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West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Wants Enforcement, not Change, in Buffer Zone Rule

CLARIFICATION OR CONTRADICTION ? TO BUFFER OR TO BURY ?

By Cindy Rank

The Stream Buffer Zone Rule prohibits mining within one hundred feet of a stream except under very limited circumstances. How it is interpreted and enforced is critical in mountaintop removal mining.

While removing the top of a mountain may be offensive, most of what many argue makes the practice illegal comes in what happens to the top of the mountain after it is removed. The cheapest and easiest place to put the rocks, dirt, etc. that used to be the top of the mountain is in the adjacent valley. Since those adjacent valleys almost always contain streams, the mining ends up filling streams. If the Stream Buffer Zone Rule means that filling streams is illegal, then much of the mountaintop removal mining that has occurred and is occurring is illegal.

The federal Office of Surface Mining has noted this contradiction between what the Rule says (no mining—which pre-

sumably includes filling—near streams) and common practice (filling streams left and right). In response, it proposed a “clarification” of the rule.



Marie Gunnoe speaks of damage to her property from an illegal valley fill above her home in Van, WV and Mary Miller (Sylvester, WV) holds the Friends of the Mountain banner at a press conference prior to the Buffer Zone Rule EIS scoping meeting in Charleston. Photo by Vivian Stockman.

The Office of Surface Mining (OSM) first announced plans to “clarify” the Stream Buffer Zone Rule early in 2003. When the
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From the Heart of the Highlands

by Hugh Rogers

Corridor H Today

Labor Day weekend at Dolly Sods: from Bear Rocks to Lanesville, dusty cars park in bunches. Bumper stickers are various, but most out-of-state license plates read Virginia, Maryland, or the District of Columbia. How did they get here? Most came by WV 55 from I-81 and the eastern megalopolis. Between Baker and Moorefield, their owners drove the 14-mile section of four-lane Corridor H, which, if they thought about it at all, they might have regarded with some ambivalence.

On a new highway alignment you drive over the damage. You don't see it unless you knew the area before. You may remember the old road, winding—in that case—over South Branch Mountain. You may notice that you saved fifteen minutes. You may be amazed, relieved, or possibly troubled by long stretches of untrafficked pavement. After a few years, you just get used to it.

The Baker-to-Moorefield section opened in two phases, in 2002 and 2003. Since then, coming from the east you've had to pass under construction of two high bridges over the Lost River—one near the Sinks, the other within blasting distance of Hanging Rock and the historic Baughman House. The damage is still apparent. It tends to heighten your ambivalence. But if the Wardensville-to-Baker section opens on schedule, later this fall you'll drive over, way over, all that. Most travelers will be oblivious.

Here's what's happening on the other sections (the pro and con Corridor H web sites haven't been kept up to date, so you can't find out that way).

- Virginia: still no plans to four-lane Va. 55 from I-81 to the state line.
- Virginia line to Wardensville: the 2000 settlement agreement barred construction for twenty years unless well-defined exceptions were met. Meanwhile, the Town of Wardensville, using mitigation funds from the settlement, is making streetscape and welcome center improvements.
- Moorefield to Forman: construction is underway between the currently open section and US 220 north of Moorefield. This fall, work is supposed to begin on the bridge over the South Branch of the Potomac. Completion date: late 2007. West of the river and US 220, the Corridor won't be open before 2009.
- Forman to Bismarck: West Virginia Department of Transportation estimates construction could begin in 2007 and be completed in 2011.
- Bismarck to Davis: the estimated completion date is the same, 2011.
- Davis to Parsons: as required by the settlement agreement, West Virginia Department of Transportation explored several new alignments that would avoid Blackwater Canyon, the Coketon historic district, and some endangered species habitat. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) has been delayed for two years so far. If WVDOT reverts to the original alignment it will face several obstacles including a re-opening of our 1996 lawsuit.

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DOBBINS SLASHINGS BOG GOES PUBLIC

Buffalo Coal Company wants to mine in the Stony River – Helmick Run area of Grant County. Since the mine; as proposed, would damage some wetlands in the area, West Virginia and the company have agreed upon an exchange of properties in mitigation of the loss. Here are the details of the exchange:

The Swap

What the State of WV gets:

- 965 acres of Western Pocahontas Land (WPPLP) in fee simple, including 240 acres wetland plus upland (Dobbin Slashings Bog)
- upgrade of road from SR 93 (A-frame) south to Red Creek so as to accommodate tri-axles to deliver lime fines to head of Red Creek. Western Pocahontas Land will pay up to \$55,000 for 'significant grading & stoning
- DNR "and the public" get permanent access to the site
- Lime fines treatment of Red Creek for 10 yrs; Western Pocahontas Land will to pay up to \$10,000 in the first year and up to \$55,000 over the 5 years. The Potesta Compensatory Mitigation Plan indicates Red Creek is acid because of bog and compounded by acid rain. The Potesta report indicates that the liming will remove Red Creek from the 303(d) list and eliminate the need for developing a TMDL, but won't restore Red Creek all together back to its historic quality
- Buffalo coal is to recreate shrub-scrub wetland on mine site

What Buffalo Coal gets:

- The right to mine the 266-acre C-1 North Strip Mine
- 20 acres of mitigation credit to be used in the future

What Pocahontas Land gets:

- 20 acres of mitigation credit to be used by Western Pocahontas Land or designee in future
- retains the right to develop the property as red spruce forest habitat for the endangered northern flying squirrel and cheat mountain salamander. This creates a bank for those endangered species (presumably to be used for future projects requiring mitigation)



Approvals Required

1. Article 3 (mining) Permit S-2003-03 issued 7/13/05
2. NPDES (Water discharge) Permit WV0068471 - issued 9/21/84
3. Modification No.13 added C-1 North - issued April 2004
4. 404 (fill) permit (Pittsburgh PA Corps of Engineers) Notice No. 05-50 comment period closed September 2, 2005
5. 401 State Certification (of Corps 404) comment period to September 15, 2005. This includes the mitigation agreement and land swap involving Dobbin Slashings Bog

The Corps' 404 permit and DEP's 401 Certification of that permit are the last stumbling blocks. There remain several questions about the permit itself and the adequacy of the mitigation proposed.

What the people are saying:

1. The **West Virginia Highlands Conservancy** has filed comments with the Corps of Engineers on the 404 permit. The main points of those comments were

(Continued on p. 4)

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

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

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a non-profit corporation which has been recognized as a tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Its bylaws describe its purpose:

The purposes of the Conservancy shall be to promote, encourage, and work for the conservation—including both preservation and wise use—and appreciation of the natural resources of West Virginia and the Nation, and especially of the Highlands Region of West Virginia, for the cultural, social, educational, physical, health, spiritual, and economic benefit of present and future generations of West Virginians and Americans.

DOBBINS SLASHINGS BOG (Continued from p. 3)

- The liming of Red Creek, if it is done at all, should only be done where necessary and while minimizing the impact of the liming itself. This would include transporting the lime fines with as little road building and generally in the least intrusive manner possible.
- The permit does little to address the comments of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service or the United States Environmental Protection Agency, as expressed in their comments upon this issue. Neither does it address the comments of the Friends of the Allegheny Front.
- In advocacy before the West Virginia Public Service Commission on the locations of wind farms, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy urged preservation of the land's scenic beauty. The PSC did restrict that project from extending into the area. Now we fear that approval of this mine plan will negatively impact both the beauty of the area and the function of the wetlands that exist here. We encourage the Corps to fully evaluate the cumulative impact of mining in this area on the hydrology and natural beauty of the remaining undisturbed acreage in the Stony River - Helmick

Run - Red Creek area.

