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HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY OPPOSES WIND FARM ON RICH MOUNTAIN

By John McFerrin

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has asked that Guascor Group, a Spanish company with offices in Miami, Florida, discontinue its efforts to develop a wind energy project that would include 65 turbines atop Rich Mountain near Harman, West Virginia. On January 25, 2003, the Board of Directors of the Highlands Conservancy voted to publicly oppose this project. The text of the Conservancy's letter to Guascor appears on page 5.

The project would include at least 65 turbines, 20 north of US 33, and 45 south. The Conservancy's Wind Energy Committee performed visibility analysis, assuming that these would be in a single line near the crest of the ridge, extending 8 miles, 2 1/2 north of US 33, and 5 1/2 south.

From Rich Mountain, the Committee verified unimpeded line-of-sight from points including Spruce Knob, other points on Spruce Mountain, Haystack Knob, Mt. Porte Crayon, Laurel Fork, Bald Knob (Cabin Mountain), and Little Allegheny Mountain. The turbines will also be visible from many other points, including the valleys directly below. The turbines would be visible from the observation platform at Spruce Knob. They would also be visible from other special places including Mt. Porte Crayon, Middle Mountain, and Roaring Plains, as well as the Gandy Creek, Dry Fork and Laurel Fork Valleys. The Spruce Knob/Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area and two Wilderness Areas would be affected. The changes in vista would be particularly disturbing on clear, star-filled nights, and at sunrise and sunset.

In performing the visibility analysis, the committee was aided by the experience with the Backbone Mountain wind energy project.

During the consideration of that project, it was uncertain how far away the windmills would be visible. At some distance they would not be visible even if nothing was in the way; during the discussions concerning the Backbone Mountain project, no one could say for sure what that distance was. Now that that project has been constructed, we know that it is clearly visible from many points on Cabin Mountain, including Bald Knob, which is over 13 miles from Backbone Mountain. From this experience, it is apparent that if there is an unimpeded line of sight of ten miles (a typical distance used by the Committee in studying the Rich Mountain/Guascor proposal) the windmills would be visible.

In its correspondence with the Guascor Group, the Conservancy emphasized only the impact that the project would have on scenic views. The high elevations where this project is proposed are a habitat niche that may be home to rare or threatened species. At this point, however, the Conservancy has no specific information indicating that this is the case. As a result, it objected to the project based upon the impact to scenic views, a known consequence of the project. If additional information reveals an area of concern, the Conservancy would address those at that time.

Prior to taking this step, the Wind Energy Committee of the Conservancy wrote the company and requested the following information:

(Continued on p. 5)

What's Inside

Thoughts from President Frank	2	How the legislature works	9	Cold weather fun	15
Officers and committee chairs	2	How to join	10	Blackwater trail or logging road?	15
Reminders	3	Memorial gifts to WVHC	10	Balsam fir	16
Court ruling on valley fills	3	Board meeting highlights	11	Readers write	16
Logging news	4	Southern forests today	12	Book news	17
Bats in trouble	4	Wind power application withdrawn	12	Water and trees	18
Birds and windmills in Maryland	6	Frog finding fun	12	Wilderness advocacy	19
Birds in Canaan Valley	7	Potomac Partners	13	The poop hits the windmill	20
More timbering news	8	Outings schedule	14		
Governor still dithering on flooding	9	Good stuff for free	14		

From the Western Slope of the Mountains

By Frank Young

We read about them almost every day- the problems associated with "harvesting" and burning ever increasing amounts of fossil fuels such as coal, oil derivatives (including gasoline and diesel fuel), natural gas, and even wood and other bio-mass products.

In West Virginia the infamous results of mining and burning coal to produce electricity for local and exported markets are legendary.

Strip mining induced water table destruction, erosion, siltation, increased flash flooding, timber destruction and loss of esthetics relating to virtual total annihilation of the natural world in hundreds and thousands of acre blocks are evident, without credible denial.

Raw crude oil spilled from drilling of oil wells and transporting oil products spoils both mountain streams and ocean beaches, and injures or kills most life forms it inundates.

And, once harvested by sometimes insanely horrific methods, burning hydro-carbon based fuels to create energy (usually heat, light or mechanical energy) starts a new round of environmental debauchery.

Animals, including humans, suffer numerous diseases and lung disorders from breathing noxious fumes and particles emitted by burning fossil fuels. Trees and other plant life in locations far removed from "power plants" suffer disease and death from acid rain that results from fossil fuel electricity generation facility emissions. Fish and other aquatic life forms are poisoned by polluted rain, or from acid bearing coal mine discharges. And the circle goes 'round and 'round.

The focus of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is, of course, on the highlands of West Virginia. And it's the highlands of West Virginia that most suffer the brunt of idiotic strip mining practices, acid rain deposition and acid mine drainage into creeks and rivers.

To a lesser degree people and other animals and plants in the highlands suffer from mobile (mostly truck and automobile) emissions.

The WV Highlands Conservancy is sometimes viewed as being more "against" the human activities that threaten preservation of natural resources than it is "for" alternatives. We oppose mountaintop removal and other forms of "strip mining" of coal- and we should. We oppose allowing acid mine drainage to flow into streams- and we should. We oppose allowing poisonous coal fired power plant emissions fall on animals and plants that inhabit the lands and waters of the West Virginia highlands- and we should.

But are we for anything? And should we be? Are we for alternative energy sources? Should we be working to educate ourselves and others about not just the evils of harmful energy practices, but about positive changes we can make in how we generate and use energy?

Yes, I think we should be. "Why?", you may ask. I believe that we need to proactively learn more about and promote alternative energy sources and energy conservation practices to both give added credibility to our traditional and ongoing activism, as well as to learn to do those things, some perhaps very simple things, to reduce our personal and collective demands for energy.

Recently I expanded our several year old wind power committee into a broader Green Energy committee. Wind power is a sub-committee of the new Green Energy committee.

What will this committee do? My vision is that the WVHC Green Energy committee will: (1) seek to educate itself, our members and the general public about simple, low cost conservation practices we can implement in our homes and in our workplaces, (2) learn about and disseminate information about emerging lower cost technologies about wind energy, solar energy, fuel cells and other alternative fuel technologies that can replace traditional, centrally produced and mass transported commercial utility energy, (3) lobby policymakers about and possibly engage in litigation to require realistic "net metering" and other innovative utility company practices relating to making small alternative energy producers more self-sufficient by allowing them to feed "excess" power back into the commercial utility grid, and (4) any and all other activities the committee and our Board of Directors deem appropriate to decreasing reliance on traditional environmentally malignant sources of energy.

I believe that the WV Highlands has traditionally been long on negativity and short on positive promotion of new ways to do what our lifestyles and economic system demand in the way of energy policies.

One way to decrease and discredit traditional energy sources like coal and oil and other fossil fuels would be to simply **make them obsolete** through development and promotion of clean and green new energy technologies. Indeed, **this could turn out to be the easiest and most successful way to accomplish preservation of the highlands we so cherish from energy demand induced debauchery.**

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The Fourth Circuit: Where Environmental Litigation Goes to Die

COURT OF APPEALS SAYS VALLEY FILLS DON'T VIOLATE THE CLEAN WATER ACT

By John McFerrin

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has reversed a ruling by United States District Court Judge Charles Haden, II that had held that the filling of streams with waste from coal mining violated the Clean Water Act.

The action was originally brought by Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, a citizens' group that advocates on a variety of issues.

At issue was what material would be considered "waste" for purposes of the Act. When mining companies conduct mountaintop removal mining, the result is that they have millions of tons of rock and dirt, the material which was previously the top of the mountain, which they must dispose of. In most, if not all, cases they dispose of this material by dumping it into an adjacent valley, creating a "valley fill." In a great many of those cases, the filling of a valley resulted in the filling of a stream that was in that valley. In the specific mine that resulted in the filing of the lawsuit that was before the Court, 6.3 miles of streams were proposed to be filled.

In that case, Judge Haden decided that filling streams with waste from mountaintop removal strip mines violated the federal Clean Water Act. That Act prohibits the disposal of waste in the nation's streams. Judge Haden's ruling considered the material blasted from above the coal seams to be waste material which could not be disposed of in streams. Judge Haden ruled that the prohibition upon the disposal of waste in streams prevented mining companies from dumping the mountaintops into valleys which contained streams.

The Clean Water Act allows citizens to get permits to affect streams in two kinds of ways. The first is a discharge to streams of minimal amounts of pollution, usually in conjunction with the disposal of waste water. In a typical situation, a company would use the best available technology to clean the water before discharging it to the stream. If the company had used the best available technology to clean the water and the discharge would not impair the uses of the stream, a company would be allowed to do it. This kind of discharge is regulated under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act.

In the case of the coal industry, the best available technology for cleaning the water is the sediment pond. Water from all

parts of the mine typically passes through such a pond which, if it operates properly, will take out most of the dirt and discharge relatively clean water.

The second way in which citizens may affect streams is to fill them in conjunction with some other purpose. In a typical situation, a company would fill a part of a stream in order to create some dry land for some building project. This kind of activity is regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

Judge Haden had ruled that the material being disposed of (the tops of the mountains) was waste material that could not be disposed of in streams. Under Judge Haden's interpretation of the Clean Water Act, the mining companies could only classify the material as "fill" and fill the stream pursuant to a Section 404 permit if its purpose was to create dry land for some other purpose.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit disagreed. It held that the fill (the tops of the mountains) could be disposed of in streams whether or not the filling had some other beneficial purpose. In ruling, it relied in part upon the longstanding practice of the Army Corps of Engineers of allowing such fills.

It assumed that if an agency has been doing something in a particular way long enough it must be doing it legally.

As a result of the ruling, mining companies will be able to get permits to fill valleys with mining waste. The ruling does not affect the obligation of companies to refrain from extensively polluting the stream segments which remain below the valley fill. In most cases, this means that the water which flows from the bottom of a valley fill must have less than seventy parts per million of dirt in it when it is released to whatever is left of the stream. Companies will be required to maintain the integrity of downstream segments while completely obliterating the segments which are immediately above.

The Highlands Conservancy was not a party to this litigation. It made the same claim (the legality of fills under the federal Clean Water Act) in litigation begun in 1998 but agreed not to pursue that claim in exchange for an extensive environmental impact assessment of the practice of mountaintop removal and valley fills. The study was begun in early 1999 and is not yet complete. A working draft was made public during the summer of 2002.



