of the highlands region of West Virginia.

The Highlands Conservancy believes that wind power development is one of several technologies that can possibly provide reasonable alternatives to the many environmental and other societal costs of the mining, transportation and burning of coal to generate electricity. Too, we realize that fossil fuels are a limited resource and that wind power and other "renewable" energy resources may be longer term alternatives to fossil fuels.

However, the Highlands Conservancy insists that your Commission, as the only existing permitting agency for West Virginia wind power generating facilities, needs to develop and implement full, comprehensive and objective siting criteria for wind turbines. Appropriate siting criteria should at least include consideration of visual and noise effects on certain public recreation areas and other recognized special places, consideration of the habitats and populations of rare and endangered species of plants and animals, consideration of the effects of wind power facilities on known flyways for local and migratory birds, and consideration of impacts on stream headwaters by earth disturbances caused by roads and other construction.

Too, the Highlands Conservancy believes that before your Commission issues certificates of convenience and necessity for wind power facilities that it should determine that the construction and operation of these facilities will comport in all respects with the federal Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Act.

Further, we believe that your Commission should internalize the relevant expertise to conduct the appropriate ecological studies and reports needed to effect good wind turbine siting recommendations. Such expertise should include the ability to conduct avian assessments, rare and endangered species and wetlands surveys, and sight and sound analyses.

We believe that this internal (or contracted) Commission

scientific expertise is necessary because of the need to conduct credible studies and because of the dynamic of wind project developer's budgets available for these assessments vis-a-vis that of citizen environmental organizations.

The Highlands Conservancy has learned that the pool of local ornithologists and endangered species scientists is small; so small that when they are first retained by the wind power industry no one qualified and willing is available for review on behalf of the Commission or citizen environmental organizations.

We believe that the Commission should internalize these scientific studies as perhaps either an attachment to your existing office of Consumer Advocate, or as adjunct capability to your existing engineering section.

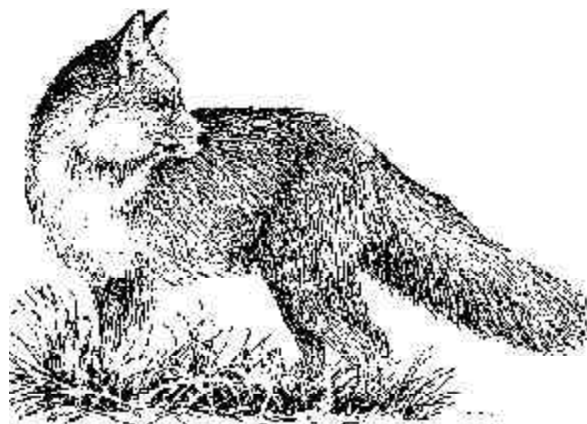
Or as an alternative to internalizing this scientific expertise, we believe that the Commission should consider having wind power project applicants fund the required studies, but as studies commissioned by the *Public Service Commission*, rather than by the applicant. Without suggesting any disrespect whatsoever for the applicant in the case herein referenced, we believe that ecological studies and reports performed by either the Commission's internal experts or by independent scientists commissioned by your agency would perhaps have more credibility than would studies and reports commissioned solely by the wind power industry.

The Commission's existing engineering section is an example of publicly recognized internal expertise the Commission already has. We are suggesting that the Commission develop scientific expertise applicable to wind turbine project applications, either internally or contractually.

Further, the Highlands Conservancy believes that both the development of a general commission policy relating to wind turbine siting criteria as well as application of that policy to specific wind power projects should include a process for full public input and fair consideration of that input. The expedited procedural schedule the Commission allows for these wind permit applications provides very limited opportunities for the public to learn about and consider the effects of these wind power project proposals. A lengthened procedural schedule would allow for better public understanding of the project proposals.

Thank you for considering our views in this matter.

Sincerely,
Frank Young, President
WV Highlands Conservancy



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www.wvhighlands.org

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OUR READERS WRITE

Dear West Virginia Highlands Conservancy,

I'm a long-time member of WVHC from Pittsburgh, PA. I've been reading about the question of wind power in The Highlands Voice, and would like to comment.

I think we must enthusiastically support wind power (along with other clean, safe energy sources). We must support these as an alternative to energy sources, such as coal, which are so environmentally destructive. Of course, we must also support efforts towards conservation of energy. I was pleased to see the article about the bottle bill in the latest Voice--it's an endorsement of a philosophy we should embrace. That is, to reduce the shocking wastefulness of our society in order to conserve energy and resources. It seems so simple and clear. Perhaps if we could just learn to be more careful, we could avoid the environmental destruction caused by our enormous energy and resources consumption.

As for the wind power project proposed for the Allegheny front just north of Dolly Sods, it's a tough issue. I dearly love Dolly Sods wilderness, Dolly Sods North and the stunning, inspiring vistas from Bear Rocks. I think this is an incomparable resource that must be protected--without question and without compromise. I believe that windmills too close to these areas would destroy their sense of wilderness. That would be a tragic, irreplaceable loss.

So how close is too close? Well, when I stand on Bear Rocks, I can already see those distant towers of the Mount Storm power sta-

tion. But they are pretty far away, and don't compromise my sense of wilderness very much. I would suggest that windmills that far away would be perfectly acceptable. Any closer would be unacceptable. Stack Rocks, just one mile north of Bear Rocks, is absolutely too close!

That brings me to my conclusion about the project. As I recall from the plans described in the Voice, there are three phases: Northern, Central and Southern. I do not recall the timing of each phase. But, I feel that the Northern Phase is acceptable and could be supported.

Some portion of the Central phase (perhaps the northern 1/3 or so) is acceptable and could also be supported. However, I feel that the Southern phase is totally unacceptable and we should vigorously oppose it. My working assumption behind this is that any windmill towers south of the Mt. Storm plant would be too close to Dolly Sods.

I realize that there may be other valuable areas--beyond Dolly Sods--that may be negatively affected by these windmills. I haven't carefully considered that. But, my main point is that there may be a way to support some portion of the wind power project, while still protecting the values and places we hold most dear. I would

hope that WVHC can find a position on the issue that does just that.

Thank you for time in considering my thoughts, and for the great work WVHC does.

Sincerely,
Rob Henning
Pittsburgh PA



Dear West Virginia Highlands Conservancy:

Issue 1

I have been a member of the WVHC since, I believe, 1974. Recent issues have been discussing what our stand on windpower generation in the highlands should be. I wish to add my voice to the discussion.

First, let us acknowledge that everyone of us uses energy resources. Probably all of us wish to use clean, renewable energy resources that can be obtained in an environmentally sound manner. I think, by and large, wind power fills this bill.

The WVHC cannot be viewed as obstructionists to wind power being generated in the highlands. But concerns such as wind power generators interfering with migratory bird flightpaths, the potential negative effects of access roads to erect and service such facilities, and visual pollution from certain pristine areas in the highlands are legitimate. For these reasons, I believe that our position should be one of supporting wind power generation -- but only if it is done in an environmentally sound manner.

If it has not been started already, I suggest that a committee of the WVHC be formed and charged with developing a model policy on wind power generation in the highlands. Obviously, business interests have already identified areas conducive to wind power generation. We should identify which of these areas are inappropriate due to proximity to pristine areas or interference with major migra-

tory bird flightpaths. We should develop standards for building and maintaining access roads. And then we should work to adopt laws and regulations that take these factors into account.

