



The Highlands Voice

The Monthly Publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

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Last Chance to Comment on Proposed Monongahela Forest Plan

THE TRAIN IS LEAVING THE STATION

It's now or never. After years of planning and studying by the United States Forest Service and years of planning and studying by citizens, including the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, the draft Monongahela National Forest Plan Revision is now out for formal comment. The formal comment period began in August and ends **November 14, 2005**. All comments must be **received** by that date.

This is important for two reasons. First, the Forest Plan is the blueprint for how the Forest Service manages the Monongahela National Forest. It guides the Forest Service in decisions about which areas to allow timbering, which areas should be managed as wilderness, and any other issues of forest management that may come up.

The current Plan was done in the mid-1980's. Since then, it has guided the Forest Service in management of the Forest. The revised Plan that is out for public comment will probably be in place for that long. What the Forest Service decides now will guide its management of the Monongahela National Forest for the next twenty years.

Second, the Forest Plan will influence Congress in any Wilderness designation. The Forest Planning process is nominally separate from Wilderness designation. The planning process is a function of the Forest Service; Congress designates Wilderness, resulting in permanent protection for areas designated. Although Forest Planning and Wilderness designation are nominally separate, it is unlikely that Congress would designate new Wilderness areas unless the final Forest Plan indicates that those areas should be managed as wilderness.

If you care about the management of the Mon and particularly about wilderness on the Mon, now is the time to comment.

But what should you say? This is America; say what you please. If you want to speak in favor of more wilderness, you should favor Alternative 3 (the draft lists four alternatives, each with different uses for various areas of the Forest). If less wilderness and the possibility of more timbering is your cup of tea, you should support Alternative 2.

This month's Highlands Voice has an insert on the Forest Plan. For more analysis of the Draft Plan, the alternatives, etc. please see the insert.

The only thing you can't do is scrawl "I'm 'fer it!" or "I'm 'agin it!" on a postcard and send it in. The Forest Service is only accepting "substantive" comments. The more you say about your experiences with the Forest and why you feel as you do the better.

Send your comments to:

Monongahela National Forest
Attn: Forest Plan Revision
200 Sycamore Street
Elkins, WV 26241

Fax: (304) 637-0582

E-mail: comments-eastern-monongahela@fs.fed.us

The comments have to be **received** by **November 14, 2005**.



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From the Heart of the Highlands

By Hugh Rogers

The River on the Mountain

Ambrose Bierce, who later wrote *The Devil's Dictionary* and other satirical works, was only nineteen when he happened to visit Cheat Mountain and the upper Shavers Fork. The date was 1861, the occasion was the Civil War, and his duty was to guard the pass on the road that ran "from Nowhere to the southeast." He recalled the experience in an essay titled "On a Mountain." You could almost believe he had been more impressed by the mountain than by the war:

Looking back upon it through the haze of near half a century, I see that region as a veritable realm of enchantment, the Alleghenies as the Delectable Mountains. I note again their dim blue billows, ridge after ridge interminable, beyond purple valleys full of sleep, "in which it seemed always afternoon." Miles and miles away, where the lift of earth meets the stoop of sky, I discern an imperfection in the tint, a faint graying of the blue above the main range—the smoke of an enemy camp.

This October, the Highlands Conservancy held its annual meeting at the Cheat Mountain Club, near Bierce's old post. We had invited affiliated groups to join us over the course of a week that was shortened by a heavy snowfall. First to arrive were the Upper Shavers Fork Partners. I found the essay in their packet, and heard Thomas Minney, of The Nature Conservancy, quote Bierce's phrase, "that wild ridge with its shaggy pelt of spruce and firs."

But the spruce that Bierce admired had been thoroughly logged in the intervening century and a half. We came together to discuss its recovery.

The Partners were eighteen organizations that signed a "Healing the Headwaters" memorandum five years ago. Convened by the Shavers Fork Coalition, a small but determined watershed-protection group, it included government, university, for-profit and non-profit entities. Several more, such as the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) and the State Rail Authority, who for one reason or another could not sign the agreement, pledged to cooperate in its purpose: "to restore, protect, and promote the unique natural and cultural resources of the upper Shavers Fork watershed."