2. The **Friends of the Allegheny Front** has filed comments with the Corps of Engineers on the 404 permit asking that the permit not be approved. It expressed concern about the hydrological consequences to the Lunice Creek watershed on the East side of the Allegheny Front. It also expressed concern about the consequences of mitigation efforts that are a part of this permit application., particularly the construction of a major roadway to the headwaters of Red Creek which could cause potential damage and destruction to wetlands.

What the Agencies Are Saying

1. The **United States Fish & Wildlife Service** believes there will be a net loss of wetlands and recommends denial of the permit. Some of their concerns involve the 33 acres of wetlands that have been eliminated from Buffalo's original permit, as well as the 13 acres of wetlands Buffalo proposes to create as part of its reclamation-mitigation for the 33 acres that will be impacted:

Original wetland impact was to be 66 acres. Buffalo proposes to avoid 33 of those acres on the western portion of the permit, but USF&W contends that Buffalo has not

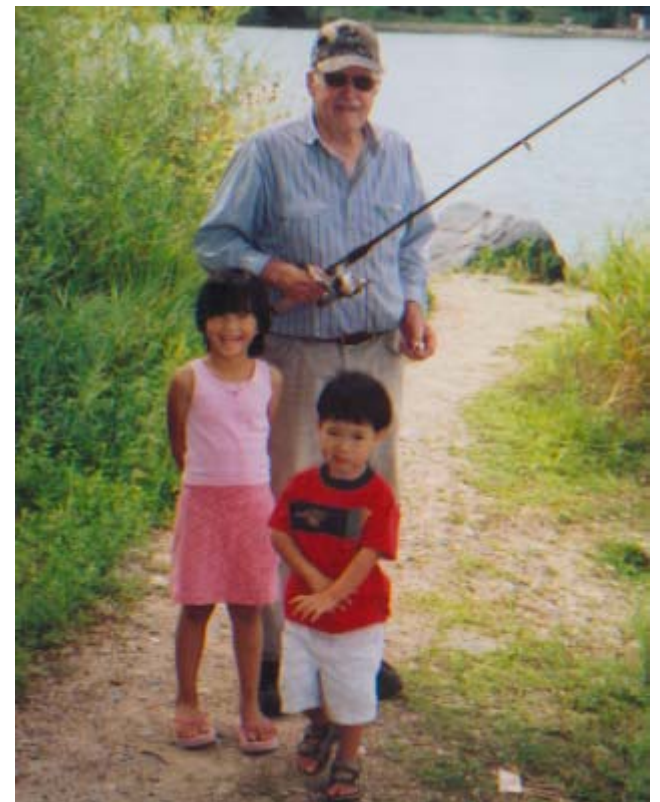
provided documentation that those 33 acres will not be affected by mining in the adjacent hydrologically-connected area. In addition to the 20 acre credit for the land swap procured from WPPLP, Buffalo plans to construct 13 additional acres of wetlands as part of its reclamation which will then add up to 33 acres of mitigation for the 33 acres destroyed by the mining. USF&W questions the viability of these wetlands and the adequacy of the mitigation they provide. The 13 acres are to be constructed in 21 separate plots: one is to be 10 acres in size, one is to be 2 acres, and the remaining 1.04 will be in 19 separate pieces along the upgraded road to Red Creek.

The Service believes the wetlands are key components of an ecosystem that is a resource of national importance and that adherence to the Corps' own policies and procedures require the Corps to insist on certain documentation and hydrological plans that have not be provided by the company. There also seems to be some question about the addition of lime fines and the effects on aquatic life downstream.

2. The **United States Environmental Protection Agency** expressed general concerns about the mine in 2004, but as of press time had not made final comments.



Highlands Conservancy member Samuel McFerrin fishes with his grandfather, Burt Kostol.



Samuel McFerrin, Katherine McFerrin, and Burt Kostol display their catch. They practiced catch and release.

Compact Disc version of Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

WV Highlands Conservancy continues to bring its publications into the computer era with its latest innovation- the publication of the Electronic (CD) version of its famous Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide, 7th Edition, with many added features by **Allen Dehart, Bruce Sundquist**, with maps and many other enhancements by WVHC contributor **Jim Solley**

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Mon Forest Reception in Lewisburg

Learn how you can help protect special wild places on the Monongahela National Forest during the 90 day comment period on the draft management plan. The opportunity only comes around every twenty years.

When: Friday, Oct 7 (during downtown Lewisburg's First Friday celebration with music in the street)

Where: Harmony Ridge Gallery, 209 West Washington Street, from 5:00 to 9:00.

What: Watch the gorgeous wilderness video, enjoy uptown luscious refreshments, win prizes and meet members of the WV Wilderness Coalition ready to answer your questions

Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

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HUGH'S MUSINGS (Continued from p. 2)

- Parsons to Kerens: the Final Environmental Impact Statement on a new alignment to avoid the Corricks Ford Battlefield was issued in 2002. WVDOT estimates construction could begin in 2011 and be completed in 2013.
- Kerens to Elkins (Aggregates, west of Elkins): opened to traffic in two phases, 2001 and 2002.

This westernmost section provided the first actual cost figures. For years, WVDOT has projected the cost of Corridor H at \$10 million per mile, or an even billion dollars for the hundred miles from Elkins to Virginia. Building the northern bypass around Elkins cost nearly double that, \$19.2 million per mile. With inflation, that would be \$20 million now. Except for the unresolved route from Davis to Parsons, cost is the main impediment to a project that will become increasingly expensive and destructive as it moves into the mountains of Grant and Tucker Counties.

Ten years ago, the Environmental Protection Agency did a cost-benefit analysis of Corridor H using WVDOT's lowball estimate. It found that the reasonably likely benefits could not offset the cost of building and the damage to the environment. For that, EPA's regional director was fired. But the analysis is as accurate today as it was then. Since the settlement agreement broke the project into sections, each required to justify its cost, those not yet built remain vulnerable to a clear-eyed review.

OUR READERS WRITE

Dear John,

Sorry to have put you in the middle of this, but I am compelled to respond to Tom Rodd's excoriation in the July issue. As suggested in the June issue, I have attempted to volunteer to participate on the Conservancy's Wind Committee. My offer has met with less than enthusiastic acceptance, although I have recently been included in some emails and invitations to visit potential wind sites. This seems my most appropriate response.

THE UNENDING SPIRAL OF IT

I apologize to some readers, but I cannot let Tom Rodd's July reply to my June reaction to Linda Cooper's original letter on the horrors of wind energy go unanswered. Please note that the land of which I am currently steward is neither in a coal field nor a high-priority wind power area - although I've often requested information on the wind potential and would dearly like a couple windmills on "my" the ridge line. At least I could feel like I'm trying to live within means of my footprint.

If the Voice is not the place to discuss these issues, then why has so much coverage been given to the anti-windpower agenda? One note of an alternative view and it receives such a vitriolic response. Tom alludes to my making "invidious" comparisons. I'm not really sure what he means but I must suggest that folks compare and contrast Kayford Mountain and the like and the miles of valley-filled streams with occasional windmill sites and some electric lines on ridge tops.