I believe that there are members who are already aware of major migratory bird paths



and knowledgeable about proper access road construction and maintenance. The visual pollution issue is one much more open to opinion. For starters, I would suggest no wind power generator erections in designated Wilderness Areas, State or National Parks. Furthermore, I would suggest that wind power generators not be erected on any ridge immediately adjacent to these areas. But is my enjoyment of a special area going to be significantly affected by my being able to see a generator in the distance? For me, probably less than the minor annoyance I experienced when, while backpacking in the Cranberry

Wilderness Area, I saw and heard a jet go overhead. We need to all keep in mind that Utopia does not exist. I will feel more than satisfied if we can just preserve "Almost Heaven" here. Let us, the WVHC, use our limited resources on insuring responsible wind power development and on preventing/ameliorating the bigger environmental threats to the region.

Issue 2

Ever since I can remember, individual membership dues have remained at \$15. Every other environmental organization that I belong to has dues in the \$25 to \$35 range. I suggest that we raise all membership dues by \$10. We can keep the \$15 membership dues for those who have a low income (honor system).

Issue 3

I joined the WVHC when I was a senior at WVU and only 20 years old. I am now 50 and notice that many of the other active members are at least as old as me. We need an active strategy to bring in other younger people and be willing to share power with them. Without new active blood, the WVHC will wither and die.

With positive regard and thanks to all those active members who have done so much for West Virginia in the past,

G. Drew Forrester

ANOTHER LETTER

Dear Editor:

I would like to weigh into the windmill debate, because I think there is key point that may not be understood by the average person outside the power industry and that I feel people may want to consider while evaluating the pros and cons for supporting additional wind power development in our region. I want to say that I, too, still struggle to some degree with the issues, and have not yet made up my mind that ALL regional wind projects are a bad idea, but I do think MOST are. Further, let me say that I do appreciate the thoughtful letters, such as the one from Ms. Haning in the last Voice, who attempt to logically rationalize the difficult decision to support wind power in WV, and avoid being perceived as hypocritical. Again, I feel a key point is missing, and that for many WVHC members, it may be a pivotal consideration.

Materiality !!! These wind projects, which often require MILES of Appalachian ridgetop, don't add up to a hill of beans in our struggle to meet our glutinous electric energy consumption requirements. As my wife can attest to, we often get locked in debate due to her tendency to elevate principle over practicality, but I just can't get myself to ignore the realities and practicalities we face while trying to right the environmental wrongs our society inflicts on our planet. We conservationists need to pick our fights, and we often times could benefit from taking practicality, or "materiality" into account. I think wind power is one of those issues where you need to consider the facts (not mentioned by developers, who just play up the "green" aspect of their project) !

Some of these proposed projects are only for 10-20 turbines, some are for up to 100-150. Power is measured in Megawatts (MW). With current technology, most wind turbines only produce about 1 MW (max), but apparently some new technology on the horizon may bring even larger 3MW turbines. But let me stick with today's turbine size to make the following points. Even a 50 turbine (approximately 50MW) project just isn't a material dent in our energy consumption. I have seen the infrastructure and land use required for just some small wind projects up here in PA near Somerset and Mill Run. I can't imagine the ridge top required for 50, 100 or 150 turbines, given the required spacing. **It would take 22 individual projects, EACH with 50 turbines, just to amount to the maximum MW output of one modern, high efficiency and (relatively) clean burning natural gas "combined cycle" power plant** (a standard size is 1,100 MW).

MOREOVER, wind power makes even a much lower beneficial impact on our electric power supply availability since it is controlled by the vagaries of the wind...which almost never correlate well with the demand for electricity !! That gas plant gives you 1,100MW at the push of a button, BUT, we'll never actually get 1,100MW from those 22+ separate 50 turbine tower projects, and it definitely won't be on a hot summer day when the air conditioners are sucking all the juice. What does that mean ? The power industry is STILL going to need to build some fossil fuel "peaking plants" to give it the necessary capacity to back-stop the power

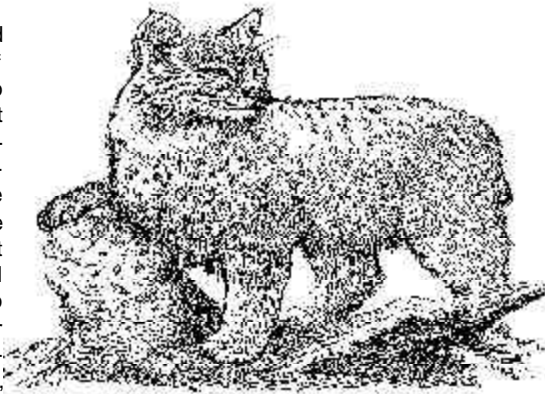
"sometimes" available from this alternative energy source. In other words, the wind projects do not completely replace the need to build a new plant ! The difference is that the "opportunistic" energy (not the same as "capacity") which the wind would supply will most likely displace output from a modern, efficient combined cycle gas plant, and NOT from coal plants (which don't like to "cycle" up and down, or on and off.)

What is more, that modern combined cycle gas plant can be sited (note, THIS is the kind of thing we should really push for) in brownfield areas near the load centers where power is needed (further reducing need for new power lines). OR, better yet, they can be sited next to existing or soon to be retired coal plants where the transmission line infrastructure is already in place. We should look for every chance we have to encourage the retirement of old, inefficient, highly polluting, coal guzzling power plants.

Here is an example near my home in Ligonier, PA. The local power plant owner is retiring a 200MW coal plant (built in the 1920s !) and replacing it with a new "waste coal" (culm, boney piles etc.) burning plant that produces 500MW but emits less pollutants than the old plant. That new plant yields 300MW of incremental power, available 7x24, AND benefits the local watersheds by cleaning up the old boney piles which contribute to AMD. This project was successfully developed, in large part, because of the very vocal support or local environmental and watershed organizations, along with the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources. That "extra" 300 MW from this brownfield power project is like a DOZEN different wind projects of 25 turbines/25MW) ! Come on, to make real dent in our power supply needs, we would have to string these windmills from Maine to Georgia along a huge chunk of the (environmentally sensitive) Appalachian ridge top. Are you still willing to compromise our mission to "conserve," and instead support 10, 20 or more wind farms in our region if they could be completely avoided by just 1 brownfield natural gas-fired plant ? Heck, we'll need to site an inefficient gas or oil-fired peaking plant anyway, since the wind farms only produce intermittently up to their total output ratings. Personally, I wouldn't make this trade, but that's for you to decide too. I just feel people don't realize how insignificant the contribution from these invasive developments really is to our supply infrastructure.