Before considering the spruce, we heard a lot about another indicator species, the native brook trout. Dr. Todd Petty and graduate students at West Virginia University have been studying the upper Shavers Fork fishery for the past six years. They don't spend much time mourning old abuses (mining had accompanied the logging), because the goal of restoration faces a nearly overwhelming current and future obstacle. 80% of the "brookies" historic habitat has been lost to acid precipitation.

Looking at the bright side, grad student Zach Liller said, "There's not a lot of brook trout anywhere [on the watershed]—but there are brook trout everywhere." By that he meant in most of the tributary runs as well as in the river's main stem. Moreover, according to Dr. Petty, 65% of the habitat could be recovered by liming the headwater streams. Some are already being treated by DNR trucks; some would have to be done by helicopter.

Brook trout are born in small, cold, alkaline tributaries, and a certain portion is ambitious enough to migrate into the main stem, where

(Continued on p. 12)

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Forget the Facts; if West Virginia Says It's OK I Must Be OK

FEDERAL OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING BLOCKED FROM PROBE INTO METTIKI MINE PERMIT

By Ken Ward Jr.

Interior Department officials have blocked the federal Office of Surface Mining from investigating a West Virginia coal mine that the Office of Surface Mining fears would eventually pour acid mine drainage into streams.

Top Interior officials in Washington overturned local Office of Surface Mining experts who were concerned about a state-approved permit for Mettiki Coal Co.

Late last week, Rebecca Watson, an assistant Interior secretary, granted a request from state regulators who wanted to stop the probe. "Permit decisions and any appeals are solely matters of the state jurisdiction in which OSM plays no role," Watson wrote in a Friday letter to Joe Lovett, a lawyer with the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment. Lovett represents three environmental groups — the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Trout Unlimited and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition — that opposed the Mettiki permit.

In May 2004, the state Department of Environmental Protection approved the permit for Mettiki's E Mine, an underground operation along the Grant-Tucker county line. Mettiki says it would control acid mine drainage by pumping polluted water into the underground mine works before it is released into streams. Once underground, the water would be treated with alkaline materials to reduce acidity. It would also be deprived of oxygen to keep more acid from forming.

Last month, three OSM hydrologists is-

sued separate reports that documented dozens of problems with the Mettiki permit and DEP's review of it. In their reports, hydrologists Jay Hawkins, Tom Galya and George Gunn said



Mettiki's proposal to abate the acid drainage is "an experimental method ... which has not been successful elsewhere."

Mettiki and DEP had predicted the E Mine's discharge would need treatment for 17 years and then be clean. OSM experts projected the discharge could actually contain 30

times the legal limit of iron for decades to come.

Based on his staff's reports, Roger Calhoun, director of the OSM Charleston field office, launched an investigation of the Mettiki permit. Randy Huffman, director of the DEP Division of Mining and Reclamation appealed to Calhoun's boss, OSM regional director Brent Wahlquist. After that, officials from the Interior Department — of which OSM is a part — took control of the matter.

Under the 1977 federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, states are allowed to police their own mining industries. OSM is supposed to make sure the states do a good job. But exactly what steps OSM should take in monitoring state enforcement are widely debated. Since passage of the law, state regulators and the coal industry have managed to more strictly limit OSM's involvement.

In her Friday letter to Lovett, Interior's Watson said, "OSM does not retain 'veto' authority over state permit decisions."

Lovett said he plans to challenge the Interior Department decision. "OSM professionals documented the problems with the mine plan and the Department of Interior won't let the experts in OSM do anything about it," Lovett said. "It is at least very encouraging that the expert staff at OSM agreed with us, and we intend to pursue other remedies."

Editor's note: this article originally appeared in The Charleston Gazette.

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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.