E-Day! 2003 Scheduled!

Tuesday, February 25th
10:00 am ~ 3:00 pm
Upper House & Senate halls
State Capitol
Charleston, West Virginia

Enviro Displays & Demonstrations
Green Business Displays
Citizen Lobbying
Award Presentations

DON'T FORGET!!!

The Spring Review is now scheduled for April 25-27, 2003. This will include the spring Board meeting. Summer Board meeting and fall Review will be July 19, 2003, and October 17-19, 2003, respectively.

COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE LOGGING WORKS FOR IMPROVED LOGGING PRACTICES

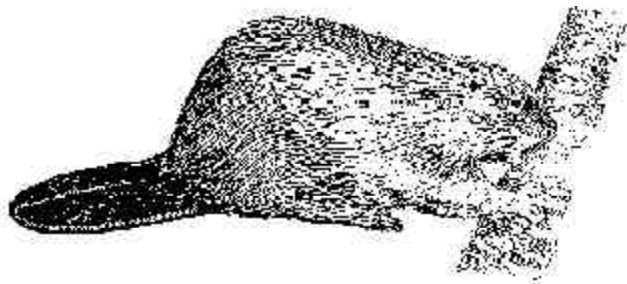
For nearly three years the Coalition for Responsible Logging (CORL) has worked to bring a better stewardship ethic to forest management in West Virginia. We're working hard and we'd like to update you on our efforts.

Last summer the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) studied how much effect logging and mining had on the flood damage in the heavily flooded areas of Southern West Virginia. The results of that study indicated timber removal impacted the level of damages suffered in the flooded communities. The DEP report's recommendations closely mirrored CORL's legislation .

In the past year we met with Governor Wise's office as well as a representative of Senator Rockefeller. We mailed postcards depicting flood damage wrought by irresponsible timbering to residents in Southern West Virginia. We "adopted" a bad timbering job site in Glen Jean, Fayette County where we held a well-attended

press conference. We surveyed legislative candidates prior to the General Election.

We plan to mail regular updates regarding our legislation during the current session. We have a lobbyist who not only covers the regular legislative session but the interim meetings as well.



CORL: What Is It?

The Coalition for Responsible Logging is a consortium of eight organizations with a common interest in improving the economic and environmental effects of logging. Our goal is to assure that companies removing timber and the government agencies that oversee these operations adhere to practices that would eliminate or reduce damages or suffer penalties for not adhering to those accepted practices. To achieve this goal, the Coalition works toward getting reforms enacted, through legislation, to better regulate the rapidly growing timber industry in West Virginia and to call for better enforcement of existing laws.

The eight organizations which comprise the Coalition for Responsible Logging are the WV Highlands Conservancy, Catholic Committee on Appalachia, Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation, Trout Unlimited, WV Environmental Council, WV Rivers Coalition, WV Sierra Club, and the WV Organizing Project.

COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE LOGGING'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

CORL will promote several pieces of legislation this year:

Priority #1 Adjacent Landowner Notification: to protect the rights of adjoining property owners, this bill provides adjacent landowners would receive notice of planned logging jobs, prior to their start. Last year's proposal required the notice to go to the persons responsible for paying the property taxes.

Priority #2 Eliminate or reduce and clarify the threshold of timber value which currently exempts many logging operations

from paying timber severance taxes and on which operators are usually virtually unpoliced for compliance with logging Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Priority #3 Changing existing "managed timberland" designations of property to allow increased property taxes collections to schools and county government. This would correct errors made in code several years ago that reduced the property value of managed timberland beyond what was contemplated by local officials and others.

Priority #4 Mandating the use of best management practices by all logging operators. This is a proposal that is actively under consideration in several states. Relying on the willingness of loggers to use bmps voluntarily has proven unsuccessful in protecting our lands and streams.

We will also pay close attention to legislation reorganizing the executive branch, responding to the repeated flood problems and others affecting timber as they arise.

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE IGNORING OBLIGATIONS TO ENDANGERED SPECIES

The Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project (SABP) and key allies issued a stern warning to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) today in response to indications that the agency will intentionally ignore its obligations to respond to citizens concerns about the Endangered Species Act.

SABP and seven other groups and individuals asked the FWS to revise outdated information about the endangered Indiana bat, *Myotis sodalis*, in an October 18, 2002 petition. The FWS listed the Indiana bat as federally "endangered" in 1967, but the species continues to decline precipitously throughout its natural range from Indiana to northern Georgia and Vermont. The Indiana bat uses caves for hibernation in the winter, which are currently

protected as critical habitat under the ESA. In the summer, the bats use mature forests areas on public and private land for foraging and reproduction, which continue to be destroyed.

Since the FWS singled out the bat's winter hibernacula for protection in 1976 (Critical Habitat Designation), Indiana bat populations have been monitored by state agencies, but protection efforts thus far have failed. FWS directed surveys have shown up to 80% population declines in some protected areas. Scientists believe that the continued decline of Indiana bat populations may be due to the loss of foraging and reproductive habitats, which are not protected under the 1976 habitat designation.

Conservancy Opposes Wind Project (continued from p. 1)

1. abApproximate location boundaries for the wind turbine component of the Rich Mountain project
2. abNumbers, physical dimensions and approximate siting information for the turbines
3. abPlans for the power grid interconnect, including any new overhead lines or substations
4. abPlans for access road development
5. abPlans for viewshed and environmental studies, and results of any studies undertaken already

The company did not provide the information requested; it said that its plans were too preliminary to provide the requested information. As part of the same correspondence, the Committee described what it understood the project would entail and asked that Guascor correct any misunderstandings. Guascor did not dispute the Conservancy's understanding. The

Conservancy's Board proceeded on the assumption that the description of the project that it had available to it was accurate.

This is not the first wind energy project that the Conservancy has considered. In 2000 the Conservancy had extensive discussions with developers of the Backbone Mountain project. These discussions resulted in an agreement by the developers to modify the project, including moving some of the proposed windtowers.

In 2002 the Conservancy had discussions with developers of the proposed Ned Power project. The discussions did not lead to an agreement. The Conservancy wrote a letter to the West Virginia Public Service Commission expressing concern about the project. The concerns, as well as the letter to the Public Service Commission, appeared in the November, 2002, issue of *The Highlands Voice*. The Conservancy did not formally intervene before the Public Service Commission; neither did it actively oppose that project.

The Conservancy has consistently supported the idea of wind energy. At the

same time, it has sought to remain vigilant in protecting areas of the highlands in which it has had an historic interest. As part of the discussions about the Ned Power project, the Conservancy's Board adopted a policy decided at our October 20, 2002 board meeting: "The Highlands Conservancy 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."

West Virginia has no siting requirements for wind energy projects. As a result, the Conservancy has approached proposals on a case by case basis. The proposed Rich Mountain project would have such dramatic consequences for areas of the highlands that have long been the Conservancy's focus that the Conservancy found it necessary to oppose the project.

Highlands Conservancy's Letter to Guascor Group

On January 25, 2003, the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy voted to publicly oppose the construction of an extensive wind energy facility on Rich Mountain, near Harman, WV. We respectfully suggest that GUASCOR discontinue efforts to develop such a project.

This decision is in line with a policy decided at our October 20, 2002 board meeting: "The Highlands Conservancy 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."

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is among the state's best-known environmental advocacy organizations. We have a special concern and institutional role in protection of the Monongahela National Forest, which surrounds Rich Mountain. We do our best to take a balanced view regarding wind energy. We applaud its contribution of clean, renewable energy but must also consider issues regarding visual impact, endangered species, and avian impacts.

In this case, our assessment indicates that the impact on the scenic splendors of the Monongahela National Forest, including the Spruce Knob/Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area and two Wilderness Areas, would just be too great. The turbines would be clearly visible from many points on Spruce Mountain, including the observation platform at Spruce Knob. They would also be clearly visible from other special places including Mt. Porte Crayon, Haystack Knob, Shavers Mountain, Middle Mountain, and Roaring Plains, as well as the Gandy Creek, Dry Fork and Laurel Fork Valleys. The changes in vista would be particularly disturbing on clear, star-filled nights, and at sunrise and sunset.

In our discussions with other developers, we have sometimes rec-

ommended changes to mitigate visual impact while maintaining the main thrust of their projects. Unfortunately, in this case, the impact appears so extensive that we don't think this is possible.

We wish you the best of luck in your efforts to develop projects that will contribute to the world's need for renewable energy without degrading the resources we need to protect.

Please feel free to contact us at any time for further discussion.

/s/ Peter Shoenfeld
Chair, Wind Energy Subcommittee

Late Breaking Non-News

As of press time, Guascor had not responded to the Highlands Conservancy's correspondence. Neither had it responded to press inquiries.

REAL PROTECTION OR NOT FOR MARYLAND BIRDS?

By Dan Boone, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club, Maryland Chapter

Editor's note: Last month the Voice reported on a decision by a Maryland regulatory agency to require a wind farm developer to shut down the giant turbines during periods when the whirling blades could kill large numbers of migratory birds. In this story, Dan Boone provides a critique of that decision. In addition, he offers some thoughts about bird mortality and related issues that may help spur our thinking on wind power.

The maximum curtailment of windmills at this proposed Maryland facility will not exceed 3600 turbine-hours per year - which means that even if catastrophic bird mortality levels occur involving all 67 windmills proposed for this windfarm, the only remedy available would be closure of the entire facility for a maximum of 2 1/4 days that year. If only one turbine was the culprit, then the maximum remedy would be to shut it down for no more than one half year. In addition, the "trigger" in terms of the possible shutdown due to bird mortality is not defined and would require actions by both the Maryland DNR and the Maryland Public Service Commission (which could be delayed by appeal of the windfarm operator).

A shutdown of the turbine or turbines causing bird mortality may make it sound like a substantial penalty that protects birds - but sadly this is more a symbolic act than a meaningful strategy to reduce avian mortality. The reason is that - whether the blades are spinning or not- these huge structures (up to 460-ft tall in Maryland) would be sited atop the highest ridge in the State and would pose a collision-hazard for nocturnal migrant songbirds - especially given their FAA-required lighting, which can attract and disorient birds at night - leading to fatal collisions.