How about this for a front page headline in The Highlands Voice!

Trillions and Billions of birds, bats, frogs, soil organisms and other ecosystem participants continually destroyed by coal mining and burning. Windmills and conservation offer **millions to billions times reduction**. Developing windmill bird/bat-discouragement methods and technologies offer further orders of magnitude reductions.

Sorry, but the landscape of WV has been impacted by human activity for 10-50,000 years. Nothing you see is pristine or "unspoiled" (whatever that means)! Where are the chestnuts? "Native" Americans significantly impacted these ecosystems for thousands of years before the recent influx of Europeans, etc. Certainly, we have exacerbated the situation and significantly increased the rate of change.

I enthusiastically applaud all those Tom mentioned who have "fought coal companies"... for whatever ages - whether "for a living" and perhaps more so, as a volunteer.

I certainly disagree with the giant corporate windfarm approach - especially with the builders failing to take long-term responsibility for their projects. However, Tom suggests that "its

not right to criticize people who are fighting [wind power] for their communities welfare." Given acid rain levels here, what does he think I'm doing? I must reiterate that yacht owners around Cape Cod would love to sister with some groups here for assistance in their efforts to stop off-shore windfarm possibilities which would impinge upon their **viewscapes**. Although a Gemini, I must also reiterate my great difficulty understanding "environmentalist" who use coal-generated electricity to fight wind power.

Tom mentions that "The multi-billion-dollar scrubbers being installed on the John Amos Plant will cause ten times more Appalachian coal mining..." I can not really tell from his letter whether he figures this is good or bad for West Virginia communities as a whole? I've suggested in the Gazette that the best and highest use of mountain-top-removal sites [May there never be any more!] is **photovoltaics** and wind electricity genera-

tion.

How 'bout if anti-wind folk push their representatives and legislators to institute net metering so that they can get full economic value for their home-generated electricity - be it photovoltaic, wind, **biomass**, or whatever renewable? Or are they still on the coal-fired grid? How 'bout they get their electricity supplier to offer renewable alternatives (at a higher price, of course) like many surrounding areas do? - and pay more of the true cost of electricity? How 'bout anti-wind folk institute maximum energy efficiency in their homes and offices? How 'bout considering air-conditioning a sin?

If apologies are due, I offer my most sincere apology to any anti-corporate wind activist who is off the coal-fired grid.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Bob Hamburg
Orma, WV



EDITORIAL POLICY

While the *Highlands Voice* does frequently announce official positions of the organization, the stories are not exclusively made up of official positions. One of the benefits of membership is an opportunity to have one's say. Stories, commentary, and especially letters are often just that. They are from members with something to say even if it is contrary to an official position or, as is more often the case, on a topic where the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has no official position. Although most writings in the *Voice* come from members, we welcome the contributions of non-members as well.

COMMENTS OF THE WVHC ON STREAM BUFFER ZONE RULE

Underlying false and misleading assumptions in the Federal Register Notice. The “historic interpretation” of the rule as presented in the June 16, 2005 Federal Register is inaccurate and must be revisited/revised in order to provide full and factual rationale for any proposed alternatives.

— The implication in the Federal Register Notice that the Stream Buffer Zone Rule is not consistent with the CWA is just not true. SMCRA does not, should not and was not authorized to supercede the goals of the Clean Water Act (CWA) — i.e. to restore and maintain the waters of the nation. The SBZR can be enforced and fills allowed in the uppermost reaches of stream valleys, and still protect the chemical, biological and physical integrity of streams as required by the CWA.

— The assumption that mining operations cannot comply with both the SBZR and the requirements for approximate original contour (AOC) and/or spoil disposal is also not true. The interpretation offered by OSM in the Federal Register implies that the only restrictions on the size of valley fills are the safety and stability standards set forth in the law and regulations. The SBZR must also be applied. If spoil cannot be put back on the mined area without additional excess waste rock being dumped into intermittent and perennial streams, then the mine plan must be adjusted to comply with SBZR and maintain the required 100 ft. buffer zone around intermittent and perennial streams.

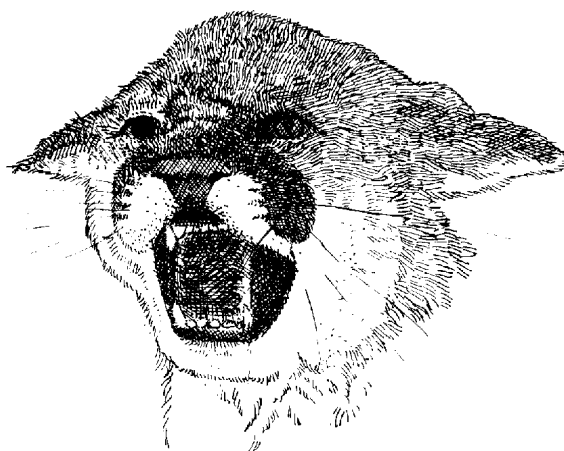
— How SMCRA and the SBZR are interpreted and enforced is not and should not be determined by the most recent technological advances in mining methods and industry’s ability to mine coal. The law and regulations were designed to balance the interests of the environment and the coal industry, to protect resources while also allowing mining to occur. This fact receives short shrift in OSM’s historic interpretation in the Federal Register notice.

Mining can be profitable without the wholesale destruction of Appalachian streams. Congress’s intent during promulgation of the 1977 SMCRA made it clear that “environmental protection and reclamation” was “a co-equal objective with that of producing coal.” Rules to implement the law must be consistent with that objective. The SBZR supports that balance by limiting impacts on stream valleys by preventing encroachment into intermittent and perennial

streams.

Lax enforcement of the rule has allowed the delicate balance of industry and environmental interests to be destroyed. The scales now tip dramatically in favor of greater profit to industry while the people and environment are trashed. The SBZR EIS must honestly address this co-equal objective and return the balance.

Aligning the SBZR with OSM’s historic interpretation of the regulations as re-



lated in the June 16, 2005 Federal Register Notice amounts to the agency overriding congressional intent and legitimizing the continued devastation of Appalachia. Any proposed alternative to the SBZR based on this interpretation renders protection of the environment subservient to the wishes and technologies of the mining industry and is not an acceptable alternative.

ALTERNATIVES should clarify that the SBZR 1) is consistent with the requirements of the CWA, 2) can and should be enforced when excess spoil rules are inadequate to protect intermittent and perennial streams, and 3) must be strengthened or better enforced to restore the balance between environmental and industry interests.

Accurate definition and assessment of intermittent and perennial streams. Stream health includes a comprehensive consideration of chemical, biological and physical characteristics of the stream. To the extent that the protection afforded headwaters streams by enforcement of the SBZR currently ignores or trivializes any of these characteristics, that enforcement falls short of the requirements and goals of both the CWA and SMCRA.

In that regard, just as OSM’s “historic

interpretation” of the SBZR reveals a disregard for the protection of headwater streams, so also do conflicting definitions of what constitutes intermittent and perennial streams. To the extent that divergent definitions exist among the multitude of agencies responsible for protecting waters of the nation, and because enforcement of laws to protect those waters rely on those disparate definitions, the most protective definitions should be honored.

ALTERNATIVES should be proposed that increase protection for water quality and quantity as well as the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems that depend on and interact with those waters by clarifying the definitions and adopting the most inclusive definition possible.