After Six Years of Labor, the Deck Chairs on the Titanic Are Satisfactorily Arranged

AGENCIES PRODUCE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDY ON MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL MINING

By John McFerrin

The United States Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources have released a final Environmental Impact Study of the impact of mountaintop removal strip mining. The study provides a blueprint for streamlining the review of new mining permits. It makes no recommendations of how we might reduce the environmental impacts of those



permits.

The study began as part of the December, 1998, settlement of litigation designed to curb the practice. At the time, the study was, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, designed "to consider developing agency policies ... to minimize, to the maximum extent practicable the adverse environmental effects" of mountaintop removal.

At the time the parties, or at least the plaintiffs, assumed that the agencies would only allow wholesale environmental destruc-

tion out of ignorance. Once there was an objective study documenting environmental damage, the agencies would change policy and practice to prevent it. Were they ever wrong.

Along the way, the focus of the study changed. By October 2001, then-Deputy Interior Secretary Steven J. Griles, a former mining industry lobbyist, had ordered the project refocused toward "centralizing and streamlining coal mine permitting."

Although it took almost seven years—five years longer than the original requirement—the study did document the environmental destruction caused by mountaintop removal mining. The study found that 1275 square miles of the study area had been or would be affected. It noted that 1200 miles of headwater streams were directly impacted and that 724 miles were covered by valley fills from 1985 to 2001.

The study recognized the importance of these headwater streams: "Headwater streams are generally important ecologically because they contain not only diverse invertebrate assemblages, but some unique aquatic species. Headwater stream also provide organic energy that is critical to fish and other aquatic species throughout an entire river. Ecologically, the study area is valuable because of its rich plant life and because it is a suitable habitat for diverse populations of migratory songbirds, mammals, and amphibians."

While recognizing the importance of headwater streams and their destruction by mountaintop removal, the final Environmental Impact Study does not recommend that we do anything about it.

Instead of recommending that we do something to minimize the environmental de-

struction that comes from mountaintop removal, the final Environmental Impact Study recommends that we shuffle responsibilities among agencies and work to coordinate ac-



tions of agencies so as to process permits more quickly.

In announcing the completion of the study, the agencies could not identify any specific examples of how the changes recommended in the study would limit environmental damage.

The final mountaintop removal study, along with the May 2003 draft report, is available online at www.epa.gov/region3/mtntop/.

BUMPER STICKERS

To get free *I ♥ Mountains bumper sticker(s)*, send a SASE to Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314. Slip a dollar donation (or more) in the SASE and get 2 bumper stickers. Businesses or organizations wishing to distribute free bumper stickers please send \$0.25 (includes postage) per sticker.

Mountaintop Removal Mining Up Close and Personal

To see mountain top removal up close and hear Larry Gibson's story about how he saved his mountain, visit Kayford Mountain south of Charleston. It is now almost totally surrounded by Mountaintop Removal. Bring a lunch—there is a picnic area on Larry's mountain. Just call Larry Gibson, (304) 586-3287 or (304) 549-3287 cellular. or Julian Martin, (304) 342-8989, Contact in advance to schedule a time and date.

MONONGAHELA FOREST HIKING GUIDE

Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

by Allen deHart & Bruce Sundquist

Published by the
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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, **Allen Dehart, Bruce Sundquist**, 7th Edition, with maps and many other enhancements by WVHC contributor **Jim Solley**

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Forty Year History of Highlands Conservancy Underway

Dave Elkinton, the Conservancy's third president, and a board member from 1970-1990, has begun the research for a history of the Conservancy. In explaining his plan to the board at the Fall Review, he indicated he plans to conduct interviews with key leaders from the entire period, research the Highlands Conservancy's archives, including those at WVU Regional Collection, and begin writing by Spring 2006. The history will focus on 10-12 key issues over time, as well as seek to understand how the Conservancy has been so successful. Publication, possibly in a book plus accompanying cd format, will be scheduled to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the incorporation of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy in January 1967. Revenues from the sale of the publication will belong to the Conservancy.