Good news. I am still just trying to learn more about the wind industry, but I like what I am hearing about the future of wind development, namely massive off-shore projects. Now we are talking! Now we have scale and "materiality"! ...not to mention a much better, consistent supply of wind, plenty of space, much less environmental impact, no view-shed impact, fewer NIMBYs (which makes the projects more economical) and fewer new transmission corridors. Imagine a single undersea cable running 10 miles back to shore and landing at an urban load pocket where power is needed. Developers could site 500, 1000 or more turbines at a good site. Several of these projects now may amount to a MATERIAL supply source. Intuitively, I feel THIS is a promising future for wind power to which we should lend our support...and that way we don't need to compromise our mission to conserve the unique, ecologically

environmental and watershed organizations, along with the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources. That "extra" 300 MW from this brownfield power project is like a DOZEN different wind projects of 25 turbines/25MW) ! Come on, to make real dent in our power supply needs, we would have to string these windmills from Maine to Georgia along a huge chunk of the (environmentally sensitive) Appalachian ridge top. Are you still willing to compromise our mission to "conserve," and instead support 10, 20 or more wind farms in our region if they could be completely avoided by just 1 brownfield natural gas-fired plant ? Heck, we'll need to site an inefficient gas or oil-fired peaking plant anyway, since the wind farms only produce intermittently up to their total output ratings. Personally, I wouldn't make this trade, but that's for you to decide too. I just feel people don't realize how insignificant the contribution from these invasive developments really is to our supply infrastructure.



fragile and very limited highland spaces of West Virginia, and elsewhere along the Appalachian Ridge corridor.

Note: Some people may reasonably ask, if Appalachian wind projects aren't of sufficient scale to be economic, then why are developers pursuing them in a competitive wholesale marketplace? Great question. Remember, first of all, your tax dollars are helping to make these projects economical for developers by way of the "alternative energy" tax credits available to support wind power projects and their owners. Second, developers are betting on (or in some cases have commitments for) receiving 1.5 to 2 cent per kWh premium for the electric output of the windmills. That is because electricity retailers can convince a relatively tiny minority of environmentally conscious consumers to pay a 10-20% premium for "green" power, which includes wind power as part of its "supply mix". Of course, the majority of these well-intentioned folks are urban dwellers and suburbanites who just buy the power, feel they are doing a good deed – which they are to some degree – but never are forced to evaluate the real trade-offs with which those of us who live and recreate along the ridges must struggle.

Finally, in selling this "green power" the retailers benefit from extremely liberal "packaging rules" which essentially further subsidize wind power and make up for its unreliable deliverability and poor daily/seasonal availability profile. In other words, the retailers are allowed to "average in" wind power on an annual basis. While they are placing some incremental demand on the supply of wind energy, buyers of green power aren't nearly sending the "one for one" sort of "Economics 101" buying signal they may think they are creating for the power production industry. They certainly aren't getting electrons from windmills most of the time! ...those are being supplied by the fossil fuel plants which are dispatched and operated to meet the hour to hour, day to day electricity needs for a

vast majority of the grid. So, no, in my opinion these projects don't stand on their own merits. That in and of itself may not make these projects "bad", but it does mean that most well-meaning folks are making uninformed decisions about buying "green" power and perhaps in WVHC members' cases whether or not to support proposed wind projects under the assumption that they are more beneficial than they in fact really are.

Note 2. Yes, I work in the power industry, (lest I am accused by some wind developer of coyly pushing an anti-wind power agenda on behalf of an employers' interest). But I am writing in my capacity as concerned WVHC member, whose only agenda is to attempt to fill in some of the info gaps, to give some perspective for making informed if not still difficult personal and/or organizational decisions. My only personal agenda here is to see WV's natural treasures conserved, as much as practically possible. (And I don't find ridge-top wind projects to be a practical solution to anything). I am not a natural gas plant developer in disguise! Gas plants, even brownfields, do have their warts. But, from a practical perspective, I feel the new breed of efficient combined cycle plants play a role in bridging our power supply for the next generation until a more renewables-based industry is technically feasible and economically viable (e.g. large off-shore wind? fuel cells, solar etc). I see small scale (25 to 150MW) Appalachian ridge wind projects as a case of (seductive but destructive) "feel good" form over substance. But, hey, I don't want to go off on a rant here...[sarcasm!] Thanks for listening!

Sincerely,
Ken Gfroerer, Ligonier, PA

Fish and Wildlife Service asking for comments on Cerulean Warbler ESA listing

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today it will expand its review of the status of the cerulean warbler, a small woodland bird, after reviewing a petition to list the warbler as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Service found the petition contained information indicating there may be a need to list the species.

The Service's finding initiates a further evaluation of the status of the cerulean warbler, a species which inhabits woodlands from the East Coast to the Mississippi River. During the evaluation, the Service will open a 90-day public comment period to allow the agency to receive information about the cerulean warbler from state, tribal, and other federal agencies, universities, scientists, and the general public. After reviewing available information, the Service will make a decision whether to propose the cerulean warbler as a threatened species.

The Service received the petition to list the cerulean warbler on October 31, 2000. The petition was signed by 28 organizations and was submitted to the Service through the Southern Environmental Law Center. The petition to list the cerulean warbler cited the species' declining populations primarily due to loss of woodland habitat. Under the Endangered Species Act, anyone may petition the Service to list a species as endangered or threatened and provide data supporting that recommendation. When a petition is received, the Ser-

vice must make an initial finding on the substantiality of the petition; if this finding is positive, further review of the species' status begins. At the end of the review period, the Service must determine whether listing is warranted, not warranted, or warranted but precluded by listing actions for species with a higher priority for listing.

The cerulean warbler is a small woodland songbird that ranges across eastern North



America from the eastern Great Plains, north to Minnesota, east to Massachusetts, and south to Louisiana. Named for the male's blue plumage, the cerulean warbler breeds primarily in the Ohio and Mississippi River basins and spends winter months in South America.

The Service has been reviewing the status of the cerulean warbler because, like many songbirds that migrate to neotropical areas, there is concern that its numbers are declining. A status assessment for the cerulean warbler was contracted by the Service and completed in April 2000; a follow-up effort fur-

ther reviewed the threats to its habitat on public forest lands. This assessment and the subsequent threats review indicated that cerulean warbler populations are declining, but did not recommend elevating the species to candidate status for listing. With the review of the petition and this initial finding that the petitioned action may be warranted, the Service will expand its review of the species' status, this time also asking for information from the public to update the 2000 assessment.

The Service is seeking additional information from the public on the cerulean warbler and threats to its habitat. Information and comments may be submitted to Field Supervisor, Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 608 East Cherry Street, Room 200, Columbia, Missouri 65201. They may also be faxed to that office at 573-876-1914. To ensure their consideration, all comments and other information must be received by the close of the comment period on January 21, 2003.

Information on the petition to list the cerulean warbler and the Service's 2000 status assessment is available on the Service's website at <http://midwest.fws.gov/endangered/>

Editor's note: The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy was one of the groups which petitioned to have the cerulean warbler listed as threatened. Tom Michael spearheaded this effort for the Conservancy.

STILL MORE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Martin:

I would be more than happy to distribute the brochure entitled "Mountaintop Removal Destroys our Homeplace STOP THE DEVASTATION!"

I am currently a student at Marshall University and I live in Huntington, but I am originally from Cabin Creek, West Virginia. I will be giving a presentation on a non-profit organization of my choice in the next few weeks and I chose the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. I have been interested in this organization for some time. My interest derives from Kayford Mountain. My family was started there many years ago and the majority of them are buried there among the constant blasting and excavation. There is a portion of the mountain owned by some of my family that the coal company cannot touch. The 50 acres of preserved land is known as Stanley Heirs Park. It is devastating to observe the surrounding areas of the park. The mountains around the Kayford area have literally been "blown" off and leveled. In the fall, when the leaves start to change, a festival is held at the park to celebrate the changing of the leaves and allow time for fellowship among family and friends. I would be glad to circulate some brochures at the festival as well as at my presentation.