ALTERNATIVES must also assure that accurate stream identification is carried out prior to any fill activities and that the biological, physical and chemical health of streams is monitored and protected.

Public Comments on 2004 Rule Change. Testimony and concerns expressed at the regional hearings and written submissions on the proposed rule change in early 2004 must be considered and made part of the record in the SBZ EIS.

MTM/VF DEIS studies. Headwater streams are an integral part of overall watershed health. Scientific studies reported in the Mountaintop/Valley Fills Draft Environmental Impact Statement (MTM/VF DEIS) show that filling headwater streams has caused significant degradation not only to those stream segments that are buried, but also to downstream waters.

Notable impacts include:

- increased chemical concentrations such as significantly higher levels of selenium, sulfate, total dissolved solids, total calcium, total magnesium, hardness, total manganese, dissolved manganese, specific conductance, alkalinity, total potassium, acidity and nitrate/nitrite;

- lower biological integrity, less diverse aquatic life, primarily attributed to reductions in pollution sensitive taxa;

(Continued on p. 10)

Highlands Conservancy Continues its Canaan Valley Balsam Fir Conservation Efforts

For the past 10 years the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has been working to protect the unique Balsam Fir trees found in our state. Called "Canaan Fir" because most of them are found in Canaan Valley, these trees are in trouble. An exotic insect pest, the Balsam Woolly Adelgid, is decimating the native stands of Canaan fir.

A northern species, Balsam fir once existed along the Appalachian Mountains as far south as Alabama. As the glaciers receded tens of thousands of years ago, most of these trees moved north along with them. A few isolated pockets of fir persisted in the highest elevations. The Fir trees furthest south gradually developed their own unique characteristics and were named a separate species, Fraser Fir. These can be found on just a few mountaintops in North Carolina and Virginia. In West Virginia, a few pockets of Fir also persisted in Canaan Valley, Dolly Sods, Blister Swamp and a couple other places in the Highlands. Isolated from the firs to the north and south, these trees also developed their own unique characteristics.

Considered by many an intermediary species between the more northern Balsam Fir and the southern Fraser Fir, Canaan Fir has some of the best characteristics of each. Jim Rockis, owner of Quarterpine Farms has been collecting the cones and processing Canaan Fir seed and growing the trees for almost 20 years. "The dark blue-green foliage, excellent needle retention, and beautiful pyramidal shape make it a favorite among Christmas tree growers," said Rockis. "It is also one of the unique aspects of West Virginia that make our forests so special, including the wide diversity of plants and animals found here." The landscape of Canaan Valley has long been synonymous with the stands of spire-like trees found along its rivers, streams and wetlands.

The Balsam Woolly Adelgid is a sucking insect introduced into New England from Asia that has made its way to the West Virginia Highlands in the last 15 years. Young, vigorous, trees tend to have a natural resistance to the deadly effects of these insects, but as the trees mature and lose their vigor, they lose this resistance, and at 25-30 years old, they finally succumb.

Volunteers with the Highlands Conservancy, with help from the West Virginia Native Plant Society, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Canaan Valley Institute, Friends of the 500th, the Timberline Conservancy, and others, have been working to preserve this unique gene pool, and to keep Canaan Fir trees as a part of the landscape in the West Virginia Highlands. Our efforts have included

seed banking seed from the various stands of fir; growing seedlings to plant on the Refuge, and making them available to other landowners and agencies to be planted throughout the Highlands. To encourage regeneration, we have con-

structed several deer enclosure fences.

Jim Rockis explains further, "Balsam trees become sexually mature at about 15 years of age. They will not produce cones until this time. They also only produce cones on average once every 5 years." The Canaan Fir trees have produced cones this year for the first time since 2000. With the help of an Environmental Challenge

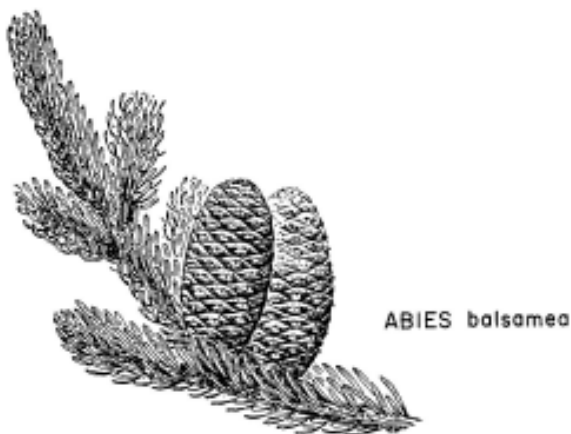
Cone Collecting 2000



Fund grant from Columbia Gas Transmission, and many volunteer hours, much needed seed was collected this summer for use in these conservation efforts. "This seed will allow us to continue to grow Canaan Fir seedlings for stand regeneration and conservation purposes," says Rockis.

The conservation goals of this effort are to encourage and generate healthy young stands of Canaan Fir trees that will grow up and produce a regenerative seed crop perhaps 2 to 3 times before they succumb to the killing effects of the Adelgid. While these efforts may not return the largest, old growth trees to our landscape, they will hopefully help to maintain vigorous younger stands of balsam trees. In the future, we hope that a natural predator, or a natural resistance, to the insects will emerge to make our conservation efforts no longer necessary.

This Canaan Fir conservation effort is an excellent example of conservation organizations working with a host of government agencies businesses and private land owners to help keep West Virginia *Wild and Wonderful!* Special thanks to Ken Sturm and Jackie Burns with the Canaan Valley NWR, John Vandevender, NRCS Plant Materials Center, Bill Grafton, Native Plant Society, Marilyn Shoenfeld and Sherm Jerrett, Timberline Conservancy, Bruce and Andy Dalton, Friends of the 500th.



BACKPACKING ON MOUNT ROGERS

By Eric Shereda

We met in the overnight parking area of Grayson Highlands State Park and set out on the AT northbound climbing up Wilburn Ridge. Along the way, we snacked on a variety of thornless blackberry that was as sweet as honey. We



Benchmark on top of Mount Rogers (Elev. 5,729 feet). Note USGS carved into rock face.

stopped for lunch near Wise Shelter eating alongside the tranquil Big Wilson Creek.

After lunch, we followed a horse trail to Scales. Currently a horse camp, Scales once was where the locals would release their livestock each spring to graze once the snows cleared. Each fall, the animals would be herded to Scales and weighed before setting off to market. In an effort to keep the highlands open, cattle and ponies are still grazed in the area. Although the cattle are removed each winter since they cannot survive, Virginia Highlander ponies, a unique breed <http://gaitedhorses.net/BreedArticles/VAHighlanders.html>, stay year round. Some are sold off each year at auction to keep numbers down.

From Scales, we climbed up Pine Mountain toward our planned campsite. On the way, we noticed a small side trail to the North which led to a beautiful, cliff top overlook of the Lewis Fork Wilderness and Hurricane Mountain to the north. We pressed onward and arrived at our campsite. The spring near the camp was almost completely dry. I was glad that I brought my pump instead of only Aqua Mira drops. We enjoyed a relaxing dinner and evening around the campfire and two of us even slept out under the stars. We saw several meteors and satellites before succumbing to

sleep.