Current and past leaders are asked to preserve records in their possession, share their perspectives with him, and assist in locating other key contacts. Photos of the early days will be especially welcome, especially of leaders and members in action.

Dave welcomes correspondence and email and can be reached at:

Daveelkinton@hotmail.com

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HIKERS HOLE UP FOR THE WINTER

Now that the frost is on the pumpkin, the snow is on the ground, etc. the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's Mountain Odyssey is dwindling away for the winter. Last winter we had one snow shoe hike scheduled. This year there may be more winter outings although none has as yet been scheduled. If you are interested in leading or scheduling an outing, please contact the outings committee chair.

Just like last year, when the weather starts to warm up in the spring the hikers will emerge from hibernation, more outings will be scheduled, and the Mountain Odyssey will go on bigger and better.

Any outings that are scheduled during the winter will be announced in the *Voice* and on the web site as will the outings as they are scheduled in the spring.



Clockwise from upper left: Lodge at Cheat Mountain Club during sudden snowstorm. Photo by Dave Saville. Cindy Rank, Julian Martin, and Hugh Rogers. Photo by Jim Solley. Wolf Creek Sessions (Alice Fleischman, Mike Broderick and Keith & Joan Pitzer) whoops it up for the Saturday night dance. Photo by Jim Solley. Inspired by Dave Saville, Hugh Rogers suffers a moment of excess seriousness. Photo by Jim Solley.





Dave Saville presents Mary Wimmer with Governor Manchin's proclamation naming September as Wilderness Month. Photo by Jim Solley.



Rachel Bocchino was among the crowd on the dance floor Saturday night. Photo by Jim Solley



Treasurer Bob Marshall with his hand in the cookie jar as co-conspirator John McFerrin looks on. (above) Photo by Jim Solley.

BIG FUN AT THE FALL REVIEW

Hugh Rogers and Cindy Rank cut a rug at the Saturday night dance. (right) Photo by Jim Solley.



Upper Elk River In Environmental and Historical Danger

By Tom Shipley

The Elk Watershed needs attention. The success of Intrawest/Snowshoe Ski Resort has put serious pressure on the environment. The building boom was allowed without the proper infrastructure to handle the problem of human waste. Pocahontas County's proposed solution to this matter is to place a 1.5 million-gallon/day sewer treatment plant with four mammoth open sludge vats directly beside the Big Spring of Elk with accompanying effluent discharge and release pipes through a large and important cold-water spring along the riverbank. Considerable numbers of residents, while not opposed to the sewer system, are opposed to the placement of the sewer treatment plant and its effluent discharge location.

The DNR cautions that no known environmental study in the area has been conducted. An Indiana Bat study (performed 7 miles away) has been their singular requirement for 'endangered species'. The reproducing native trout, *Cambarus Elkensis* crayfish and others have not been considered.

A large portion of Snowshoe's water comes from Shavers Fork. Water from the Shavers Fork watershed will be dumped into the Elk watershed. The river system in Shavers Fork watershed is in jeopardy due to low water flows. As Snowshoe grows, more and more water will be taken. (inter-basin transfer). The Shavers Fork river system will be denied its source of much needed water. Should the effluent not be returned to its original source?

The Pocahontas County Commission appointed a 3-member board known as the Pocahontas County Public Service District to sort out local utility matters. These three men, all from Durbin (40 miles away), voted to place the sewer treatment plant on the Sharp farm along the Big Spring of Elk - site unseen. They relied on the due diligence of the engineering firm whom relied on the Department of Environmental Protection who relied on the Department of Natural Resources and Fish and Wildlife, etc. The very process put in place to protect our environment somehow overlooked the crucial native trout population. The engineering firm made no consideration of the trout in their design or placement of this facility...nor did the DEP require them to do so.