Sincerely,

Becky Moore.

Dear Editor,

I am a twenty year old West Virginian. I love this state; for me it is almost heaven. What more could one ask for? Lush valleys, majestic hills, quiet woodlands that seem untouched by human hands, beautiful sunsets, it is all here. Each time I walk into a sunset I have to wonder what could be any better. To see the chain of life continue one more year with the rebirth of all that our creator placed here for us to see. When I stand outside I look around in total awe. This beauty has stood for centuries; it was here for our ancestors and it is here for us to enjoy today.

However I have discovered that not all West Virginians have this sense of pride. Growing up in the southern coal fields, I always had to see what "prosperity" did to the earth. Growing up around Elk Run Coal Company, a subsidiary of Massey Energy, in Sylvester, West Virginia, I have seen first hand the little care that is taken in watching out for residents and their property, let alone the creation that sits around us.

Is anything sacred any more? Human life isn't; the earth certainly isn't. I think there certainly are lessons to be learned in life. Do unto others as you would have them do to you. Would you like it if your neighbor paid you a visit daily and released a bag of carcinogenic diesel fuel laced coal dust in and around your home. It was in my family's best interest to leave the town that was our home for over 21 years because of Massey Energy's blatant disregard for human life. We couldn't stand their filth any longer. We couldn't use our own property because of the disgusting waste from their synfuel facility.

The constant plea that echoes far and near to the young people of West Virginia is "Stay here in West Virginia and help to improve our state!" Why stay if we will be subjected to unexpected torrent floods, cancer causing coal dust, deadly coal truck accidents, and state agencies that turn the other cheek when it comes time to hold coal companies accountable for their actions. If the youth of West Virginia are to remain in the state, the destruction must stop, or it will no longer be safe to live in this soon to be "Almost Level West Virginia" (in the words of our former secretary of state).

Chris Sharps

Fairmont State College

Dear Sirs,

My name is Denver Mitchell. I was at your Hill Top meeting at Charleston last Saturday. The cause you are doing, to try to stop Mountain Top Removal, is a very good cause. I'm all for stopping Mountain Top Removal. I'll tell you why. All of the people who live in the valleys are in danger of flash flood drowning if we do not get this stopped and get the people to understand the dangers that we face in the future. As you know, any time you take vegetation off mountaintops, we are going to have flash flooding. We are going to lose many lives in the future.

If Massey wants to mine mountain tops and timber industry wants to timber the mountains, unless the big corporations take responsibility for low land streams. That's why we have to pressure our Senators and Governor to stop Massey Coal Company from raping our land. That's why we have to fight and educate our people about what danger we are in down in the valleys. Massey Coal Company has been raping our land for a long time. Now is the time for the people to stand up and express their feelings toward this matter.

I, Denver Mitchell, challenge the hunters and the National Rifle Association to stand up with us on this matter. If we do not take the bull by the head now and try to bring it down to its knees, we are going to lose many lives and millions of dollars in property. I'm not against a man working, but I'm against Massey Coal Company raping our land losing people in the valleys. With no water ways, we know that one tree in the mountains will absorb fifty gallons of water. Nature teaches you that itself. That's why we are to start to express our opinion before it is too late for other counties.

Yours truly,
Denver Mitchell
Wilkinson, WV

Dear Editor:

It is nice to hear from Bob Mueller again. He signs his letter to the editor "Hopefully yours." We here are already using the maps and the references he gave us in his letter. We too view this as our last chance to reverse the fragmentation we have observed in the Monongahela in the last 15-20 years. Our "desired future condition", being formed now, may be the unique opportunity the Monongahela has to become the largest Wilderness Recovery Area in the east. We have not forgotten the National Forests in Virginia either.

We have not forgotten Bob Mueller and his lone call for wilderness long ago.

Don Gasper
Buckhannon, WV



MON FOREST PLAN REVISION

Which Forest Service Will We See?

By The Fish Guys (aka Don Gasper and Don Garvin)

As the Forest Service staff on the Monongahela National Forest begins the long overdue process of revising the Monongahela National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan, we can't help but wonder which Forest Service we will be dealing with this time around.

We ask this question because, after years of observation, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service seems to be more impacted by the vagaries of politics and political change than almost any other federal agency. And these impacts can mean real and immediate change in the ways our public lands are managed.

Clinton's out, Bush is in. Dombek's gone, Bosworth is in. Out with the Roadless Area Protection Initiative, in with the Healthy Forests Initiative. It surely must keep the heads of longtime professional Forest Service staff spinning, particularly down at the level where the rubber meets the road, at the local individual national forest or district office.

There is no better example of the schizophrenia that engulfs the Forest Service as a land management agency than the national "U.S.D.A. Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000 Revision)," which is discussed in greater detail below. That document, in most respects, represents a new and "evolved" Forest Service. If the provisions of this Strategic Plan are implemented it would be an awesome readjustment for the agency, one that could shift the mood of the management debate from one of gloom and doom to a mood of cooperation and optimism.

Well, don't hold your breath in anticipation. There are already signs that the good work contained in the 2000 Strategic Plan will be scrapped, and replaced with a focus on management by exclusion rather than inclusion.

The Wilderness Society just this month reports that Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth has already signed draft regulations that would "categorically exclude" the forest planning process from the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This exemption would allow the Forest Service to adopt, revise, or amend its management plans for the national forests without considering any alternatives or the environmental consequences to the forests. These draft regulations are currently going through final clearance within the Administration, and the Forest Service expects to release them later this month for a 90-day public comment period — a period in which apparently the Forest Service expects the public to willingly hand over its rights to participate fully in the forest planning process or to ask that the Forest Service prepare environmental impact assessments as required under NEPA.

Enough said for a spirit of cooperation, optimism, and inclusion. It would appear that the Forest Service has already shelved the forward looking provisions of the 2000 Strategic Plan which were based on a framework of "integrity and accountability."

The U.S.D.A. Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000 Revision)

"Mission: To Sustain the Health, Diversity and Productivity of the Nation's Forests and Grasslands to Meet the Needs of Present and Future Generations"

The goals of the Strategic Plan are divided into four main groups:

1. Ecosystem Health — Improve and protect watershed conditions

to provide water quantity and quality, and soil productivity necessary to support ecological functions and intended beneficial water uses; provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of desired species; restore watersheds to healthy condition to resist damage from insects, etc.

2. Multiple Benefits to People — Improve capability to provide diverse, high quality outdoor recreation opportunities; provide desired sustainable levels of uses, values, products, and services; improve the capability of wilderness and protected areas to sustain a desired range of benefits and values; increase accessibility to a diversity of people and members of under-served and low-income populations to the full range of uses, values, products, and services; improve delivery of services to urban communities.

3. Scientific and Technical Assistance — Improve the knowledge base provided through research, inventory, and monitoring to enhance scientific understanding of ecosystems, including human uses, and to support decision making and sustainable management.