Day two began early as it is difficult to "sleep in" outside of a tent. We had breakfast and set off before the heat of the day bore down on us. We continued on the Pine Mountain Trail towards the other end of Wilburn Ridge and Rhododendron Gap. We stopped at one point to climb a 40-foot "tooth" for a spectacular view of the area. From here, we rejoined the AT but this time, heading southbound. We stopped for a snack at the Thomas Knob shelter and gathered a little water from the spring before heading up Mt. Rogers (elev. 5,729 feet).

Mt. Rogers is the highest peak in Virginia and was named in 1883 for William Barton Rogers, Virginia's first geologist. Prior to 1883, the mountain was called Balsam Mountain due to the large numbers of Fir trees found on the slopes and summit.

We descended from the Top of Virginia relieved that it was all downhill from here as we headed south on the AT towards our anticipated campsite on the saddle of Brier Ridge. After setting up, we took a day hike to Whitetop Mountain (elev. 5,520 feet).

Whitetop is Virginia's second highest mountain. Unlike Mt. Rogers, it has several balds allowing a stunning (but hazy for us) view of the lowlands 2300 feet below and the sleepy community of Whitetop. We could even see into North Carolina and Tennessee. In retrospect, we should have also gone to Buzzard Rock on the west slope of Whitetop.

All in all, it took 11.6 additional miles (on top of the 5 to the campsite) to go to Whitetop and back. We were



Mount Rogers from the AT on Wilburn Ridge.



Hiking my favorite stretch of the AT on top of Wilburn Ridge

skimping on water thinking we would at least cross a stream or spring along the way. Unfortunately this was not the case. Everything was dry. We stopped at Elk Garden (elev. 4,465 feet) on the way back and begged some water off a generous group of day-hikers before climbing back up to our campsite on the AT.

The sign at Elk Garden gave us some history of the area. This land was once inhabited with elk, cougar, wolves and even buffalo were particularly common. Even today, in the Elk Garden area of Mount Rogers, the remains of a once huge buffalo wallow can be found in use by cattle that now graze the land.

On Sunday, we headed back to Rhododendron Gap to pick up the AT back to the parking area. Before long, the sun was overhead and scorching us again. We passed the saddle of Cabin Ridge where I am planning to camp next year. We reached the AT and climbed up on top of Wilburn Ridge. This, in my opinion, is one of the prettiest trails I have ever hiked. The AT even goes through a natural rock tunnel as it twists and turns on its path along the ridge. We made good time even though we were picking blueberries and blackberries along the way. Although it was hot, I could not help thinking that this was still an awesome weekend to explore one of the finest highlands on the East Coast.

BUFFER ZONE COMMENTS (Continued from p. 7)

- changes in the physical nature of the streams has led to increased runoff, changed flow patterns, increased flooding, and adverse affects on nearby wells.

Current lax enforcement of the Buffer Zone Rule allows this damage to continue.

Findings from these studies should be considered during this SBZR EIS and the studies themselves included as part of the official record. Individual and cumulative impacts to streams, multiple streams within watersheds and multiple watersheds within a given area must be studied.

ALTERNATIVES should be proposed that prevent further chemical, biological and physical degradation to headwater streams and downstream waters below valley fills.

ALTERNATIVES must assure that the biological, physical and chemical health of streams is monitored and protected.

Public Comments on MTR/VF EIS. Written comments and concerns voiced at hearings during the MTR/VF EIS must be considered and made part of the record in this SBZ EIS.

The EIS must consider impacts not just to headwater streams, but also to the forests and associated ecosystems and human communities that are interdependent with those streams.

Forests. The interdependence of forests and streams, especially in the steep headwater reaches of southern Appalachian coalfields compels consideration of how damage to streams also damages these forest resources. These impacts must be included in the analyses conducted during the SBZR EIS. More and bigger valley fills, make possible more extensive mining operations that lead to more extensive impacts to what are the most productive and diverse temperate hardwood forests in the world. Studies in the MTM/VF DEIS documented extensive permanent damage to the once healthy and sustainable forests, their rich and diverse ecosystems. The ongoing ecological damage and the economic impact of the removing these forests must be considered in this EIS.

Substituting golf courses, prisons, ATV trails, greenhouses, wineries and an

occasional wood products plant may be acceptable to some limited extent and may benefit a few, but the wholesale destruction of the biologically rich and productive hardwood forests of the Appalachian coalfields is a tremendous long-term economic and ecological loss. This loss is exacerbated by the larger permits made possible because lax enforcement of the SBZR allows more and larger stream valleys to become cheap disposal areas for bigger and bigger

I end here and with this item - with the people - because it's damage to our families and friends and the heritage of the mountains that will have the last, greatest and most long lasting impact. The people may not be first on the priority list of technical and scientific considerations for OSM during this EIS, but the greatest loss attributable to lax enforcement of the SBZR may well be the loss of these communities and the rich mountain heritage that is disappearing with them.

mountaintop removal and steep slope mines. The cumulative impacts to forests must be studied.

ALTERNATIVES should be recommended only if they will decrease the potential for damage to our biologically diverse and productive forests.

Cultural Impacts. The most overlooked and undervalued resource in any debate, discussion or study of Mountaintop Removal mining and Valley Fills to date has been the people and our mountain communities and traditions. The SBZR EIS must study not only the impacts to streams, but also how these impacts effect individuals who live alongside those streams, downstream communities, and people who depend on those waters.

Individual and cumulative impacts of multiple and large fills on the health of the human as well as aquatic and terrestrial life in the Appalachian coalfields must be considered.

It is here, where the co-equal objec-

tive of SMRCA — of balancing mining interests and the interests of the environment — touches the people most directly. And it is here where the law and rules that limit damage to the environment are most critical.

Because the Buffer Zone Rule has not been enforced, some of today's monster mines are filling stream valleys more than 2 miles long, turning those valleys into cheap disposal sites for unwanted waste rock and coal from mining operations. Increasing numbers of fills and larger individual fills have led to larger mines, more damage and further decay of small mountain communities that have been the heart and soul of WV for hundreds of years

The ability to obtain permits to fill multiple and larger stream valleys has made it possible for companies to extend their mining operations deeper into the mountains and deeper into the surrounding communities. Damage to homes and water supplies, as well as the outright purchasing of whole communities continues to destroy the very fabric of life in southern West Virginia. Whether due to fear, intimidation, impossible living conditions, constant noise, truck traffic, blasting, dust, etc., individuals are forced to leave or sell their home-places and move away. Those who stay live in diminished communities with fewer local stores, schools, churches and fewer neighbors to stand together against further destruction.

The mental, emotional and physical scars to the people of the region as their ancestral mountains and homes are torn apart were not given adequate consideration in the MTM/VF DEIS, but should rightfully be fully considered and analyzed during the SBZR EIS.

ALTERNATIVES should be proposed to strengthen the SBZR and further protect the people and communities in and near the stream valleys where mining is proposed.

I end here and with this item - with the people - because it's damage to our families and friends and the heritage of the mountains that will have the last, greatest and most long lasting impact. The people may not be first on the priority list of technical and scientific considerations for OSM during this EIS, but the greatest loss attributable to lax enforcement of the SBZR may well be the loss of these communities and the rich mountain heritage that is disappearing with them.