The solid "tubular" structure and lack of guywires of newer windmills may be good designs for protecting hawks and songbirds migrants during daytime. But these "improvements" do not provide much meaningful protection to nocturnal songbirds since these species are known to collide with tall buildings, cooling towers, smokestacks, and other very tall "solid and unguyed" structures that are in their flight paths. Note that the incidence of songbird mortality at communication towers out west is only a very small fraction of that found at eastern towers, so the lack of songbird mortality at western windfarms is not a good indicator of the risk to birds from the recent deployment of windfarms in the east. There are very few studies of bird mortality at eastern windfarms, and the few sites that have some research either have big flaws in their study designs (e.g., did not compensate for dead birds eaten by scavengers) or did not occur on prominent ridges (where songbird migrants are likely much more numerous).

Incidentally, the purported improvement of "slower rotating blades" in the new generation of windmills is not relevant in terms of bird mortality since the "blade tip speed" can be over 160 MPH (due to the huge diameter of the rotor at 18-20 rpm). And it is the visual blurring effect of their fast "tip speed" that creates the illusion of no-obstacle - leading to daytime bird flight into the path of the rotor. Lots of eagles are still being killed at Altamont by newer, bigger windmills with blades moving at slower RPMs (because they still have very fast tip-speeds).

Unlike the concerns about bird mortality from windfarms out west, the windpower projects atop Appalachian ridges pose mainly a risk to songbirds - not hawks, eagles and other birds that are active only during the day (and may likely avoid turbines during their migration along the ridges). However, a much greater num-

ber of birds would be "at-risk" from the relatively new generation of very tall windmills that are now being proposed and deployed throughout the Appalachians - neotropical migrant songbirds. Populations of many of these birds are already rapidly declining. The vast majority of migrating birds in the Appalachians do so at night (e.g., warblers, vireos, flycatchers, etc.). Because the higher ridges are known to concentrate birds during migration, the potential is great that substantial die-offs could occur - especially during inclement weather.

I have involvement or info about 7-8 windfarm projects on Appalachian ridges in the east; not one has performed adequate surveys that could determine their potential impacts to birds. I believe that off-shore windfarms likewise are being proposed without good assessments of bird use in project area. The current proliferation of windfarms on Appalachian ridges do not even require a NEPA assessment of the cumulative impacts - since no federal permit or review is required. In addition, the Bush Administration has now limited enforcement of the Migratory Bird Treat Act to within 3 miles of shore - so the several thousand windmills now proposed by Winergy would be essentially exempt from this law should their actions harm migratory birds.

The potential cumulative mortality to many species of songbirds resulting from the rush to site and build windfarms on the ridgetops of the Appalachians is likely to accelerate the declines in already dwindling populations. Some say this is inevitable - and would likely occur anyway if we don't slow global warming and air pollution. I guess it may be comforting to those boosters of windpower to consider that the birds would be dying for a good cause - collateral damage, so to speak. But I believe a realistic evaluation of the potential of windpower in the eastern states to reduce the growth in burning coal or lessen global warming rests on a wish and not a reality.

Also, the headlong rush to pass RPS legislation in states throughout the east is likely to create a much greater demand for these inadequately evaluated and/or inappropriately sited windfarms. I would like to see the data that suggests that RPS legislation in the eastern states will substantially reduce the use of coal or halt the rise in global temperatures. I've looked - and it appears that the growth in demand for electricity will "swallow" any realistic contribution from renewables - especially so for wind. Until we get serious and "tap" the motherload of windpower in this country - which is located in the Great Plains, it is difficult to see our reliance on coal will be reduced - especially by the renewable demand created in the eastern states. It seems from my investigation that windpower in the east will mainly impact the cleanest burning, albeit most costly form of fossil fuel - natural gas.

Windfarms are already subsidized through tax-credits, and it seems to me that by artificially creating a market demand for renewable energy through RPS legislation will create even more conflicts over the siting of this industrial energy source. It appears as though wind energy may be far ahead of other renewables in its ability to readily capitalize on future increases in demand for "green energy." I would be interested in hearing of studies or even ball-park estimates as to what proportion of the future renewable energy supply would be provided by windpower in order to service the demand created by RPS in the eastern states - say by 2010 and by 2020? Are we likely to "saturate" the east with windpower even though it will only make a minor contribution towards reducing the use of coal or only minimally impact rising global temperatures?

SNIPES AND OTHER BRIDS OF CANAAN VALLEY

By Edwin D. Michael

Only one bird species in the Appalachians regularly performs aerial courtship displays at dawn, dusk, and for several hours after dark. One of the best places in the eastern United States to hear this interesting bird, the common snipe, is in West Virginia's Canaan Valley State Park. Wetlands of the park are its courtship grounds.

Canaan Valley State Park in southern Tucker County contains more natural wetlands than any other state park in West Virginia and possibly more than any other state park in eastern United States. These wetlands support dense stands of alder, aspen, balsam fir, hemlock, sphagnum moss, spirea, and various species of grasses, sedges, and rushes. Canaan Valley is a high elevation, anticline valley surrounded by ridges as high as 1,000 feet above the level valley floor, which is at 3,200 feet elevation. The Canaan Valley watershed is 35,000 acres and Canaan Valley State Park contains 6,014 acres, of which 1,724 are wetlands.

Beaver have created many of the wetlands in Canaan Valley State Park, through their damming the Blackwater River and its tributaries. This chief engineer of the wildlife community has created habitat for many wetland birds which would not be there otherwise. Canada geese nest on island-like beaver lodges, where their eggs are safe from marauding raccoons, skunks, and mink. Black ducks and mallards nest in dense grassy meadows created where beaver dams have been abandoned. Wood ducks, the only other species of waterfowl which nests in Canaan Valley, lay eggs in the protective cavities of trees killed when beaver flooded wooded stands of red maple, black cherry, and river birch. Bitterns boom from the dense emergent aquatic vegetation, where they are so expertly camouflaged.

Green herons sit quietly on snags at the edge of beaver ponds, while great blue herons wade silently through the shallows, ever alert for a meal of fish or frogs. Balsam fir and hemlock provide nesting sites for green herons, but no great blue heron nest has ever been found in Canaan Valley, even though 25-30 birds are present from April to October.

Woodcock probe the earthworm-laden, fertile soils under alder thickets which form boundaries around the many ponds and streams scattered throughout the park. Male woodcock frequent the more open sites for their singing grounds while females nest at the edge of hawthorne or viburnum areas. Barn and tree swallows use the flooded spirea for night roosts when they stage in numbers reaching 800 prior to fall migration. Many wetland birds use Canaan Valley State Park as a rest stop during fall and spring

migrations. Ducks, geese, swans, grebes, coots, rails, and sandpipers feed in and around beaver ponds. Migrant ospreys and bald eagles fish at beaver ponds which provide meals of catfish, bass, and trout for many birds and mammals. An occasional marsh hawk and short-eared owl sweeps low over the marshy areas in search of meadow voles.

One of the most mysterious birds of Canaan Valley State Park, the common snipe performs its courtship rituals both day and night. April is the best month to hear this bird, as it engages in its unique courtship flight. It is rarely heard when on the ground, but when in the air its presence can be detected by even the inefficient human ear for distances of one-half mile. The male rises to 400 feet, then dives toward the ground at a 45-degree angle. The tail is spread horizontally and the wings are held in a swept-back position. Air passing over the outer tail feathers causes them to produce a humming sound. Wings regulate the airflow passing over the tail feathers and produce the tremolo quality of vibration. The male repeats this "winnow" as many as eight times per minute before dropping to the ground near a female.

The snipe's scientific name, *Capella gallinago*, is reminiscent of the musical term "a cappella." Could this Latin name have been assigned because the bird "calls" without music or flies unaccompanied during courtship? Leslie Tuck, an authority on snipe, wrote in his book, "The Snipes," that the word-element *capella* is Latin for goat and refers to the bleating or winnowing.

The weird winnowing sound of the snipe's courtship flight has been described as a disembodied sound, the sighing of some wandering spirit across the sky. Unlike most courtship calls this sound constantly moves, as the bird flies in circles of 800 yards.

Nighttime walks in Canaan Valley State Park during April are an experience to be remembered. As many as six snipe can be heard winnowing at the same time as the birds circle over the spirea-alder wetlands. An April night is never quiet, and in fact is often so full of different sounds that it is difficult to concentrate on a single one. Woodcock emit their courtship "peents" while an occasional Canada goose or wood duck calls from a beaverpond. Green herons, great blue herons, and barred owls may also be heard as they call from conifer stands. The slapping of a beaver tail signals that mammals are also active during their period of darkness. All these sounds may be over-

shadowed by the unorchestrated symphony of calls produced by thousands of spring peepers, pickerel frogs, and green frogs.

Snipe may be heard winnowing in the valley during March, April, May, and occasionally June. One newly-hatched snipe chick was found in the valley in 1971, representing the southernmost known breeding site for this species. Many snipe migrate through Canaan Valley, and groups of 50-75 may be seen during March as they feed in open boggy areas. Snipe also migrate through the area in fall, when they may be flushed from the edges of beaver ponds.

Snipe can be seen as they engage in aerial courtship during daylight hours, but the first attempt to locate the bird producing the sound is usually quite discouraging. They fly so far overhead that they appear to be only specks in the sky. The call does not seem to be emitted by the bird, but instead trails some distance behind the actual source. Dawn is the best time to actually see snipe. Courtship continues two hours after daylight and on a clear morning a pair of binoculars enables one to detect the fanned tail and swept-back wings of diving males. On three occasions I have also witnessed courtship flights during the middle of the day. This behavior seemed to be triggered by a spring shower followed by sunshine.

Canadian peatlands support the greatest concentrations of breeding snipe. If you cannot go to Canada, though, courtship can be witnessed in Canaan Valley State Park. The last full moon during April or the first full moon during May is the best time.

Edwin D. Michael, a professor of wildlife management at West Virginia University, is active in research on wetland wildlife and timber-wildlife relationships. This article was reprinted in a booklet given out at the just completed "Canaan Valley and Its Environs: A Heritage Landscape Celebration", on October 16-19, 2002 at Canaan Valley State Park. It had previously appeared in Wonderful West Virginia, March 1990.



Photo by Chan Robbins

TIMBERING BIG NEWS IN PARKERSBURG

As timber in West Virginia becomes more valuable, groups like the Coalition for Responsible Logging are becoming more concerned.

CORL recently released the names and general locations of active logging operations registered with the West Virginia Division of Forestry.

"There is a great demand for wood these days and a lot is sent overseas. Logging jobs have nearly tripled in the past 10 years," said Bob Marshall, President of CORL.