4. Effective Public Service — Improve and integrate informational systems, data structures, and information management processes to support cost-efficient program delivery; improve the skills, diversity, and productivity of the workforce; provide appropriate access to U.S. land.

The purpose of the 2000 Strategic Plan is to "guide future agency actions." It will make "use of scientific information from research and development programs and improve the management and accountability for these activities." As it "focuses on outcomes, or long-term results, such as the health of the land, the quality of water, and customer satisfaction, it represents an important change in focus for the U.S.D.A. Forest Service."

The 2000 Strategic Plan reflects a shift in societal values that the Forest Service must have, to a considerable degree, become aware of. It came about after an assessment of the resource status and trends, followed by considerable public input. It incorporates the National Resource Agenda that "focuses on watershed health and restoration, sustainable forest management, the National Forest road system, and recreation." It in fact incorporates all rules and laws to date and sets the four main goals and the objectives under each that "will drive adjustments to, and development of, new programs and plans." "As Land and Resource Management Plans are amended and revised and projects are proposed, local managers will look to the National Strategic Plan for guidance."

The status of American forests, as revealed by the resource assessment, was getting older with less earlier successional stages. Though forest is being converted to sprawl, as much cleared area is reverting to forest — it is then "expected to remain relatively stable." Fragmentation is increasing, with many small valuable private holdings near public land. Wildlife levels are stable, but the number of endangered species is increasing. Wetland conversion is slowing. Large undeveloped landscapes and the species favored by them are "likely to be at risk in the future." Citizen's demands for goods and services are expected to continue to increase. Almost 95% of



More on the next page

Continued from previous page

the U.S. population 16 years and older now participates in some form of outdoor recreation: walking, non-consumptive wildlife activities, biking, sightseeing, non-pool swimming, fishing, family gathering and picnicking. The availability of private land for public recreation has not kept up with population increases. Timber harvest from public lands is expected to remain at recent levels. Water use in the U.S. is expected to increase only 7% between 1995 and 2040 while the population is projected to increase 49%.

This strategic plan is to be implemented by determining baseline current status conditions as soon as possible — by September 2002 in some cases — and then to make annual performance plans. These “establish annual goals and objectives for what must be done in the near term in order to make progress toward the long term outcomes articulated in the strategic plan.”

The plan’s overarching objective is to insure “sustainable ecosystems by restoring and maintaining species diversity and ecological productivity that helps provide recreation, water, timber, minerals, fish, wildlife, wilderness and aesthetic values for current and future generations of people.” This objective is reiterated in the following statement: “The Forest Service must comply with its legislated responsibilities, particularly concerning the water, air and soils that sustain life . . . specifically, it must work to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests.”

Objectives and goals are really just “management speak” unless they are fleshed out with specific action items. Here are just a few of the specifics that the 2000 Strategic Plan says the Forest Service will do:

The Forest Service will identify species, habitats and ecological conditions to serve as indicators for ecosystem health and conservation. They will develop and implement priority strategies in cooperation with partners. They will establish measurable objectives for populations, habitats, and/or ecological conditions to provide for species at risk and special focus species. They will establish surveying and monitoring methods, and initiate baseline and trend evaluations. They will “reduce the potential impacts from roads on ecological conditions through implementation of a roadless area conservation policy.” They will “implement habitat restoration and management activities for species with viability concerns, focal species and ecosystems at risk.” One species identified is the Eastern brook trout.

They will attempt some coordination with near-by landowners. To foster forest health they will identify priority health prob-

lems, they will research ecosystems (composition, structure and process), and the historical role of disturbance. They will minimize insect and disease problems. “They will develop a national and eco-regional integrity rating system to improve the ability to assess ecological conditions and trends.”

They will improve the capability of the Nation’s forests to provide high quality outdoor recreation opportunities. They will research methods for estimating outdoor recreation capacity using ecological capacities and information on the demand for outdoor



recreation. They will maintain the integrity of roadless areas for dispersed recreation opportunities through implementation of a roadless area conservation policy. They will determine trends in user satisfaction. They will increase environmental education and interpretation. They will improve management of facilities and special places. They will establish baseline information and indicators for determining and maintaining wilderness in collaboration with other agencies.

With respect to air quality they only note that the E.P.A.’s air quality standards will improve air quality. (They have not stated here that they will monitor effects and act to protect resources found to be damaged by Acid Rain.) Under goal # 3, to improve the knowledge base to enhance scientific understanding, etc., they will “incorporate/integrate the best available science in all broad scale assessments and Land and Resource Management Plan Revisions.” “They will implement inventory and monitoring systems to provide scientific information and decision support across all land ownerships.” They will “expand the annual Forest Inventory and Analysis and Forest Health Monitoring Programs.” They will develop a similar program for aquatic ecosystems. (That could be very important.) They will establish an expert review process for the broad scale assessments and Land and Resource Management Plan Revisions — and for their Research and Development Program (whatever that is). They will provide research results and tools that support effective management, protec-

tion and restoration of ecosystems. Information and education programs will be improved. They want a 50% increase in information services by 2006.

They will build cooperative relationships with nearby communities. They will continue to acquire rights-of-way for roads and trails for access to forest lands. They will acquire land to enhance and protect resources, and restore ecosystem integrity. They will clearly identify their property boundaries. They will implement a scientific road policy using an increased understanding of the ecological and social impacts associated with roads and related management activities. They will improve road safety.

Well, there it is! Doesn’t this sound good! The only real important issue entirely missing is the role forests play in reducing flooding. It is a legal requirement they surely cannot overlook.

So contrast what you have just read to a section of a speech given just this September by Chief Bosworth. He is talking about the President’s recently announced “Healthy Forests Initiative.” Bosworth says: “Here are some of the things we are working on: we are improving procedures for developing and implementing projects, in collaboration with local governments; we are reducing the number of overlapping environmental reviews; we are developing guidance for weighing short-term risks against long-term benefits; we are helping ensure consistent NEPA procedures, including a model Environmental Assessment; we are also simplifying our appeals process.”

For those of us interested in protecting clean water for trout, those words ring hollow. They shout to us that the Forest Service is not only back to business as usual, but wants to do so with a vengeance by streamlining and “fast-tracking” the process to minimize public comment and eliminate the legal appeals process as established in NEPA.

And how does anything mentioned in the Bosworth speech relate to the 2000 Strategic Plan? Well, not to worry: the Forest Service intends to revise the Strategic Plan in 2003. It will be interesting to see what the next revision looks like.

You can read the entire Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000 Revision) on-line at <http://www.fs.fed.us/plan/>.

(Don Garvin is president of the Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Don Gasper is a member of MCTU and a retired WV DNR fisheries biologist. Both are members of the Board of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. This article originally appeared in the October MCTU newsletter).

BOOK NEWS

The Art of the Commonplace: the Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry. Edited and Introduced by Norman Wirzba. (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2002).

Review by Kathleen Parker

Farming is as old as any recorded human tradition: from goddess Ceres to Cain and Abel to the Farmer in the Dell, agriculture forms part of our heritage, defining not only how we produce food but how we live from the land. In western societies, small farms are a nearly mythical ideal, promising a peaceful, pastoral life. Small farms are fast disappearing, however. Even West Virginia, a chiefly rural state, has only about 20,000 farms, by USDA counts. Just 7,000 of those have operators who list farming as their principal occupation. Clearly, we are no longer a nation or a state of farmers.