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

September 23rd-25th, High Meadows/Seneca Creek Backpack, MNF, WV: Car Camp at primitive Spruce Knob Campground on Friday night. Backpack 13 miles from Spruce Knob to the headwaters of Seneca Creek on Saturday/Sunday. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

Late September/Early October TBA. Dolly Sods North: Still Planning. Information Forthcoming. Contact Eric at backpacker@1st.net, (740) 676-4468 for more info or to reserve your spot. Limit 10.

October 8th-10th, Great North Mountain Backpack, GWNF, VA/WV: 21+ mile strenuous backpack featuring 4 fantastic overlooks. Will hike 7 miles on day 1, 10 miles on day 2 and approximately 5 miles on day 3. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

October 8th-9th and October 15 & 16: Red Spruce cone collecting volunteer opportunity: (two weekends!) As part of the Highlands Conservancy's Red Spruce Restoration efforts, we will be collecting cones from various areas in the Highlands including Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Monongahela National Forest, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge and

water Falls and Canaan Valley State Parks. Contact Dave Saville 304-284-9548 daves@labyrinth.net.

October 15th-17th, Cranberry Wilderness Backpack, MNF, WV: Approximately 24 mile circuit mostly along the drainages of North Fork of Cranberry River, Cranberry River, Beechlog Run, Laurelly Run and Middle Fork of Williams River. Mileage breakdown: 7 – 10 – 7. Should still have good fall colors this far south! Experienced Backpackers only. Limit of 10 participants. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or Email at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

October 22nd and 23rd, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Fall Review Cheat Mountain Club. See the announcement on p. 16 of this issue of the Voice.

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. Contact in advance to schedule a time and date.

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

BUMPER STICKERS

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

GOOD STUFF FOR FREE

The Sierra Club, Citizens Coal Council, Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Focus(Kentucky), Big Sandy Environmental Coalition(Kentucky), Kentuckians For The Commonwealth and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy have put together a new brochure entitled "Mountaintop Removal Destroys Our Homeplace STOP THE DEVASTATION!" For a copy send a self addressed stamped envelope to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314.

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

GOIN'UP TEA CREEK

07-21-24-2005: by Mike Juskelis

Hiking in the Tea Creek Backcountry is a blast. Very few hikers use the 35 plus miles of trails there. In order to insure that we were able to get good campsites along the Creek at the primitive campground the Mad Hatter, Cognac Jack, MTM and I all arrived on Thursday afternoon. We set up camp and then went on a bit of a nature walk before dinner.

We arose early and were hiking over the hill to Tea Creek by 8:30. The skies had cleared up but a haze of humidity clung to the narrow valleys of the backcountry. We reached the confluence of Tea Creek and the Right Fork. We took a long break there and then studied the Right Fork crossing. We would not be crossing it today but unless the water dropped considerably tomorrow's 10 crossings would be challenging, with or without alternate footwear.

We then turned south on the North Face Trail to pick up the Right Fork Trail. Crossing the Right Fork just below Red Run tested our skill ... and balance ... but we all made it across OK. We had a nice lunch at Red Run and then proceed up to what has become an obligatory visit to the beaver pond boardwalk.

Next came a walk out to the vista on the Scenic Highway followed by a steep but brief ascent up Tea Creek Mountain. Right as we neared the end of a rock field we saw a break in the brush to the left. We followed it out to a reasonably nice view of the ridges to the east. We couldn't see down into the valley becomes of the forest. We continued along the mountain and finally made a knee jarring descent to the campground.

The next day we were joined by Susan and began hiking by 9:00. We retraced the first 2.7 miles of yesterday's trek. This time, we crossed the Right fork at its confluence with the main Creek. We did it without wet feet! The next nine crossings would be technically challenging but not hazardous. We performed the last of the creek crossings at the junction of the Boundary Trail which climbs the western wall of the valley and leads to Turkey Point. It's a long climb but it's an old railroad grade so one hardly notices it.

Just as we reached the crown of the first hill, there were two bear cubs climbing up separate Red Spruce trees at an incredible rate of

speed. We were already having a great outing. This was even more icing on the cake. Some folks go through a lifetime of hiking without seeing a bear and this was my second and third bear of the season.

We scanned the surrounding woods for Mama bear and could not see her. We continued quickly up the trail as we engaged in loud chatter to let her know where we were. (Note to self: Forget about climbing trees when confronted by a bear. It won't work!)

We turned off onto Turkey Point Trail and enjoyed several Red Spruce Groves with an under story of moss covered rocks and ferns. We paid brief visits to a couple of overlooks before our descent. From them you could view much of the Tea Creek Drainage, Gauley Mountain and taller ridges further east. We reached what I thought was Bannock Shoals Run Tr (The sign was off of the post and bear damaged beyond recognition.). My trail notes instructed me to turn left here and that it would be a short distance downhill to the campground. So we did.



Things didn't seem right. We were heading slightly uphill and although at first we were heading directly for the creek we soon started to veer away from it. The road was overgrown in places but there were plastic blue blazes all along the way. The blazes eventually led us to a footpath that descended to the creek flood plain. I knew where we were now! This was part of a loop trail that the FS had started but abandoned because of a huge blowout of the creek bank that the trail used to cross. I recognized the area because Janet and I had found the other side of it on our last trip to Tea Creek and wondered if it continued on the other side. Question answered!

Even though we had made the wrong turn we were still close to camp. We forded the creek above the blow-out, bushwhacked across a weedy, rocky island until we were below the blowout and re-crossed the creek. From there it was an easy frolic, albeit in wet boots, back to camp.

We did the usual campside stuff for the balance of the day and built a fire. By 9:30 we decided we couldn't stay awake any longer so finally called it a night. The next day we broke camp early, drove to Lewisburg for a hearty breakfast and returned to reality ... but just for a week. We'll be out in the woods again next weekend I'm sure!

T SHIRTS

White, heavy cotton T-Shirts with the I [heart] Mountains slogan on the front. The lettering is blue and the heart is red. Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL, and XXXL. \$10 total by mail. Send sizes wanted and check made out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to:
Julian Martin, WVHC, Box 306,
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

HATS FOR SALE

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy caps for sale. The cap is khaki and the pre-curved visor is forest green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy in gold above the I [Heart] Mountains. The heart is red; we and mountains are black. It is soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure. \$10 by mail. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to Julian Martin, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.

SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE IN LONG SLEEVE MODEL

We now have I [heart] Mountains long sleeve shirts in sizes M,L, XL. The shirt is heavy cotton and white with blue lettering. The heart is red. \$15 total by mail. Send sizes wanted and check made out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to:
Julian Martin, WVHC, Box 306,
Charleston, WV 25321-0306

Join Now !!!



**West
Virginia
Highlands
Conservancy**
www.wvhighlands.org

Yes! Sign me up.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Membership categories (circle one)

	Individual	Family	Org
Senior	\$15		
Student/	\$15		
Introductory/			
Other	\$15		
Regular	\$25	\$35	\$50
Associate	\$50	\$75	\$100
Sustaining	\$100	\$150	\$200
Patron	\$250	\$250	\$500
Mountaineer	\$500	\$750	\$1,000

Mail to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy PO Box 306 Charleston, WV 25321

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

Conservancy Opposes Change In Buffer Zone Rule *(Continued from p. 1)*

agency finally proposed to change the rule in January 2004, thousands of people called for an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to be done before implementing the change. In June 2005 OSM acknowledged the need for an Environmental Impact Study before making any changes to analyze the possible effects of revising the regulation.