CORL is a coalition of environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, that want stricter timbering laws. CORL is known for its studies on the adverse effects of timbering.

Marshall noted that West Virginia is the second most heavily forested state in the East, following Maine. West Virginia forests are especially desirable because of the variety of hardwoods and softwoods found here, he said.

"Our concern is with the loggers who are cutting wood and getting out before the Division of Forestry goes in and has a chance to inspect," Marshall said.

David Carsey, owner of Carsey Sawmill Lumber in Waverly, said small local loggers are getting a bad name from a few large out-of-state companies.

Carsey said he has been in the timbering business since 1978 and has the oldest crew in Wood County. Carsey mostly works for private owners, but has done jobs for Mountwood Park and the Wood County Airport.

"One of our biggest concerns is marring the woods. I believe timber is cut too hard. There should be a law against cutting anything less than 16 inches across. Anything cut smaller than that will make it impossible for the future," Carsey said.

Marshall said there aren't enough inspectors to police West Virginia's timber industry.

"They (West Virginia Division of Forestry) must work double duty to promote the timber industry and regulate it," he said. "It is a difficult situation."

According to the Division of Forestry, about 1,300 logging licenses and 3,600 timber jobs are monitored by a staff of 106 people.

Gerald Waybright, District Six forester for the Division of Forestry in Wood County, said between 400 and 500 logging operations are monitored each year in the 10-county district.

"Presently, we do not have enough people to check every operation. We are getting close, but there are a lot of jobs compared to the people we have to monitor them," Waybright said, who has 39 years experience as a forester. "Most we are catching, but a few are still falling through the cracks."

Last year, the state Division of Forestry received five new positions to monitor the state's timber industry, said David Lilly, DOF assistant state forester.

Waybright wants to see the law changed so timbering companies are required to notify his agency a week before



beginning a new job. Currently, timber operators are required to register with the DOF within three days of beginning a timbering operation.

Dick Waybright, Gerald's brother and executive director of the West Virginia Forestry Association, said the law requires loggers to follow Best Management Practices. He said making the same standard apply to all logging jobs wouldn't be practical.

"Every logging site is different, so you can't make one (set of) Best Management Practices fit every site," he said.

Most problems are reported in the spring, when ignored timbering regulations are likely to produce flooding, officials said.

Waybright said complaints are addressed by the DOF within 48 hours of notification. If a logging company is found in violation of Best Management Practices, it can be issued a compliance order. The company then has ten days to fix the problem or face having its operations suspended.

The DOF can issue fines of \$250-500 a day for violations, Waybright said.

Organizations like CORL do not believe this is enough to discourage poor logging practices, though.

"We are fighting for stronger laws and more people to enforce those laws. Until that happens, it will continue to be open season on timber laws. Timbering companies are not penalized for what they have done (in

the past). Coal, gas and oil all have much stricter regulations in West Virginia," Marshall said.

Carsey said problems are caused by large companies' oversized equipment that decreases the time of each project.

"The more timber an operator can move, the more then need to be watched. Somebody has to pay for it and it's Mother Nature," he said.

Marshall said people near logging operations should look for two warning signs: undocumented timbering operations and mud in nearby streams.

A company registered with the DOF should have a sign bearing the company's name and permit number, Marshall said.

If the logging company has not posted a sign or the information on the sign seems incorrect, a call should be made to the Division of Forestry, Marshall said. If streams are muddy after every rain, it could be a sign of a waterway destruction upstream, he said.

"If a person is concerned about mud in a stream near them they should contact the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection at 558-5929.

The Division of Forestry is also in charge of enforcing the Sediment Control Act. The act states the industry should use Best Management Practices to ensure minimal damage is done to streams and rivers.

"Excess mud in a stream which is downstream from a logging operation is a pretty good indicator that the company isn't following the Best Management Practices," Marshall said.

Until the penalties outweigh the rewards, Marshall does not expect the timbering practices to improve.

"It's a longstanding problem. It is especially a problem now because trees are so valuable, it is worth it to take a risk," he said.

Unscrupulous loggers will go past a property boundary and steal timber from adjacent landowners who are unable to consistently check on their property, Carsey said. More vigilance and reporting from neighbors would go a long way in solving those problems, Carsey said.

After the timbering job is complete, the logger should reclaim the land, build water bars, mulch and seed the area and make sure nearby streams are clean, Carsey said.

This is a slightly shorter version of a story that originally appeared in The Parkersburg News-Sentinel.

GOVERNOR CONTINUES TO LIE LOW ON FLOODING RULES

By John McFerrin

We have now reached the midpoint of the legislative session and Governor Bob Wise has not decided whether or not he will support new timbering and mining guidelines designed to reduce future flooding.

These guidelines were prepared by the Department of Environmental Protection based upon the studies and recommendations of the task force which Governor Wise appointed to study the July 2001 flooding in southern West Virginia.

The recommendations of the Department were published in draft form and subject to criticism both by citizens and by coal and timber interests. The Department delivered a final version to Governor Wise on August 6, 2002.

The guidelines would require the coal industry to do runoff studies before they could obtain permits. They would have to show that their mining would not increase runoff during heavy rains. The guidelines would also require the coal industry to use "constructed valley fills." Instead of shoving or blasting the rock and dirt into the valley, the mine operators would have truck the material to the bottom of the area to be filled, deposit it in layers, and compact each layer. While this would be a change from different practice, it would not represent a novel practice. In the past all valley fills were "constructed valley fills."

The guidelines would also require stricter oversight of logging operations. The Division of Environmental Protection wants the Division of Forestry (which regulates logging) to inspect all timber operations and limit logging in particular watersheds to limit runoff.

In interviews following his State of the State address, Mr.



Wise said, "I haven't hesitated to call attention to the problems." Mr. Wise also said that he has been unfairly criticized for not embracing state Department of Environmental Protection proposals meant to reduce runoff from mining and timbering sites. "I'm the guy who ordered the review in the first place," Wise said. "I ordered DEP to undertake a look at that."

Mr. Wise has not yet indicated whether or not he intends to support the recommendations of his agency of ways to reduce flooding. Neither has he indicated what, if anything, his administration intends to do to cause them to become law.

Even without any apparent leadership or support from the Governor's office, the Department of Environmental Protection continues to soldier forward with its proposals. Jim Pierce, a Department of Environmental Protection engineer recently said, "We could study this forever, but it's not going to change the fact that mining and timbering had an impact on the flooding."

ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL'S DON GARVIN WORKS ON LEGISLATION

The Environmental Council's Don Garvin had hoped to prepare a report of his lobbying efforts for this issue. Since it is very difficult to find the time to both lobby and write about it, he was unable to find the time to write a story. Instead, we offer this picture of the legislative process in action.

For an update on environmental legislation in the West Virginia legislature, please go to the web site of the Environmental Council, www.wvecouncil.org.



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William Parsons

Memorial Donations Help Conservancy

By Frank Young

Recent memorial donations in memory William E. Parsons of Charleston have added almost \$700 to the treasury of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. He died November 22nd of last year, at the age of 78.

Upon his death his wife, June Parsons, felt that gifts in memory of Mr. Parsons, a lifelong conservationist, made to the Conservancy or to other environmental causes was a more appropriate memorial to her husband, in lieu of flowers.

I spoke with Ms. Parsons by telephone one evening in early February. She said that she could not see having living flowers cut and die as a fit memorial to William Parsons, who loved living things and the natural world so.

She recounted that Mr. Parsons, a civil engineer by profession, had purchased a 165 acre farm in Mason County where he loved to plant trees and to otherwise help preserve and enjoy nature, because he always wanted "to leave his little corner of the world a little better", she said.

She related that Parsons' mother had told her that even as a child he showed enthusiasm for conservation. "She told me that he always wanted to sow seeds and plant trees".

"He simply loved nature. The happiest times of his life were on

the farm, planting and nurturing plants and trees", she said. And she related the sadness they both felt that near the end he could only ride to the farm he loved so, and sit or stand and only watch what he had tended for so many years, no longer able to immerse himself in the joys of planting and tending.

William E. Parsons was preceded in death by his parents, Clafus Oscar Parsons and Margaret Roseberry Childs Parsons of Charleston and Fort Myers, Fla. He was a U.S. Navy veteran of World War II and graduated from the University of Louisville. He retired as a senior staff engineer after approximately 40 years of employment with Union Carbide Corp. Other survivors are his daughter, Robin L. Michul and her husband, Kenneth P. Michul of Lexington, Ky.; son, William Scott and his wife, Linda Casdorph Parsons of Charleston; son, James M. Parsons II and his wife, Deborah Jackson Parsons of St. Albans; and daughter, Mary Clay Stauffer and her husband, Peter A. Stauffer of Littleton, Colo. He also is survived by a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Memorial or other gifts to the WV Highlands Conservancy are fully tax deductible. The Conservancy is an IRS designated 501(c)3, non-profit organization.

HIGHLIGHTS OF WVHC BOARD MEETING

By Hugh Rogers, Secretary Extrordinaire

The Highlands Conservancy and two partners have hired a Wilderness Campaign coordinator to work for wilderness protection of pristine areas in the Monongahela National Forest. Matt Keller of Morgantown will begin by creating a timeline for the campaign. The position has been funded by The Wilderness Society, which will oversee the campaign in association with the Highlands Conservancy and the West Virginia chapter of the Sierra Club. Matt will work with members of the organizations to identify potential areas and encourage grassroots support.

Dave Saville and Bob Marshall, the Highlands Conservancy's representatives on the campaign, said the current Mon National Forest management plan revision must include a review of roadless areas for their potential as wilderness. The Wilderness Campaign will participate in that process. In addition, it will make its own identification of eligible areas and work for congressional authorization. Wilderness designation requires legislation, so eventually Matt Keller will have to spend some time in Washington. He'll have help from Helen McGinnis, a Highlands Conservancy member who played an active role in that process when Dolly Sods and Otter Creek gained wilderness status.

At our meeting in Flatwoods on January 25, the board also discussed a second green job. Julian Martin, who served on the selection committee for the Sierra Club's new regional environmental justice coordinator, said Bill Price of Whitesville was named to the position. Bill has been active with Coal River Mountain Watch.

Last October, proposals for new "wind farms" along the Allegheny Front dominated the board's agenda. Ultimately we remained neutral on the biggest project, which is being developed by NedPower, but we adopted a policy opposing wind power projects "that would degrade scenic vistas from Canaan Valley, Dolly Sods, Seneca Rocks, Spruce Knob, and other special places in West Virginia." Very quickly we were called on to apply that policy to a wind energy project that would place 65 turbines on top of Rich Mountain, between Elkins and Harman.