What happens when agriculture is diminished and fragmented from the rest of culture? This is a question frequently visited by Kentucky writer Wendell Berry, from his landmark 1977 book *The Unsettling of America* to novels, poetry, and essays published since. *The Art of the Commonplace* collects some of his previously published essays on agrarian themes. For those long acquainted with the prolific Berry, reading this collection is like a good conversation with an old friend telling familiar tales. For those who have yet to discover this important Appalachian writer, *The Art of the Commonplace* offers a thorough introduction to Berry's agrarian ideas. These are "agrarian" essays not in that they describe farming technique, but in their plea for sustainable communities built on intimate connections with the earth. Berry offers his agrarian framework for conducting life as a corrective to modern exploitive economies.

Editor Norman Wirzba gathered Berry's essays into five major groups. The first, "Geobiography," looks at Berry's farm home in Kentucky as the foundation for much of his work. It is followed by "Understanding Our Cultural Crisis," essays that explore the correlation between attitudes we have toward the earth and toward each other; and closely related, "The Agrarian Basis for Authentic Culture," pieces exploring our responsibility in developing healthy communities. "Agrarian Economics" offers Berry's critique of current economic models. Finally, essays on "Agrarian Religion" take a look at the way religion may help transform culture to agrarian principles.

The section on economics contains some of the most recent work, and provides the strongest conceptual explanation of agrarian thought and practice. In "The Whole Horse," Berry describes agrarianism as "a way of thought based on land," as opposed to industrialism which focuses on money and technology. Further, in "The Idea of a Local Economy," Berry proposes that the "environmental crisis has happened because the human household or economy is in conflict at almost every point with the household of nature." Our industrial, consumer-driven households have become organized by the demands of the marketplace, instead of local conditions. While consumer households are geared toward accelerating change, constancy would be favored in a household responsive to nature; where industry seeks profitability, households connected to a landscape seek sustainability; industry assumes it must acquire all it can get, but agrarian households can find satisfaction in "enough". Under scrutiny, we find that industrial communism and industrial capitalism alike are not true economies, but only financial systems that measure money. "And so we have before us the spectacle of unprecedented 'prosperity' and 'economic

growth' in a land of degraded farms, forests, ecosystems, and watersheds, polluted air, failing families, and perishing communities."

Concern for communities runs throughout Berry's work. By community, Berry means a group of people identified with a place and with each other. While valuing individual privacy and difference, he warns against pursuit of individual freedoms that lead only to self-enrichment, self-interest, or self-aggrandizement: "one individual represents no fecundity, no continuity, and no harmony. The individual life implies no standard of behavior or responsibility." Berry instead recommends the exercise of freedom within community: "A community confers on its members the freedoms implicit in familiarity, mutual respect, mutual affection, and mutual help; it gives freedom its proper aims; and it prescribes or shows the responsibilities without which no one can be legitimately free, or free for very long." Because communities derive their identity, continuity, and livelihood from their landscape as well as their members, people in community cherish their land and work to assure its long-term health over short-term gain. Thus by attending to community, we gain not only freedom in a supportive network of neighbors, but environmental stewardship as well.

Just as the industrial economy fosters a disconnect between people and place, it also divides people and work. Work becomes something to endure for the sake of pleasure postponed, instead of a satisfying contribution to the household. In "Economy and Pleasure," Berry points out that the industrial economy gives no accounting for pleasure. We are left with workplaces destitute of pleasure, with homes that are driven by consumption, and pleasure sold to us by leisure industries. "Where is our pleasure but in working and resting kindly in the presence of this world?" Berry asks. "In the right sort of economy," he notes, "our pleasure would not be merely an addition or by-product or reward; it would be both the empowerment of our work and its indispensable measure."

The essays in *The Art of the Commonplace* are convincing in their criticism of American society and its devaluation of traditional agriculture. They are, collectively, better at criticism than they are in describing solutions. After sustained reading, one longs for a discussion of the "Art" of agrarian life. Berry makes brief mention of successful agrarians, from Amish farmers to a local sheep breeder, and he repeats familiar advice on how all citizens can participate in an agrarian economy ("eat responsibly", plant a garden, buy local products, participate in political processes, etc.). Nonetheless, these positive expressions are overwhelmed by the weight of problems identified in these essays. Readers will need to go elsewhere to find working models of sustainable rural life. Before seeking other books, however, readers will find their time well spent lingering over Berry's thoughtful, provoking, and wonderfully straightforward prose.



CINDY RANK WINS CLEAN WATER AWARD

The Clean Water Network has named West Virginia Highlands Conservancy mining committee chair Cindy Rank one of thirty national Clean Water Act heroes as part of the celebration of the Clean Water Act's 30th anniversary. This award honors individuals who have made powerful contributions to the protection and restoration of America's rivers, lakes, wetlands, and coastal waters.

In 1972, Cindy and Paul Rank built their dream home along the headwaters of West Virginia's Little Kanawha River. Within a few years, they learned that four coal mines were proposed in the watershed – threatening their home, their community and the river they had come to love and rely on.

The Little Kanawha River starts in Upshur County and grows as it flows 167 miles to its confluence with the Ohio River. A beautiful hill country stream in its headwaters near the Ranks' home, the river becomes a large workhorse as it grows, the result of a series of locks and dams that turned the lower river into a major transportation route in the late 1800s. Today, the river is mainly used for recreation – fishing, swimming, and boating – and as a source of drinking water.

The proposed mines threatened to pollute the Little Kanawha with acid mine drainage, created when water makes contact with pyrites, an iron sulfide often exposed by mining in that area. The newly exposed pyrite reacts with air and water to form acid runoff low in pH and high in metals like iron, aluminum, and manganese. This combination of acid and metals often stains streams bright red, orange and yellow, kills fish, smothers aquatic life and destroys water supplies. In addition, infrastructure such as bridges and community water supply systems are harmed by its corrosive power.

Rank and her neighbors took action. They formed the Friends of the Little Kanawha and took up the fight for clean water and safe communities. The fight over the mines was long and twisted – involving legal battles, painfully technical assessments and all kinds of politics. In the end, the permit application was withdrawn. But Rank is quick to say the need to protect the Little Kanawha remains.

In fact, Rank hasn't stopped since the 1970s. From the early days of the Clean Water Act, she engaged in state water quality standards development, clean water permitting, wetlands protection and more.

She remains active in the Friends of the Little Kanawha and volunteers for the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. As mining chair for the Conservancy, Rank helped spearhead the first citizen lawsuit to protect West Virginia's streams from mountaintop removal mining and valley fills. The effect of this lawsuit has been far-reaching – raising the issue with the national media, rousing congressional

interest, and galvanizing a continuing legal battle. Cindy speaks out about mountaintop removal mining.

Anyone who works with Rank comments on the same thing – her amazing ability to dive into the nitty-gritty of the policy and legal issues surrounding clean water. What makes this all the more amazing is that all this work – all 25 years of it – has been done as a volunteer.