The process began with scoping meetings and a comment period about what significant issues and specific alternatives OSM should consider during the EIS.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy joined a number of other citizen and environmental groups in submitting extensive and detailed comments before the September 1st deadline. This article represents additional comments made by

the author at the Public Meeting in Charleston August 24th.

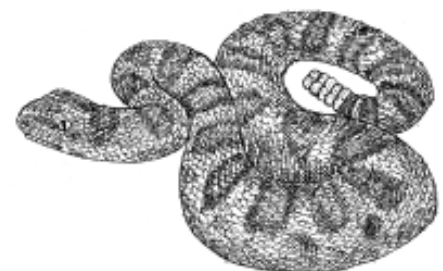
The underlying message expressed by citizens at the public meeting in West Virginia echoed the sentiments of others at similar meetings in Tennessee, Kentucky and Pennsylvania:

“The law is clear and the law is clearly being broken: no land within 100 feet of an intermittent or perennial stream shall be disturbed by surface mining operations, unless the company can prove the mining activity won’t hurt water quality or quantity. We say leave the rule as it and enforce the rule, don’t weaken it. Protect our lives and our lands. Do not destroy them.”

There were many articulate, deeply

heartfelt and emotional personal statements by people who have suffered flood damage from failing valley fills and other direct impacts from large mines above their homes.

I added far less eloquent comments about issues and alternatives to be considered.



How Can YOU Save the Mon?

By Harrison Case

The next several weeks will be crucial in determining the fate of our beloved Monongahela National Forest for decades to come. If West Virginians do not speak up, the Forest Service will continue with its plan: to strip wild areas of their protection, open more of the forest to logging and diminishing recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat across the forest.

If, however, citizens speak with one voice in favor of protecting the Mon's special places, we can build upon the Mon's original management plan of 1986, which was created with enormous public input and has satisfactorily governed Forest management for nearly two decades.

Here's how to help:

- 1. Get Energized!** Make it a point to watch the great video, *Vision for a Wild Mon*, narrated by Larry Groce and featuring the photography of Jonathan Jessup. This short piece contains valuable information about the Mon's history, role and future, and the value of Wilderness. More importantly, it will move you and your friends to action: the images remind us of what we are fighting for.
- 2. Get Educated!** Log on to www.wvild.org, the newly-updated website of the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition. Here you can learn about potential Wilderness areas, aspects of the Forest Plan and more ways to get involved.
- 3. Get Wild!** Host a Wild Mon Party! This is the most fun way to pitch in. The Wilderness Coalition has assembled everything you need to throw a party with a purpose: the *Vision for a Wild Mon* DVD, sample invitations, comment tips and much more. At your party, friends of the Mon can tell the Forest Service, in writing, what they think the future of the forest should look like.
- 4. Get Heard!** All of these efforts center around one goal: overwhelming the Forest Service with pro-Wilderness comments. Your time and thoughts, in the form of a letter, are the most valuable donation you can make to the cause. Whether your comments are written at a house party, a public meeting or on your own, they must be, according to Forest Service regulations, "substantive and unique." In other words, you must state what you want, and why. For example, "I think we need more Wilderness" won't count; "I think Seneca Creek should be recommended for Wilderness, because I fly-fish there and do not want the waters threatened by future logging or road-building" is more effective. In your comments, make it clear that Alternative 2 is NOT appropriate for the Mon, and that you support the designation of the 15 new Wilderness areas identified in the Citizen's proposal. Be sure to send a copy of your comments to the Wilderness Coalition, your Senators and Representative in Washington, and Governor Joe Manchin.

You can also make your voice heard at one of these public meetings being held by the Forest Service throughout the comment period.

Fax: (202) 225-7856

Send your substantive comments to

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-3954
Fax: (202) 228-0002

The Honorable John D Rockefeller IV

531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-6472
Fax: (202) 224-7665

The Honorable Alan Mollohan

2302 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-4172
Fax: (202) 225-7564

The Honorable Shelley Moore-Capito

Washington Office:
1431 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-2711

The Honorable Nick Rahall:

2307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3452
Fax: (202) 225-9061

Governor Joe Manchin

State Capitol Building
Charleston, WV 25305
1-888-438-2731

West Virginia Wilderness Coalition

P.O. Box 6
Masontown, WV 26542
Phone: 304-864-5530
email: matk@tw.org
<http://www.wvild.org>

Please attend a public meeting on the Plan Revision
hosted by the Forest Service

9/17 10:00 am-2:00 pm Elkins, WV Graceland Conference Center, Davis and Elkins College

9/19 4:00 pm -7:00 pm Richwood, WV City Hall

9/20 4:00 pm -7:00 pm Pocahontas County, WV Pocahontas County High School

9/21 4:00 pm -7:00 pm Charleston, WV Marriot (Towncenter)

9/26 4:00 pm -7:00 pm Petersburg, WV Public Library

Come to Tucker County

for fall foliage and the

2nd Annual

Friends of Blackwater

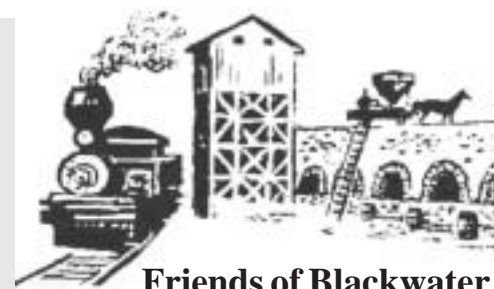
Membership Meeting and Awards Banquet

Saturday, September 24, 2005

5:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Timbers Pub & Fireside Grill Banquet Room

Timberline Four-Seasons Resort, Canaan Valley, West Virginia



Friends of Blackwater
Historical Tour Schedule
Saturday, September 24

10:00 a.m. - Friends of Blackwater
Parsons History Tour begins at
Tucker County Courthouse

12:00 p.m. - Friends of Blackwater
Davis History Tour begins at
Sirianni's Cafe

2:00 p.m. - Friends of Blackwater
Thomas History Tour begins at
the Purple Fiddle

Join Friends of Blackwater to learn about the latest developments in Blackwater Canyon, the National Park Initiative, and how the new Monongahela Forest management plan will affect the Blackwater Canyon.

Help us celebrate the lives of John A. Cuthbert, Roy B. Clarkson, George A. Hall, Margaret Calwell and Cynthia Phillips, West Virginia authors who brought the Blackwater region to life through their writings.

Also, see the picture that raised more than \$10,000 for Blackwater pro-

tection. Susan Poffenbarger's "Blackwater Backwater" is traveling the state to spread the Blackwater preservation message, and its first stop will be at Timberline Saturday, September 24.

Reception begins at 5:00 p.m. in the Timberline Conference Room. Dinner will be served at 6:00 p.m., and reservations are required. Dinner tickets are \$25 per person. Awards will be presented at 7:00 p.m.; child care will be available; call to arrange.

Make the Most of Your Weekend

Friends of Blackwater Membership Meeting and Awards Banquet scheduled for Leaf Peepers weekend - Combine your attendance at our membership meeting and awards banquet with the 17th Annual Leaf Peepers Festival. We have listed some of the events scheduled for Saturday. Complete list is at www.canaanvalley.org/leafpeepers. The Leaf Peepers Festival is pre-sented by the Tucker County Alpine Festival.