Peter Shoenfeld brought to the January meeting maps, background information, a draft letter to the developer, a press release, and a motion. The Highlands Conservancy voted to oppose this project, not only because of its visual impact on special places but also because of the ecological value of this high (over 4000 foot) ridge.

The recent interest in wind power, both pro and con, has led to a change in our committee structure. President Frank Young announced the formation of a Green Energy committee to work on all sorts of alternative energy issues, including the controversial matter of siting. Frank named Peter as chair of the wind power subcommittee.

Bob Marshall, our new treasurer, gave his first report on our financial health. Like other organizations and individuals, we are being squeezed between the declining value of our investments and the increasing costs of doing business: insurance, postage, general supplies. So far we have been able to spend slightly more than we have taken in, but that isn't a policy we'd like to continue. A fundraising letter will go out this week. Please look for it and respond as you're able. And we agreed to increase our dues for the first time in many years: regular membership will change from \$15 to \$25 per year. A \$15 option will remain for seniors, students, "introductory," and "other." The insert in this month's Voice offers a last chance to join at the old rates. The new dues structure should

allow us to balance our budget for 2003. Membership continued to increase in 2002—it has nearly tripled in the past five years.

Other issues that came before the board at this meeting included:

* Comments submitted to Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge on its "compatibility determination," asking that hikers and photographers be allowed the same access as hikers and fishermen.

* Comments submitted to Monongahela National Forest opposing Allegheny Wood Products' request to use the Blackwater Canyon rail-trail as a logging road.

* The Bush Administration's push to "expedite" national forest planning and endangered species plans in order to cut more trees.

* Advocacy for awareness and preservation of special places on private lands.

* Comments on Environmental Impact Statements on two sections of Corridor H between Kerens and Davis, and our request for information on waste and fill overruns in recently completed sections of that highway.

* And finally, in our continuing struggle against abuses by the mining industry and the failure of government agencies to enforce mining laws: mining permits issued without the required endangered species review by the Corps of Engineers and Fish and Wildlife Service; permits for smaller valley fills issued without consideration of their cumulative impacts; and unpermitted discharges into stream segments between valley fills and sediment ponds.



Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

by Allen deHart & Bruce Sundquist

Published by the

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SOUTHERN FORESTS TODAY

By Don Gasper

The U.S. Forest Service in December 2002 completed a 2000 page report "The Future of Southern Forests". It was done in part because of citizen concerns and the concerns of responsible agencies about the increasing timbering of Southeastern Forests.

Presently these Southeast Forests comprise only about 40% of the nation's forests but annually produce 77% of U.S. pulpwood. To accomplish this about 5,000,000 acres of forest is being clearcut each year and replanted with a fast growing pine. By the year 2040 this is expected to climb to 54,000,000 acres of pine plantations. A lot of this is going on in our National Forests.

In this report the industrial forestry's influence over the U.S. Forest Service is very clear. "Business can go on as usual"; this harvest is, they say, "sustainable". The pine monoculture conversion will change what we perceive a forest to be. Characteristic forest diversity, and then biodiversity will be gone from many areas. The environmental and economic risks of relying on such extensive monoculture of short rotation pine tree crops are great. The difficulties are barely noted. It was noted that for a time, 20 years hence, naturally grown hardwood timber will be in short supply.

As forests are replaced by settlements everywhere, sprawl was identified as

the greatest threat to southeastern forests. Environmentalists agree this is important, but claim that Industrial Forestry is a bigger threat. This, and the deceptive ownership of the word "sustainable" Industrial Forestry



has tried to achieve, are the main problems with the report.

In 1953, 2,000,000 acres were planted in pines; today (1999) there are 32,000,000 acres.

Much good information is assembled and often good, conclusions flow from them. Perceptively stewardship, even recycling, and a renewed land ethic are noted as be-

ing important in the future. It notes that "Best Management Practices" have been devised by foresters and are the standard used by these states in judging the performance of timber operations. Their adequacy is assumed, though there are no measures to prevent stream channel scour then sediment generation from within the channel that results in channel capacity destruction and flooding. Only canopy retention would do this. Inadequate standards are set for undisturbed stream-side borders. If Best Management Practices were effective, they are not adequately enforced. The report fails to note the inadequate, if not half-hearted, inspections. It fails to report the great environmental abuse.

We can expect more young pine "forests" (if you want to call them forests), growing more pulp/acre with fewer acres needed than otherwise to meet our growing demands for fiber. They would be near mills, and beyond we would have the opportunity to preserve the traditional southern hardwood forest with its ecological diversity and beauty.

It was noted some of the large timber holdings are being sold off. Many are being developed for settlement, but we do have an opportunity to preserve some of it and for the public.

DOMINION POWER WITHDRAWS WIND POWER APPLICATION

Dominion Mount Storm Wind Inc. withdrew its application to the Public Service Commission for a permit to build a wind farm in Grant and Tucker counties to generate electric power. While the Highlands Conservancy has had some active interest in other proposed wind farms, it had taken no position on this proposal.

In a Jan. 3 letter, Dominion lawyer Lee F. Feinberg stated the company hired consultants to conduct several studies about the impact the wind farm would have on the local viewshed, on wetlands and on rare or endangered species including birds, flying squirrels and salamanders. "Dominion Mount Storm believes that some of the analyses and studies that are necessary for the project will not be fully completed by a date that will provide the parties and the [PSC] sufficient time to fully review the application and participate in a hearing," Feinberg wrote.

Judy Rodd, executive director of Friends of Blackwater, said "Dominion apparently realized they were building in a unique and sensi-

tive habitat when they found 15 flying squirrels on the site. They withdrew their application.

"We think other wind companies should look carefully before they locate in these sensitive areas," Rodd said. "If they say they are trying to protect the environment, why aren't they protecting migratory birds and endangered species?"

Critics of wind farms include many local landowners in northeastern West Virginia who believe huge towers will permanently scar some of West Virginia's most beautiful scenery.

The proposed site, withdrawn from PSC consideration by Feinberg's letter, is located south of W.Va. 93, between the Mount Storm power plant and the town of Davis.

This is an abridged version of a story which appeared previously in the Charleston Gazette.

LOOKING FOR FROGS IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES

The North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP), sponsored by the U.S. Geologic Survey, is seeking volunteers throughout West Virginia for 2003.

Data collected by volunteers will be entered into the NAAMP database and used to track the health of North America's frogs and toads. Volunteers will be assigned a survey location within driving distance of their home. After learning to identify frog and toad calls by listening to audio tapes provided by NAAMP, volunteers will travel to their assigned survey location on 3 evenings in the spring and summer during defined time frames and listen for frog and toad calls. Each surveying trip requires 1 to 3 hours plus travel time.

Those interested in volunteering should contact Seth Myers at Myers59@marshall.edu or leave a message at (304)736-3472.

POTOMAC PARTNERS MEET

By Don Gasper
POTOMAC PARTNERS MEET

Recently there was a week-long conference at Shepherdstown, W.V. about the Potomac River which has its headwaters in West Virginia. People from more than 70 organizations and agencies worked to develop ideas and partnerships to protect water quality in the Nation's River. Don Gasper thought these notes to be useful, and applicable to any watershed, and offers them for your consideration.

Speakers from diverse backgrounds addressed a wide range of issues affecting aquatic resources within the basin. Paul Brouha, Executive Director of the American Fisheries Society noted that "water quality in the Potomac has improved since 1972 when the Clean Water Act was passed, but some problems remain and there are major challenges ahead." He pointed out that "over the next 30 years, there will be 2 million more people in the basin creating an increasing demand for clean water and aquatic recreation, including fishing."

Chip Smith from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental and Regulatory Affairs, pointed out that federal programs over the last 20 years have changed to focus on restoration and protection of water resources. He stressed the need for leveraging resources and said, "we have to figure out how to put funds together from many sources to do something comprehensive rather than using a single program if we are to be successful."

"Urbanization is affecting the environment," according to Timothy Foresman from the University of Maryland's Geography Department. "Better, more compact growth resulting in less traffic, less air pollution, and a higher quality of life," was one of the solutions suggested. Stewart Schwartz from the Coalition for Smart Growth noted we can have better growth, smarter growth. "By saving our cities and urban areas we save our countryside and farmland as well."

"We may have become an urban nation, but we are still an agricultural land," said Paul Welle from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. "There are 97,000 farmers in the river basin contributing \$1.8 billion to the economy. As we strive to keep our rivers and streams healthy, we need to keep agriculture healthy and work with farmers to implement solutions and monitor results." He emphasized stewardship of the land and then its sustainability. He noted the loss of farm-land to urban sprawl.

Ken Rosenbaum with the Environmental Law Institute said there is a patchwork of more than 200 federal, state and local agencies working in the Potomac. He called for better coordination, improved feedback, greater program flexibility and commitment to implementation to provide more effective solutions.

The geology and hydrology of river reaches were superbly described by Jim O'Connor and Jim Gracie respectively - both hydrologists from Maryland. Stream channel instability by sediment from stream channel scour from increased flows from urbanization and forest clearing were noted as were increased impacts in the channel below.

Speakers from several watershed groups emphasized the need for citizen involvement, education, and advocacy at the local level. Steve Bauserman, a member of the Winchester, Virginia City Council stressed the importance of educating and involving local officials and citizens in water quality initiatives. "We have to help citizens visualize their watershed, and slice the watershed into smaller segments that people can relate to and care about."

A pre-meeting tour of the Potomac Headwaters watershed underscored many of the issues brought out in the conference. Sponsored by the Soil and Water Conservation Society and the Canaan Valley Institute, stops included Kinsey Run Dam, a riparian restoration project, and 2 farms using nutrient and poultry litter management techniques.

The main purpose of the conference was to help develop watershed strategies that are good for fish and good for people. Priority issues covered at the session included policy reform, sediment and nutrient management and watershed protection and restoration. Stream-side wooded borders were found to be important safeguards, but watershed activity above was important also. Urbanization produced more impervious and compacted surfaces and generally reduced tree canopy. All cause more flooding and sediment. Perhaps urbanization is more important in producing too much sediment than agriculture - surely in many watersheds. Agriculture seemed more responsible for producing too many nutrients.