Why anyone would spend their free time reading statutes and regulations? According to Rank, the answer is simple: "That's where the decisions are made. You can yell and scream and cry until you're blue in the face, but it's all for naught if you can't back yourself up with the law. "You can yell and scream and cry until you're blue in the face, but it's all for naught if you can't back yourself up with the law. People forget that all the seemingly small changes made in the legislature and at the agencies are going to make such a difference in their own backyard." "People forget that all the seemingly small changes made in the legislature and at the agencies are going to make such a difference in their own backyard."

"The importance of the Clean Water Act can't be overstated," Rank said. "Even though some rivers and streams in West Virginia have been cleaned up, we continue to get further and further and further away from the goals of the Act. The basic intention of the Act was to protect and restore the waters of the nation. Simply put, if water is clean, you are supposed to keep it clean. If it is dirty, you are supposed to clean it up."

Rank made her comments during a meeting reviewing studies for a long-overdue Environmental Impact Study on mountaintop removal / valley fill coal mining.

"It is very difficult to feel good about the 30th anniversary of the Clean Water Act when we are sitting in the middle of a meeting determining how many miles of streams we are going to bury based on profits for the coal industry.

"Probably the most egregious violation of the Clean Water Act in West Virginia today is the burying of thousands of miles of streams under millions of tons of coal mining waste rock and slurry."

"Cindy is a Clean Water Act pioneer, an outstanding individual, and my personal environmental hero," says Margaret Janes, a fellow clean water activist in West Virginia. The incredible wild streams of West Virginia and the communities nestled next to them rely on people who can speak out for their protection. Even corporate coal companies have to listen when people like Rank speak for the rivers.

Cindy Runs With the Big Dogs

Cindy was one of thirty recipients of the national Clean Water Act Heroes Award. Here is the list of all recipients:

Wendell Berry, Kentucky
 Rep. Sherwood L. Boehlert, New York
 Lee Botts, Indiana
 Senator Barbara Boxer, California
 Representative John D. Dingell, Michigan
 Rick Dove, North Carolina
 Don Elder, Oregon
 Arthur Feinstein, California
 Beth Fraser, Georgia
 Donna Frye, California
 John Kabler, Maryland
 John Katko, Ohio
 Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., New York
 Jessica Landman, Washington, DC
 Robin Mann, Pennsylvania
 Judy Meyer, Georgia
 Rob Moore, Illinois and Vermont
 Joint award: Senator Edmund S. Muskie
 and Senator John H. Chafee
 Rep. James L. Oberstar, Minnesota
 Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr., New Jersey
 Ed Perry, Pennsylvania
 Myrna Poticha, Colorado
 Nancy Rabalais, Louisiana
 Cindy Rank, West Virginia
 Pete Seeger, New York
 Rep. Christopher Shays, Connecticut
 Mark Solomon, Idaho
 Terry Spence, Missouri
 Mark Van Putten, Washington, DC
 David Zwick, Washington, DC



CHEAT CANYON PROTECTION IN THE WORKS

By Dave Savile

Cheat Canyon Protection in the Works

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has been working quietly, behind the scenes, with a group of concerned citizens, other conservation organizations and agencies to find the means to protect the Cheat Canyon. Organized by Charlie Walbridge and the Friends of Cheat, negotiations are underway for the WV Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) to acquire approximately 6,500 acres of land in Preston County currently owned by Allegheny Energy (AE). Approximately 4,700 acres is in Cheat Canyon; the remaining 1,800 acres are along the Big Sandy.

We have a history of working towards the conservation and preservation of this vital resource, the Cheat River, dating back to the early 1960s. From the very beginning, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has had as one of its principle concerns, protecting the Cheat River watershed. We have worked to stop harmful and destructive dams; We have demanded that coal operators prevent acid mine drainage that has seriously impacted water quality; We have advocated for the protection of the Cheat River headwaters through Wilderness designation of the Dolly Sods, Otter Creek and Laurel Fork Wilderness Areas; We have worked with the USDA Forest Service to see that development and resource extraction in the Monongahela National Forest is done in a manner that does not degrade the quality or quantity of water in the Cheat River; We worked for over 30 years to protect Canaan Valley and its 7,000 acres of wetlands, a most important Cheat River headwaters; the list goes on and the work goes on.

As you are aware, we have recently had one of the more important portions of the Cheat River watershed slip through our hands and fall into the hands of those who would despoil it and degrade the scenic, biologic, cultural and economic qualities of the river. Despite our efforts to protect the Blackwater Canyon, also once owned by Allegheny Energy, to become part of the economic engine that powers the vital tourism industry in the West Virginia Highlands, it has not yet happened. While we continue to work towards its protection, we are currently faced with an opportunity of equal or greater import.

The Cheat River Canyon, which is located in Preston and Monongalia Counties is one of the states premier tourism destinations. Thousands of whitewater enthusiasts flock to this portion of the river each year, not only to experience the thrill of some of the best whitewater in the nation, but also to experience the splendor of this pristine Appalachian river canyon. The Allegheny Trail follows a path through the canyon for over 15 miles of its 330 mile journey through the State. The Cheat Canyon is home to several rare, threatened and endangered species of plants and animals. There are as many as 80 caves found in the canyon walls. The Canyon comprises the viewshed, which is the attraction to over 400,000 visitors annually to Coopers Rock State Forest, the most visited of all our State Forests. Through our efforts, and those of others, 1500 acres of the canyon was protected

CONSERVANCY ASKS GOVERNOR TO PROTECT CHEAT RIVER CANYON

Dear Governor Wise,

We are writing in support of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources efforts to protect the resources of the Cheat River Canyon through the purchase of the lands currently owned and being offered for sale by Allegheny Energy.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is among the State's oldest and largest environmental organizations representing over 2,000 groups and individuals. We have a history of working towards the conservation and preservation of this vital resource, the Cheat River, dating back to the early 1960s. From the very beginning, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has had as one of its principle concerns, protecting the Cheat River watershed. We have worked to stop harmful and destructive dams; We have demanded that coal operators prevent acid mine drainage that has seriously impacted water quality; We have advocated for the protection of the Cheat River headwaters through Wilderness designation of the Dolly Sods, Otter Creek and Laurel Fork Wilderness Areas; We have worked with the USDA Forest Service to see that development and resource extraction in the Monongahela National Forest is done in a manner that does not degrade the quality or quantity of water in the Cheat River; We worked for over 30 years to protect Canaan Valley and its 7,000 acres of wetlands, a most important Cheat River headwaters; and the list goes on. Many of our accomplishments in protecting the Cheat River and its watershed were done with your help and support. For this, we are

extremely grateful.

As you are aware, we have recently had one of the more important portions of the Cheat River watershed slip through our hands and fall into the hands of those who would despoil it and degrade the scenic, biologic, cultural and economic qualities of the river. Despite our efforts to protect the Blackwater Canyon, also once owned by Allegheny Energy, to become part of the economic engine that powers the vital tourism industry in the West Virginia Highlands, it has not yet happened. While we continue to work towards its protection, and are appreciative of your efforts on it's behalf, we are currently faced with an opportunity of equal or greater import.