The proposed sewer treatment plant location on the historic Sharp farm (12 miles from Snowshoe) is situated by the Scenic Route 219 Bridge over the Big Spring of Elk River - a short distance from the Upper Elk. Immediately after this bridge is the home of Evva Shelton, a 65-year resident. She has used the spring just past

this bridge for her drinking water during her entire tenure. However Evva and her family have not been the only beneficiaries of its existence. According to Todd Petty, of West Virginia University, this dynamic cold-water spring by the Shelton home provides a refuge for the Upper Elk River native trout population. During periods of low or no flow this spring it provides the only source of water for the Upper Elk. The Big Spring of Elk, from the Route 219 Bridge to the point where the Elk River begins is the singular cold-water sanctuary for native trout and their reproduction during these low water periods. While reproduction occurs farther upstream, these areas are cut off from the Elk River in drought conditions and are unable to provide sustenance to the Upper Elk, one of West Virginia's premier fishing destinations.

Recent decisions by the Pocahontas County Public Service District to place the effluent discharge at this location is of concern. It requires digging directly through a vibrant cold-water spring with the very likely disruption of this crucial system. Karst hydrologist William Jones (chairman of the Karst Waters Institute) reports that the path for the effluent pipe risks disrupting the springs. "I would not want to be part of a project that has even a slight chance of disrupting that spring complex. Things happen fast on karst". Jones recommends a full year of data and observation for the spring system to be fully understood.

The experts agree that the Big Spring of Elk is a cold water system. It is a rare beast largely fed by cold-water springs. In contrast, Old Field Fork of Elk (joins Big Spring Fork to form the Elk River) is a warm water system, not fed by cold water springs. Petty knows of no trout reproduction in Old Field Fork. While the introduction of effluent anywhere in the Upper Elk brings one pause, the fact is Old Field Fork, as a warm water tributary, would be impacted far less from the warm sewer plant effluent. Adding warm effluent to the Big Spring of Elk just below the bridge at Route 219 will severely stress the native trout. If they do survive, breeding will likely stop. In addition to temperature issues, metals and sediment from the effluent and from construction along Big Spring of Elk will contribute to the potential demise of the native reproducing trout and the imperiled crayfish, *Cambarus Elkensis*. Whitney Stocker, discoverer of this West Virginia endemic species, cautions that the spring at Evva Shelton's is the only reason the *Cambarus Elkensis* survive. Petty's long term observations of the Big Spring of Elk in regard to the native trout population

and its contribution to the Upper Elk raises similar flags. The Evva Shelton spring, as the only source for cold-water flow on the Big Spring of Elk near the Upper Elk River, is irreplaceable.

Several sights away from the Big Spring of Elk have been considered and dismissed as too costly. We contend situating a sewer treatment plant, with its obligatory effluent discharge on the nearly pristine Big Spring of Elk will cost the State of West Virginia its premier fishing attraction; the Upper Elk and its headwaters.

We understand that the trout will benefit from a sewer system. An effort by Trout Unlimited to support the sewer system resulted in a letter of general support to the West Virginia Public Service Commission. We have asked that this letter be amended with a caveat against placing the sewer treatment plant and effluent discharge as situated on the crucial Big Spring of Elk. The treasured Upper Elk River fishery depends on it.

The sewer plant location on the historic Sharp farm is a 9-acre field surrounded by the 100-year flood plain on one side and Scenic Route 219/55 on the other. It is in a karst terrain with sinkholes, underground water channels and caves. One accidental spill and the groundwater for miles will be ruined for decades. The field is an Indian burial site, a burial place for two unknown Civil War soldiers and Mary Eleanor Sharp and William Luther Sharp (died in Civil War). Their graves are unmarked and will be bulldozed. A 120-year continuously running Sharp's Country Store and recently restored farmhouse bed and breakfast are across the road from this field. Their continued existence is in question.

The Upper Elk River, The Elk River watershed, The Shavers Fork watershed and the Sharp Farm need your help! Please take the time to contact your representatives, local and national.



Join Now !!!

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 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
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Membership categories (circle one)

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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!**

PROPOSED OR OPERATING WIND FARMS

Keeping up with all the different wind farms— operating, permitting, proposed, and thought about—is enough to keep your head spinning like, well, a wind turbine. There is no central listing of wind farms unless one makes one’s own from newspaper stories or the files of the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC). Here is such a listing, courtesy of Frank Young.