Participants identified several components needed for an effective Potomac action plan:

- * Goals and strategies to implement the goals for sustainable land use and water quality.
- * Education of youth and adults with "good science" developed by expert consensus.
- * Uniform water quality standards between jurisdictions and pollution sources.
- * More research and monitoring, and the sharing of data and information.
- * Economic costs of prevention versus remediation. The "free" services of a healthy, robust ecosystem in continued supplying of clean air and water, flood prevention, beauty, and recreation, etc., must be considered as must "recovery".
- * More incentives for water quality protection practices.
- * Partnerships between conservation professionals and citizen action groups.



West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

March 1, Sat. Canaan Mountain Winter Day Hike. We'll plan about a 7 mile loop, on foot or on snowshoes, as you wish and as is needed. Will bring tracking guides and will offer a prize for most interesting critter identified. Contact Peter Shoenfeld at peter@mountain.net or 301-587-6197.

March 3, Mon. Snow shoe trek at White Grass. Looking for a unique way to celebrate 03/03/03? How about trying out snowshoeing in the Dolly Sods/Canaan Valley area. This will be a day outing only, covering about 7-10 miles, weather permitting. www.whitegrass.com Contact Susan Bly at sbly@shepherd.edu or 304-258-3319 between 7:00 and 9:00 pm.

May 31 - June 1, Sat.-Sun. - Bushwhack Extreme On North Fork Mountain. Two day backpack trip up then down the steep west slope of North Fork Mountain. Enjoy thousands of vertical feet cascading streams and cliffs in very rugged and remote country. Spectacular views. This is a good chance to explore remote areas of a potential future Wilderness area. No trails. Experienced backpackers who are sure of foot and in good shape, only please. Hosted by Jonathan Jessup. (703)204-1372 jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

June 20-22, Fri-Mon. Spruce Knob Bushwhacking/Backpack Trip. Ever wondered what lay beyond the trail's end? Or how about the "abandoned trail" listing on an older map? Come find out as we bushwhack through spruce and laurel, trying to find our own hidden Shangri-La. Strenuous. Contact Susan Bly at sbly@shepherd.edu or 304-258-3319 between 7:00 and 9:00 pm.

June 28-29, Sat.-Sun. - Mountain Laurels Bloom Hikes in Bear Rocks and Dolly Sods Scenic area. Join for one or both days (with camping) to hike in countless acres of open meadows full of flowering mountain laurels. Spectacular mountain views and cool temperatures make for a nice summer escape in West Virginia's best alpine-like country. Hosted by Jonathan Jessup. (703)204-1372 jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

July 4-6, Fri.-Sun. - Roaring Plains - Canyons Rim Trail. Explore and witness spectacular, remote, rocky and rarely visited high elevation country. Many excellent views. Be prepared for cool temps and weather extremes. Despite high elevation, climbs are gradual. ~23 miles. Experienced backpackers only please. See photos at <http://www.jonathanjessup.com/rp-set1.html> Hosted by Jonathan Jessup. (703)204-1372 jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

August 8 - 10, Fri-Sun. Dolly Sods Waterways. Looking for a way to cool off this summer? How about dowsing your head under a waterfall in one of WV 's premier hiking destinations? Help find swimming holes in Red Creek as we backpack both in and out of the Creek. This trip is moderate to strenuous. Contact Susan Bly at sbly@shepherd.edu or 304-258-3319 between 7:00 and 9:00 pm.

October 4th, Sat. - Roaring Plains - Canyons Rim Trail Day Hike. Explore and witness spectacular, remote, rocky and rarely visited high elevation country. Many excellent views. Be prepared for cool temps and weather extremes. Only one 400ft climb. ~5 miles See photos at <http://www.jonathanjessup.com/rp-set1.html> Hosted by Jonathan Jessup. (703)204-1372 jonathanjessup@hotmail.com

Almost Anytime. Visit Kayford Mountain south of Charleston to see mountain top removal (MTR) up close and hear Larry Gibson's story about how he saved his mountain, now almost totally surrounded by MTR. Bring a lunch— there is a picnic area on Larry's mountain. Just call Larry or Julian Martin. Leaders: Julian Martin, (304)342-8989, imaginemew@aol.com and Larry Gibson, (304) 586-3287 or (304) 549-3287 cellular.

GOOD STUFF FOR FREE

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

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.

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.

COLD FEET AT SENECA CREEK

By Greg Good

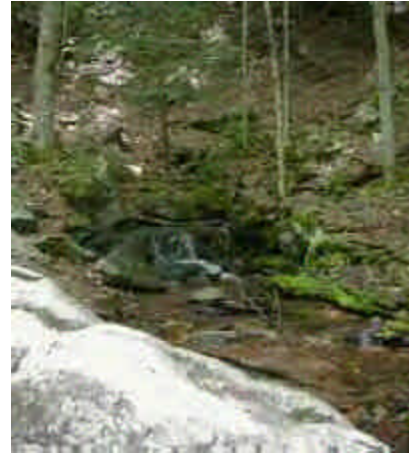
Written by Greg Good

The plan of our intrepid group (any group that goes out in winter should be called intrepid until they prove unworthy of the name) started out intending to ski into the Seneca Creek Backcountry on the weekend of Martin Luther King Day. The crew included experienced winter campers, along with two newbies. But then we found that the road wasn't being plowed because of broken equipment and then we started to get cold feet. We ended up in a posh cabin at Old Timberline, complete with hot tub. We transmogrified into an insipid group.

But we skied our tails off. Friday night some of us skied into the Sods and then in the valley around Spruce Island Lake to look at some firs. On Saturday we toured the little travelled northern end of Canaan Valley State Park, in marshes that are only easily visited in the winter. On Sunday, we skied the main cross country trails around the Canaan Valley Lodge and Cabins, including the Allegheny Trail. And one contingent did part of the Loop Road. Finally on Monday we nibbled a small morsel of White Grass and headed home.

We skied hard, we schemed day and night to save WV from various intrusions, and then we soaked our troubles away. It was a hard trip, but someone had to do it! Next year, maybe we'll camp.

*Judy Springs,
Seneca Creek
Backcountry*



CONSERVANCY WANTS STUDY OF BLACKWATER TRAIL

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has asked the United States Forest Service to conduct a detailed environmental analysis, including the preparation of a complete environmental impact statement, before it makes a decision on the request by is by Allegheny Wood Products, Inc. (AWP) for access on the Blackwater Canyon Trail (FS 115) via Special Use Authorization.

In making its request, the Conservancy has indicated that these impacts should be studied:

1. Impacts on sensitive, threatened and endangered species, some of which have already been found along the trail. Current surveys are needed along the trail, as is consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
2. Impacts on the historic resources of the Blackwater Industrial Complex, a National Register of Historic Places eligible district, which the Forest Service has documented along the trail.
3. Effects on water resources and the riparian zones of the Blackwater River and its tributaries from modification of the trail into a logging road, proposed logging activities, as well as proposed residential housing construction, as indicated by applications to state and/or federal agencies for residential related infrastructure.
4. The Blackwater River is eligible for designation as a Scenic River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Modification of the trail into a road could jeopardize this eligibility.
5. We believe that the effects on current recreational users and on future tourism activity need to be analyzed and disclosed to the public as a cumulative effect of the requested access, if granted.
6. The public continues to have a right to use of the trail. Safety



concerns, user conflicts, the degraded trail user experience and the length of time for such effects need to be analyzed and disclosed.

7. Alternative access routes to AWP land north of the Blackwater River.

At issue is a request by Allegheny Wood Products to turn the scenic and historic Blackwater Canyon Trail, on public land, into a commercial logging road. Today, the trail is frequently used by hunters, fishermen, hikers, bikers, kayakers, etc. Before the United States Forest Service may act upon the request, it must make a study of some sort. It is currently considering whether it will conduct the complete study the Conservancy suggests or something less. Because of the importance of that trail to the Conservancy and its members, the

Conservancy believes that the Forest Service must undertake a thorough study, including a study of all of the items listed in its letter to the Forest Service.

In making this request the Conservancy has joined a wide variety of groups who have taken similar positions: Friends of Blackwater, Sierra Club, West Virginia Citizens Action Group, West Virginia Environmental Council, League of Women Voters, West Virginia Bow Hunters Association, West Virginia Native American Coalition, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia InterFaith Center for Public Policy, Communications Workers of America, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Coalition for Responsible Logging, and the Religious Campaign for Forest Preservation.

The campaign to keep the trail available to the public rather than turned into a logging road is being coordinated by the group Friends of Blackwater 501 Elizabeth St., Room 3 • Charleston, WV 25311 • 304-345-7663 • info@saveblackwater.org.

Balsam Fir Conservation

An Update on Highlands Conservancy efforts

Background:

In West Virginia, balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) occur in four counties (Randolph, Tucker, Grant and Pocahontas) in small localized populations. Although it is a common tree species in the north-eastern United States and Canada, it reaches its southern growing limit here in the Highlands of West Virginia. West Virginia fir, because it is so far and long isolated from any other fir, is considered to have developed characteristics unique from northern populations and has been given a special designation: *Abies balsamea* var. *phanerolepis*. In many ways it is more similar to its southern cousin, Fraser fir, including dark green color, heavenly scent, soft needles, and great form. The vast majority of what is now becoming known as *Canaan Fir*, is found in Canaan Valley.



The Problem:

Canaan Fir, West Virginia's balsam, is in trouble. We fear for its future in West Virginia. There are two major threats: over-browsing by large populations of white-tailed deer and infestations of an exotic insect pest, the balsam woolly adelgid (*Adelges piceae*). Adelgid infestation has resulted in an estimated 80% mortality in native balsam fir stands in just the last five years. Heavy deer browse has limited natural regeneration of the fir so that no new trees are poised to replace the aging trees that are susceptible to adelgid infestation. Without intervention, it is possible that balsam fir will soon be eliminated from the wild in West Virginia.

The Fix:

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has been working for several years to conserve balsam fir in West Virginia. We have coordinated and initiated research and have worked hard to explore and undertake innovative conservation techniques. Deer exclosures have been constructed at sites where balsam fir are currently growing, including the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Canaan Valley State Park and at balsam stands on private property. Some trees have been treated with an organically approved dormant oil spray to control the adelgids. The Highlands Conservancy has also been working with the Forest Service and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to store, or *seedbank*, seed from each of the several stands of fir found throughout the highlands.