Leaf Peepers Activities scheduled for Saturday, September 24

7:00 a.m. Birdwalk "Finding Migrant & Resident Birds" National Wildlife Refuge. Meet @ the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center. Call Jackie Burns 866-3858.

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Appalachian Craft & Food Fair, Davis Fire Hall, Davis. Crafters & Artists from all over the region display their specialties. Many items for sale. Call 259-5315.

10:00 a.m. Conifer Forest Restoration, CV National Wildlife Refuge. Join Refuge staff in planting spruce and balsam trees to restore and grow these native woodlands. Meet @ the Refuge Visitor Center. Call Jackie Burns 866-3858.

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Free Fly Fishing Casting Lessons, Canaan Valley. Try your fly casting skills. Equipment provided. Meet at the pond at Big John's Family Fixin's. Call Bill Riley of Hemlock Cove Fly Fishing School 866-6229.

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Specialty Food Tasting, Mountainmade.com, Thomas. Stop in and try a variety of specialty food. Call 463-3355

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Craft Show, Canaan Valley. Quality handmade crafts by area and out-of-state crafters at the Fire Department. Call Betty Riley 866-6229.

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 a.m. Book Signing, MountainMade Artisan Gallery, Thomas. MountainMade will host local author Cindy Phillips, who will sign copies of "Tucker County" released in July as part of Arcadia Publishing's Images of America Series. Call 304-463-3355.

10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Art & Craft Demonstrations, The Art Company, Davis. Various artists will perform their best art in front of you. Enjoy hot cider & fresh baked goods from the coffee shop. Call Lori 259-4217.

11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Canoe Floats on the Cheat River, St. George. 4-mile float trips down Cheat River Valley. Floats includes; shuttle, lifejackets & paddles. \$20.00 per person. Call Patrick 478-3775.

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Leaf Peeping Tour, Highland Scene Tours. A 3-hour driving tour into the heart of "Leaf Peeping" country. We will tour Canaan Valley to Red Creek and on to Jenningson Bridge then return past the Windmills. \$5.00 per person. Meet at the Old Bank Building Parking Lot. Call Diane 866-4455.

1:00 p.m. Blackwater Canyon Bike Ride Dedicated to continued development of the Allegheny Highlands Trail. Meet at the Purple Fiddle in Thomas at noon; Departure at 1:00. Helmets required, pedaling optional on this 10-mile descent. Children under 18 must be accompanied by adult. Sponsored by HTF and Tucker County Trails. For more information contact karen@elkinsbike.com

8:30 p.m. Ghost Walk, Davis. Walk through Davis, stopping where strange happenings have occurred. \$5.00 per person. Meet at old Nat'l Bank of Davis. For more information call Diane @ 866-4455.

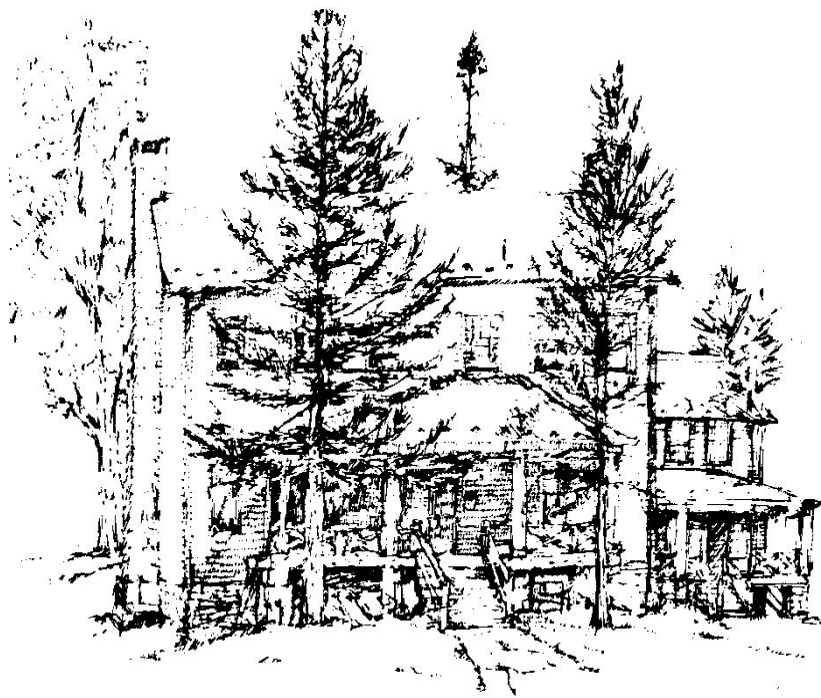
8:30 p.m. Bluegrass Music, Purple Fiddle, Thomas. The Purple Fiddle is proud to host the live bluegrass band "Blue Mule." \$7.00 cover charge. The Purple Fiddle is a family-friendly, smoke-free environment. Call 463-4040.

To request registration, contact:
Friends of Blackwater

501 Elizabeth Street Charleston WV 25311
304-345-7663 or register online at

www.SaveBlackwater.org





The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy presents it's

**40th annual
Fall Review
at
Cheat Mountain
Club**

October 20-27, 2005

For over 100 years known as a great place for hunting, fishing and wilderness adventure, the Cheat Mountain Club is a special retreat from the outside world - a gracious, quiet, comfortable lodge that fosters contemplation, good talk, and recreational enjoyment in a place of spectacular natural beauty.

This year we will again dedicate an entire week to our 40th annual Fall Review. In the heart of it all, on Cheat Mountain, on the shores of the Shavers Fork of the Cheat River, we'll have workshops, art, lectures, outings, service projects, dignitaries, music, and a whole lot of fun. Details are still being worked out, but mark your calendar for the greatest Fall Review ever!

Details are still coming together, tentative intierary:

October 20, Thursday, afternoon check in, evening programs and social.

Oct. 21, Friday, Upper Shavers Fork Brainstorming Day. All-day gathering with the Shavers Fork Coalition to (1) brainstorm draft of Recommendations developed from Shavers Fork Coalition's Coldwater Input Project data, and (2) share and discuss recent research of agencies, universities, and non-profits regarding the biological health of upper Shavers Fork.

Oct. 22, Saturday We'll have outings this day, some special events, and special guests and presentations for a banquet dinner.

Oct. 23, Sunday, there will be some outings, and also the WVHC Board meeting beginning at 9:30, usually go till 4-5pm
Also beginning Sunday afternoon will be a Wilderness Coalition steering committee meeting,

Oct. 24, Monday, Wilderness Coalition meetings continue. Others welcome to stay and plan outings.

Oct. 25&26, Tuesday & Wednesday, Red Spruce Symposium, organized by Don Gasper, (304-472-3704).

Lodging

Space in the CMC Lodge is limited, first come, first served.

Beds in the double rooms on the second floor of the lodge are \$40/nite including breakfast. (\$250 for the whole week)

Beds in the large room on the 3rd floor (one king, 4-singles) are \$25/night, including breakfast. (\$145 for the whole week)

Breakfast for folks not staying in the lodge, \$5.00;
lunches (bag lunches available) \$8.00;
dinner \$20.00

Camping available on the grounds \$5.00/person

Bed and breakfast available in Durbin. Visit www.destinationdurbin.com

You can learn more about Cheat Mountain Club at www.cheatmountainclub.com

*For more information
and reservations.*

Contact

Dave Saville daves@labyrinth.net

304-284-9548