There are currently 3 permitted wind farms in West Virginia, but only one is actually constructed and operating. The other two are still being designed and/or seeking financing.

1- Mountaineer Wind Energy Center (MVEC) on Backbone Mountain in Tucker County began operating in December, 2002. It consists of 44 turbines of 1.5 megawatts capacity each. The MVEC wind farm can easily be seen from and is intersected at two points by U.S. route 219, about 4 miles both north and south of the town of Thomas in Tucker County

2- Since 2002 U.S. Wind Force has had a WV Public Service Commission (PSC) permit for an approximately 200 turbine wind farm near Mt. Storm in Grant County. But this project seems to be stalled by inability of the company to find financing or a buyer for this wind farm project.

3- In 2003 NedPower Mt. Storm, LLC was granted a WV PSC permit to construct and operate a wind farm of approximately 150 to 200 wind turbines with a capacity of 1.5 to 2.0 megawatts each, to be located on the Allegheny Front (eastern continental divide), southeast of the community of Mt. Storm, in Tucker and Grant counties. Recently NedPower announced that it had sold this project to Shell Energy Co., and that construction was expected to start this fall, and to be completed and operational by December, 2006.

There are three other wind farm proposals in various stages of development- one each in Pendleton, Randolph and Greenbrier counties.

Invenergy, Inc. has said that it expects to make application to the WV PSC for an approximately 130 turbine wind farm in a rather remote, previously coal mined part of northern Greenbrier County this year.



Greenbrier River Watershed Association Looking for Outreach Coordinator

Environmental organization seeks a leader to do community education, direct water monitoring program and recruit volunteers. This is an Americorps Vista position which will last at least one year. Please email grwa@peoplepc.com or phone 304 647 4792 for more information.

Finding the Silver Lining**HIGH GAS PRICES A GOOD THING**

Comment by Dave Cooper

Think badly of me if you want to, but I've actually enjoyed watching gasoline prices rise to their current unprecedented levels. When the local TV news crew does a story on higher gas prices at the pump, I smile as the owners of gas-hog trucks and big SUV's whine and complain to the reporters. I laugh when I see a Hummer with a "For Sale" sign in the window. To tell you the truth, I cheer for rising gas prices like most people do for rising stock prices.

Is this just my contrary nature? Do I get pleasure from watching working people struggle to pay their bills? Am I just being a smug, self-satisfied, I-told-you-so environmentalist smart-aleck?

Actually, there are several good reasons for all Americans, not just environmentalists, to applaud higher gasoline prices.

First, there is nothing that will hurt the popularity of our oil-industry-controlled President Bush and Vice President Cheney more than skyrocketing gas prices. Bush's poll ratings are plummeting as fast as gas prices are going up. That's good news for the planet, good for our relations with other countries, and good for our children's health. Americans are finally waking up to the years of deception, dishonesty, and disregard for the future of the human race that this administration has shown. Americans know that both Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney came from the oil industry, and they will hold these two directly responsible for the prices at the pump.

And wait until Americans learn that the new Bush-Cheney Energy Bill provides billions of dollars in subsidies and tax write-offs to oil companies that are already swimming in an ocean of profits. Then the fur is really going to fly.

Secondly, higher gas prices are good because people are starting to trade in their big SUV's and pickups for more fuel efficient vehicles. That's good for the environment, and it's good for public safety. Smaller vehicles pollute less, so our air will be cleaner. There will be less greenhouse gases contributing to global warming, the greatest challenge that mankind will face in this century. And our roads will be safer without enormous SUV's flipping over every time a gust of wind blows across their bow. As the driver of a small car, I will definitely appreciate being able to see down the road without the obnoxious derriere of a Chevy Suburban blotting out the sun.

And more people will walk and bicycle to work to save money. That's good for heart health, good for our waist lines, and good for worker productivity.