This year, we will continue our efforts both on public and private lands. We are currently raising funds from a variety of sources for these efforts. We will be constructing two more deer exclosures this year, one on the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the other on the Timberline Conservancy. We will also continue and hopefully expand our adelgid treatments to protect more mature trees. For the time being, this is important, as we need these trees to produce seed for stand regeneration. The goals of these projects are to keep the existing trees alive by protecting them from the adelgids, protect the young balsam fir trees and seedlings from deer browse pressure, establish an area to educate the public on damage created through deer/herbivore browse and exotic pests, and to establish a long term monitoring plan to document regeneration of balsam fir trees.

How you can help!

The Highlands Conservancy has procured a limited number of husky, 12-15 inch balsam fir trees, specially grown for us from seed collected in Canaan Valley, to sell as a fundraiser. There are several ways for you to participate in this effort. 1.) buy one or more seedlings for yourself or as a gift for someone else; 2.) If you can't use and trees yourself, buy 1 or more seedlings to be planted on the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, or; 3.) look for details in up-coming issues of the Highlands Voice for volunteer opportunities in fence construction and tree planting. For more information write: West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321, or contact Dave Saville at dave@wvhighlands.org or 304-284-9548.

Our Readers Write

Dear Editor,

I wanted to share my family's experience while enjoying a day of skiing in Canaan Valley this past weekend. From the chairlift on this bright, blue Sunday, we gazed out at the wind turbines on the distant ridge. Far from disturbing our "viewshed", we were in awe of their size and beauty on the horizon. My children were excited that West Virginia, our home, is involved in the production of renewable energy. It must have been the first real example they've seen in action!!

We wondered how many birds would choke to death in the fouled air from the burning of fossil fuel and figured wind power was a better alternative.

Please don't render the environmental voice meaningless by opposing this non polluting energy source. How are moderate, "every day" people going to support environmental causes if we continue to bash this clean energy supply? Are we against EVERY thing??

Bret Rosenblum, Elkins

Dear Editor:

I had to see them to believe them! The wind towers transform the landscape up around Davis. It is a foreign intrusion. It looks like something (something so strange and unintelligible) surely from Mars - marching across the horizon. I don't like the looks of them. We can, and must, keep them from the viewscapes of our public land.

Naturalness is what citizens of the east come to our mountains for. All our state license plates picture natural mountain scenery and exclaim "West Virginia, Wild and Wonderful". Hopefully there are places, less traveled, in West Virginia for wind power.

Hugh Rogers said in the Highlands Voice, "...Viewsheds. What a minging 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."

Donald C. Gasper

IF YOU'RE STILL IN NEED OF SOMETHING TO READ

Small Wonder: Essays by Barbara Kingsolver. HarperCollins, 2002.

Reviewed by Kathleen Wood

What do the Grand Canyon, television, hummingbird nests, and homelessness have in common with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center? Barbara Kingsolver uses these and other seemingly disparate elements to respond thoughtfully to the events of September 11, 2001. *Small Wonder* is a collection of essays "about who we seem to be, what remains for us to live for, and what I believe we could make of ourselves" after 9/11. A native and part-time resident of Kentucky, Kingsolver is best known for her novels, including *The Bean Trees*, *Poisonwood Bible*, and *Prodigal Summer*. Here, she combines her skills as a storyteller with her background as a scientist, training her sights from the physical terrain to the political landscape, to consider what brought us to be targets of terrorists and what marvelous hope we can find in the rich life surrounding us.

Very few of the pieces in this book address the events of September 11 head-on. Rather, Kingsolver tries to place those events in a larger context. In one essay, "Saying Grace," she reports that her family cancelled their Thanksgiving travel plans in 2001, unsure about flying and even more unsure it would be appropriate to seek personal luxury in what felt like wartime. As a close-to-home alternative, they took a short trip to the Grand Canyon, not far from her southwest residence. Looking at the Grand Canyon gave Kingsolver a renewed sense of perspective. Instead of feeling sorry for herself because her holiday was short-changed, she came to ask, "How greedy can one person be, to want more than the Grand Canyon?" Which leads to the questions of "How much do we need to feel blessed, sated, permanently safe? What is safety in this world, and on what broad stones is that house built?" It is explorations of questions like these that draw lines between hummingbirds, their unique evolutionary path, biodiversity, greed, and global politics. If 9/11 is to change everything, what are we willing to change?

There is plenty for those of a liberal bent to like in these essays – calls to build a peace corps rather than a war corps; admirable models of rainforest conservation; warnings against genetic engineering; feminist counsel to a teenage daughter. At times, however, Kingsolver slides perilously close to self-righteous dreaminess. After making a convincing case that the problem of terrorism arises from complex political, social, economic, and environmental issues, she

lapses into soft-hearted, simplistic solutions. One has to wince, for example, when she wishes, "If I got to make just one law, it would be that the men who make the decisions to drop bombs would first, every time, have to spend one whole day taking care of a baby." Her observations become sentimental rather than practical. That is unfortunate, for it is the practical where Kingsolver is at her best.

The strongest essays in this collection, "Knowing Our Place", "A Fist in the Eye of God", "Lily's Chickens", reflect Kingsolver's ability to move between politics and the environment, bringing them together in the household. Here she describes her family's efforts at living consciously and lightly on the land: "This is not exactly a hobby," she says in the essay about growing their own food. "It's more along the lines of a religion, something we believe in the way families believe in patriotism and loving thy neighbor as thyself. If our food ethic seems an unusual orthodoxy to set alongside those other two, it probably shouldn't. We consider them to be connected." And so, the connections between consumerism, globalization, militarism and terrorism grow apparent.

Several of the essays in this collection expose excesses of American consumption, particularly energy consumption. In West Virginia, we know first-hand the damage wrought by thoughtless use of coal energy. And anyone with a glimmer of political or environmental consciousness knows the damage caused by other fossil energies. (Would we have entered the Gulf War if the main export of the Middle East was organic broccoli?) Writing before the beginning of serious saber-rattling against Iraq, Kingsolver points out, "We must surely appear to the world as exactly what we are: a nation that organizes its economy around consuming twice as much oil as it produces, and around the profligate wastefulness of the wars and campaigns required to defend such consumption." Kingsolver would have us consider that the motivation for the September 11 attacks was not simply, as the administration touted, "our enemies hate us because we're free." Canada, she points out, has equally free citizens (and offers universal health care); Finland is also free (and has a higher rate of literacy than the US); Costa Rica is free (and more biodiverse). The United States was the target of terrorist hate, and the terrorists chose to bomb not the United States of farm and forest, but the heart of its commerce and

military. However wickedly, wrongfully delivered, there is a message here.

Small Wonder reminds us that the accumulation of our small actions will make a difference. We can broaden our perspective by sharing the grief of families of the thousands killed in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington on September 11, 2001, and also the grief of the families of the 35,600 of the world's children who died from conditions of starvation on that same day. We can teach our children that nature is not ours to consume at will, without regard for the other residents on this planet. We can refuse to buy genetically modified crops that reduce seed banks and increase dependence on agricultural chemicals. We can watch less TV, get rid of the video games in our houses that use killing as entertainment, and learn more about our communities. These and more modest strategies for change come through in Kingsolver's work. "Small change, small wonders – these are the currency of my endurance and ultimately of my life," she says. "It's a workable economy."



THE FORGOTTEN FORESTS PRODUCT: WATER

By Mike Dombeck

STEVENS POINT, Wis. - My daughter, Mary, is a Peace Corps volunteer in a village in Mali. Each day she gets a small amount of drinking water, which she must purify, plus two buckets of water for bathing. We are far more fortunate here in the United States, a relatively water-rich nation. Yet even here, water restrictions have become the norm in some parts of the country - in the East, where supplies once seemed inexhaustible, and in the arid West, where a number of states, along with Mexico, routinely fight over the trickle from what is now the parched Colorado River.

Given such realities, I am puzzled that water rarely enters the debate as the Bush administration and interest groups argue about roadless areas, logging and forest fire management. For water is perhaps the most important forest product.

Forests generate most of the water in the country, providing two-thirds of all the precipitation runoff - the water that comes from the sky - in the 48 contiguous states. Some 14 percent of all runoff comes from the roughly 190 million acres of our national forests, which take up only 8 percent of the land. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more than 60 million people in 3,400 communities in 33 states rely on national forests for their drinking water. Millions more depend on state and private forests to facilitate the refilling of aquifers from which they draw their water.

A century ago, President Theodore Roosevelt recognized the vital connection between forests and water. When Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot, the first United States Forest Service chief, set up the national forest system, they talked about managing for the greatest good for the greatest number -for the long run. This was in response to the cut-and-run era of timber harvests that left the United States with 80 million acres of denuded forests known as clear-cuts, mostly in the East and upper Midwest. Roosevelt, Pinchot and other federal policymakers were most concerned about preserving the long-term timber supply and the watershed function of the forests.

Yet in modern times, this connection has been lost. When I was in the Clinton administration, I participated in more than 100 Congressional and public hearings and fielded thousands of questions about forest policy. Then, as now, water rarely surfaced as a forest management issue. Yet water from our national forests has an economic value of more than \$3.7 billion a year, according to a Forest Service report issued in 2000.

How do forests produce and preserve water? The complex array of trees, shrubs, ground covers and roots slows runoff from

rain and snow, and water is purified as it percolates through the soil and into aquifers. By slowing runoff, forests also reduce floods and erosion, minimizing the sediment entering streams and rivers.

Mature forests do this work best. They have the best soil, and their mixed canopy - a mosaic of open and closed spots among the treetops - allows for snowfall accumulation and eventual runoff.

Old trees also use less water for growth than young trees do. And as intact forests better regulate

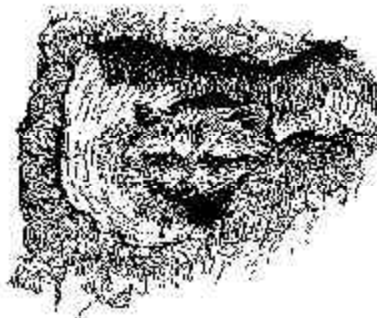
water chemistry and temperatures, they enhance habitats for aquatic species. (In many streams this means better recreational opportunities, such as trout fishing.)

New York City has some of the best water in the world because it maintains healthy forests in its Catskill, Delaware and Croton watershed system. The E.P.A. recently warned that New York would have to spend more than \$6 billion on a purification plant if it failed to protect those watersheds.