The Cheat River Canyon, which is located in Preston and Monongalia Counties is one of the states premier tourism destinations. Thousands of whitewater enthusiasts flock to this portion of the river each year, not only to experience the thrill of some of the best whitewater in the nation, but also to experience the splendor of this pristine Appalachian river canyon. The Allegheny Trail follows a path through the canyon for over 15 miles of its 330 mile journey through the State. The Cheat Canyon is home to several rare, threatened and endangered species of plants and animals. There are dozens of caves found in the canyon walls. The Canyon comprises the viewshed, which is the attraction to over 400,000 visitors annually to Coopers Rock State Forest, the most visited of all our State Forests. Through our efforts, and those of others, 1500

acres of the canyon was protected by former Governor Caperton as the Snake Hill Wildlife Management Area.

Big Sandy is a major Cheat River tributary entering the Cheat at mid-canyon. This tract contains a stocked trout stream, Laurel Run, that is a significant destination for anglers in the Morgantown area. Trout Unlimited is interested in pursuing a cooperative management agreement for Laurel Run. The Big Sandy is also a renowned kayaking stream from Bruceon Mills all the way down to the Cheat, through Rockville and past the Falls.

West Virginia is currently faced with what is most likely a once in a lifetime (or perhaps longer) opportunity to protect this important resource for current and future generations. Rarely does an opportunity present itself to protect an area as large and important as this. We now have the opportunity to see the remaining portions of the Canyon, from Coopers Rock State Forest up stream all the way to Albright, largely protected. The steep terrain, sensitive soils and rare biologic elements, make these lands inappropriate for development or resource extraction. Indeed, we feel that its best and highest use is to have these elements protected to better serve the local economy and the people of West Virginia. The quality of life offered in this area, in no small part because of the natural, clean and green environment, and the multitude of local outdoor recreational opportunities, is a principle force in driving our successful economic development efforts.

If acquired, these lands will be managed as WVDNR wildlife management areas, probably as an expansion of the existing Snakehill WMA. AE is seeking to sell these lands as soon as possible. The company currently has other buyers for the property, but would rather negotiate with the State for these lands to become public. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy fully supports the purchase, by the State, of the Allegheny Energy lands in the Cheat Canyon. While significant portions of the purchase price are already in hand, and more is within reach, we feel that stronger support from Governor Wise is needed to make this deal happen. We urge you to contact the Governor, to tell him how important this resource is, and ask him to do everything in his power to support the WV DNR's efforts to make this important acquisition possible.

Please write to:
Governor Robert Wise
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, E
Charleston, WV 25305
1-888-438-2731
governor@wv.gov

acres of the canyon was protected by former Governor Caperton as the Snake Hill Wildlife Management Area.

West Virginia is currently faced with what is most likely a once in a lifetime (or perhaps longer) opportunity to protect this important resource for current and future generations. Rarely does an opportunity present itself to protect an area as large and important as this. Allegheny Energy is offering for sale approximately 6,500 acres of the Cheat River Canyon. The steep terrain, sensitive soils and rare biologic elements, make these lands inappropriate for development or resource extraction. Indeed, we feel that its best and highest use is to have these elements protected to better serve the local economy and the people of West Virginia. The quality of life offered in this area, in no small part because of the natural, clean and green environment, and the multitude of local outdoor recreational opportunities, is a principle force in driving our successful economic development efforts.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy fully supports the purchase, by the State, of the Allegheny Energy lands in the Cheat Canyon. We urge you to do everything in your power to support the WV DNRs efforts to make this important acquisition possible.

Sincerely,
Frank Young Robert Marshall
President Public Lands Committee Chair

WET WEEKEND ON SPRUCE KNOB

By Peter Schoenfeld

Joe, Elaine, Steve and Peter met Saturday morning October 12 at Spruce Knob Tower for the Columbus Day Backpack trip. Plan was to hike Saturday on Spruce, Sunday on Seneca and Allegheny, and Monday on Big Run of Gandy.

It had rained multiple inches the two days previous and was still drizzling Saturday morning. However, it stopped and we had a nice hike that morning out the Lumberjack Trail. Autumn color was in an early stage and the ground was very wet.

Near the junction with High Meadows Trail, we came to a spot where a group of backpackers had placed their camp right in the middle of the trail, in an obvious last-ditch effort to cope with the previous days heavy rain. Nobody was home, but a little while later we ran into the occupants - a disheveled but happy bunch including old-time Highlands Conservancy activist Tom Michael.

We made camp early at a gorgeous high meadow on High Meadows trail. This campsite was dry- about the first dry place we'd seen. Took an extra trek and some digging to get water for camp. This campsite provided

gorgeous vistas - full autumn colors in some directions, Allegheny Mountain, and wisps of cloud traveling below and around at different elevations. We found enough dry wood to have a great campfire, with lots of good stories.

Sunday morning the rain started again about 6 AM. We came in and out of our tents, trying to have breakfast and pack up during a dry spell. It never came - intermittent and sometimes heavy rain continued all day. Things got wetter and wetter. We went down to Seneca and headed north, wading the three

fords downstream of Judy Springs. We developed a plan - this was that if the weather ever cleared, we'd go up Allegheny and camp there, but otherwise we'd hike out to the Seneca Creek trailhead and curtail the adventure. The weather stayed wet, and we finally "curtailed" late Sunday afternoon.

This was the third time I'd led a Mountain Odyssey adventure to Seneca Creek Backcountry. The first time the snow was too deep to get there, so we went elsewhere instead. The second two trips were both in the rain. Hmm.



Photo copywrite by Jonathan Jessup

Job Announcement Wilderness Campaign Coordinator

West Virginia Chapter Sierra Club - West Virginia Highlands Conservancy - The Wilderness Society

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club, both statewide environmental advocacy organizations, are cooperating with The Wilderness Society on a campaign to designate additional Wilderness in West Virginia. We seek a person with energy and organizational skills to work with volunteers, agencies, the public and other conservation staff to move our wilderness efforts forward. We are looking for someone who has demonstrated a deep commitment to the protection of wildlands.

Goal: Build a successful campaign that results in permanent protection of additional wilderness in West Virginia.

Campaign Coordinator Responsibilities:

- Work with coalition groups to develop and implement a wilderness campaign plan and timeline.
- Coordinate wilderness campaign, including scheduling the following activities:
 - a. press releases and other publicity.
 - b. articles for newsletters of our, and other organizations.
 - b. outings to candidate areas.
 - c. Work on educating elected officials about wilderness.
- Keep permanent file of campaign - meeting notes, contracts/job descriptions, correspondence, progress reports, budget and expenditures, etc.
- Make regular progress reports to Wilderness Campaign Committee (WCC).
- Schedule meetings of WCC as needed.
- Recruit volunteers and coordinate their work with other participating contractors & employees.
- Oversee design and production of educational and promotional materials.
- Work with coalition groups, volunteers, agencies and Elected officials to develop proposals to permanently protect West Virginia wilderness.

Qualifications:

- A demonstrated commitment to the conservation of wildlands.
- A background in grassroots organizing or public outreach.
- Solid communication skills.
- Demonstrated ability to work cooperatively with public agencies and citizens from a wide array of perspectives on public land management.
- A self-starter with the ability to think strategically and the initiative to work effectively with little direct supervision.

Compensation:

This is a full time position, salary commensurate with experience.

To Apply

Please submit a resume, writing sample and a list of professional references along with a cover letter noting why you are interested in the position and when you would be available to start:

Wilderness Campaign Committee
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
PO Box 306
Charleston, WV 25321
304-284-9548, dave@wvhighlands.org