It comes as no surprise that the Bush administration is proposing new forest-management policies. New administrations always bring new policies. What's unfortunate, however, is that some of these policies effectively abandon Theodore Roosevelt's long-term goals. Roosevelt valued open-space preservation and resource conservation. That's why I support the recent ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which upheld the ban on building roads in roughly 60 million acres of national forest. Maintaining these areas is both prudent and conservative, especially given the explosive rate of urban expansion and the rapid decline of open space.

New national-forest planning regulations should now specify that the remaining old-growth public forests should not be harvested, since these wild lands provide the cleanest water in the country. Rather than wasting energy on the rancorous, tired debates about road building in the wilderness and old-growth forest management, the focus should be on how to let our forests do their job of producing high-quality water. Given our water supply problems, this should be the highest priority of forest management.

Mike Dombeck, a professor of global environmental management at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, was chief of the United States Forest Service from 1997 to 2001. This column originally appeared in the New York Times.



West Virginia Wilderness Effort Takes a Big Leap

By Dave Saville

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has joined forces with the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society to move Wilderness protection in West Virginia forward. We have combined resources to hire a full time Wilderness coordinator. Since posting the job announcement nationwide in November, the Wilderness Committee has reviewed and evaluated dozens of applications. While this was not an easy process, I am delighted to announce that following an extensive evaluation, we have selected Matt Keller to fill the position. Matt has accepted the position and will begin work in mid-February. This is a very exciting development, as never before have we had a person able to work full time on Wilderness. Never before have the Highlands Conservancy, The Wilderness Society and Sierra Club folks worked so closely in a cooperative effort. Never before have the prospects for additional Wilderness designation in West Virginia looked so bright!

These three organizations came together to work to best achieve a common goal: additional Wilderness designation for Federal lands in West Virginia. A committee was formed to guide the process including; Mary Wimmer and Beth Little for the WVSC, Fran Hunt and Brian O'Donnell for TWS, and Bob Marshall and myself for the Highlands Conservancy. Mary agreed to chair the committee. Helen McGinnis helped out with the interviews.

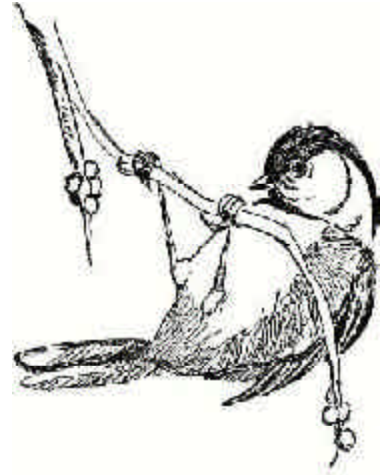
After we determined that we would hire a coordinator, the first task was to determine exactly what qualifications we needed. This necessitated a self evaluation to see what skills we already possessed amongst us, and what we were lacking. Based on this needs assessment, a job announcement was carefully crafted and disseminated. It explicitly listed the qualifications we were seeking, and asked applicants to submit a cover letter, resume, writing sample and references. Specifically, we were looking for the following:

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

We soon had over 30 applicants and more kept coming. Applications were circulated to the committee, which evaluated each of them against the job criteria we had established. From this group of applications, we selected a portion of the applicants we wanted to learn more about. To do this, we decided to use a telephone interview. Fran contacted each of the selected candidates and scheduled the calls and Beth contacted their references. Mary and Beth came to my house where we used a speaker phone, while the rest of the committee and the applicants participated via conference call. An interview procedure was decided upon with a set of questions to be asked each candidate, leaving 30 minutes between calls for us to discuss the interview. Interviewing all these people was a process that took all of 2 days. We had a lot of fun too, and shared our enthusiasm and good cheer with the interviewees. One of our questions was, "If you were going to give a talk to the Parkersburg Garden Club, what steps would you take to set up the meeting?"

I have never been in a situation where I had to hire a person before, so this whole process was new to me. Needless to say, I learned a lot, and was grateful for the experiences of the rest of the committee in doing this. As much as can be determined by a written application, I was just about overwhelmed by the quality of the applicants. It would have been great to have any one of them working for us. But narrowing the list down to a reasonable number to conduct phone interviews with was a difficult task. Objectively applying our criteria to the applicant's listed qualifications was the method. It still wasn't easy. But ultimately, eliminating all but one, was our charge.

We learned a lot from the phone interviews. It still wasn't easy to get the number down to what we could reasonably interview in a couple days. But we did. We selected a handful of candidates to request face to face interviews with. Fran contacted each of the "finalists," and we conducted the interviews in the WVU Mountainlair on the weekend of Martin Luther King Day. As with our phone interviews, we designed an interview process that we felt would bring out the qualities of the applicants we were looking for. Interviews lasted about 2 hours. We did assign homework for the finalists. They were asked to prepare a 5 minute introduction to their presentation to the Parkersburg Garden Club. Following introductions, this is how we began the interview. Playing the



of Garden Club members, the committee then asked questions. Some of us took the role of garden club member more seriously than others. Each candidate possessed a remarkable mix of skills, experiences and qualifications; but, of course, all a little different.

Rather than make a final decision immediately following the interviews, we decided to sleep on it for a couple nights and get back together via conference call that Thursday evening. This gave us all the chance to contemplate the candidates and their qualifications and to review our notes.

Ultimately, Matt Keller was our selection. Matt lives in Morgantown, West Virginia, and has family scattered throughout the Mountain State. He attended Ohio University where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Recreation and Outdoor Education. He received a MA from the University of Wyoming in Geography. Matt's Master's thesis was done evaluating potential Wilderness in the Medicine Bow National Forest in Wyoming. Matt has also worked with families and youth as a program director for the YMCA. In this capacity he planned, promoted and led outdoor adventure activities for teens including whitewater rafting, backpacking and rock climbing. He has worked as a Sierra Club volunteer in roadless area inventories, and participated in grassroots training workshops. Most recently, Matt has worked at the Natural Resources Analysis Center at WVU as a GIS technician. Matt is an avid outdoorsman, and Wilderness advocate. We are excited and honored to have Matt joining us.

THE PUBLIC SPEAKS (OR AT LEAST SOME OF IT)

Editor's Note: When the Conservancy announced its opposition to windmills on Rich Mountain, Board member Julian Martin used e-mail to send a press release to a long list of people who have expressed some interest in being kept informed of environmental news. The list includes both members and non-members of the Conservancy. These are some of the responses he received from people on that list.

Hello,

I would like to voice my concern over the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy opposition to the wind power project on the basis of visual impact.

First of all let me start by saying that mountain top removal clearly has environmental impacts. Most coal operations and everything associated with them are linked to air and water pollution. I have voiced my concerns through this organization many times on these issues. I was also part of the relief provided during the floods that devastated many families. Much of this devastation was due to the mountain top removal practices.

Although I am not totally familiar with West Virginia's power needs, and how coal is allocated, but if the opposition to mountain top removal succeeds, then wouldn't that leave big gaps in West Virginia's energy production? I know there are safer coal practices, but how about looking at the bigger picture and trying to reduce everything associated with coal production. Wind power would seem to be a clean and environmentally friendly way to achieve this. It is a low impact source of power, a clear energy alternative to coal burning power plants and everything associated with them.

I understand preserving the beautiful views that are associated with mountains. I have kayaked, biked, and hiked in West Virginia for many years and I am concerned with environmental issues that effect this beautiful area.

However, I am also an advocate of wind, solar and other sources of clean environmentally friendly sources of power. We must not forget that we need to promote these clean energy practices if we want to preserve our natural resources. Windmills are much easier on the eye and the environment than a mountain that has been sheared off.

Thank you.

Douglas Miley
Miamisburg, Ohio 45342-3662

I've been a rabid environmentalist for a half century. I published my first article on the ills of water pollution in 1963. I've risked my career on several occasions to go public with environmental messages. My tree-hugger credentials are impeccable.

We live on a mountaintop in Bartow. Our nearest neighbors are four miles away. We installed a windmill in our back yard that makes much of our power. Snowshoe resort is 15 miles away on the next ridge. The lights of Snowshoe are infinitely more disruptive of the beauty of our home than is the windmill in our back yard. In fact, given the right (or wrong) conditions you can see the light pollution from Snowshoe as far away as a few miles west of Harrisonberg.

Unfortunately, you cannot harvest wind energy without wind turbines. They must be on hilltops. They will be visible from other hilltops. Either one favors alternatives to fossil fuels or one does not. As much as I dislike any disruption of nature, our economy will get our electricity from somewhere. Those who make wind power projects impossible are making mountaintop removal inevitable. It is as simple as that. Please advise folks involved in your policy making of that fact. It might help clear their minds if they realize that they are inadvertently siding with the environmental rapists when they embrace the kind of purist ideology that we all wish were possible but we all should be mature enough to realize is not.

Rich Laska -

Thanks for sending this, Julian. I wasn't very attuned to the debate over the windmills in the Tucker/Grant co. areas, but over Christmas had the shock of seeing them firsthand. I had no idea of the scale of that project, and would hate to see something similar on Rich Mtn.

-Nathan Fetty

I think the Conservancy needs to very carefully consider their opposition to wind power projects. I know it has been the topic of discussion for several months, but no firm stance should be decided on until all considerations are evaluated fully.

I, for one, don't generally mind wind turbines in my viewshed, even though I highly prize scenic and wilderness areas. If these renewable energy sources help prevent some of the danger and destruction

caused by other energy sources, I think it is a fair trade-off. Looking out over a beautiful landscape of hills and forest, interrupted by some wind turbines, is preferable to looking at mountaintop removal sites, nuclear power plants etc.

Keep up your good work, but please think twice about opposition to projects devoted to renewable sources of energy.

Thanks for your time.
Geary Weir

The sight of distance windmills is preferred to the haze generated by coal emissions any day. And the sight of windmills around the world may well be the pearl in the oyster to prevent the melting of the polar ice caps. Windmills smell better, too. No one dies from the air emissions from windmills, and no one dies from the black lung of windmills, windmills don't need mine roofs to fall on anyone, and windmill trucks haven't run over anyone with illegal overweight loads.

Science and technology brought us to the point of disaster with careless energy consumption, and are the only hope to save us from the precipice. The new wind technology is a true success of engineering development. To oppose windmills is to be a stooge for the coal industry. How many relatives and friends have you lost in the mines?

Regards,
M. Weirick

I do not agree with you on your wind power position. I find them quite elegant and a good solution to environmental and energy challenges. You want to have your cake and to eat it as well.

Robert Neff