Third, people are driving less. And they are spending less. That means less traffic, less demand for farmland to be developed into distant sprawling subdivisions, and less profits for Wal-Mart, which recently posted its smallest quarterly profit gain in 4 years.

Finally, higher gas prices will wake people up to the reality that oil supplies are indeed limited. Maybe we as a nation will get serious about planning for a future with less oil. Maybe we will get serious about renewable energy and conservation – finally. Maybe in three years we will elect a president with a clear vision for a self-sufficient country powered by clean energy, instead of dirty, antiquated fossil fuels like coal and petroleum.

Yes, I do have sympathy for those struggling with high gas bills. But there is a solution, and it's as close as the daily newspaper classified section.

You don't have to buy an expensive new hybrid to start saving big on gas. While the Toyota Prius is a great car, and owners give it rave reviews, it is rather expensive, and the current high demand means

little room for negotiating price at the dealer.

Instead, I suggest to anyone worried about high gas bills that there are many small, comfortable, well-made used cars available such as the 2000 Honda Civic, which gets around 35 mpg on the highway. Or the 2000 Toyota Corolla, which gets 38 mpg on the highway with a 5-speed transmission, and 37 with an automatic, according to the EPA website www.fueleconomy.gov

Or if you want a domestic car, there is the 2000 Ford Escort, which gets about 35 mpg. Or General Motors' Saturn SL, which gets over 40 mpg with a 5 speed standard transmission.

All of these vehicles are available second-hand for less than \$10,000, and the used Saturns are dirt-cheap (I've had very good luck with my 99 Saturn SL, although it is a rather small car). Note that some of these used cars get even better gas mileage than the new Honda Accord Hybrids.

For those who drive a big SUV because they feel safer: I'm afraid you are deluding yourselves. SUV's are much more prone to rollovers than small cars. SUV's handle poorly in emergency maneuvers. And SUV's are extremely hazardous for pedestrians. If you really want a safer car for your family, get a Volvo.

Finally, for those who really want to smile at the gas pump, consider getting a scooter! I bought a battered old Yamaha Jog for \$500 this spring, and it's really fun to ride. It goes 45 miles per hour, gets over 50 mpg, and it makes running errands fun instead of a chore. And best of all: no license, and no insurance required. And the chicks really dig it.

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BACKPACKING THE CRANBERRY WILDERNESS

By Mike Juskelis

First I need to thank two people: Dimitri Tundra, for sharing his knowledge of the Cranberry Wilderness with me as well as his maps and GPS Data (It made the outing easy.) and Susan Chappel who pre-scouted our first night's camp and led us to it. Thank you both! Susan joined us to take us to our first night's camp.

The hike down the North Fork Trail was both easy and rewarding. At higher elevations we walked through a beautiful Red Spruce Forest. As we dropped down into the valley the evergreens gave way to birch, cherry and oak.

In a couple of miles the old forest road began to parallel the stream itself, never leaving its banks again except to avoid a couple of blown-out spots along the bank. We made camp, a secluded spot hidden in a rhododendron thicket right along the bank of the stream, around 5:00 o'clock. After taking a break Sue said good-bye and we continued setting up our tents and collecting fire wood. The high-lights of the evening were the tidbits of freshly baked pizza (Yes, made right at fire's side, even making the dough from scratch) prepared by D.B. We spent the rest of the trip trying to develop a backpacking pizza oven to bring on the next trip. That night we were drenched by the light of a silver moon.

We hiked about 11 miles on the second day, first walking along FR76 and the very scenic Cranberry River and then climbing steeply up the Birch Log Trail to the North/South Trail. We turned east on that Ridge trail for about a mile and then descended on the Laureley Trail to the Middle Fork of the Williams River.

It was only about 3:30 when we reached the ford, so we hiked down to the confluence of Big Beechy Run and camped at that magnificent spot. Surprisingly, only a pair of backpackers was camped at a small site below the falls so we were able to spread out in an area big enough for several groups of hikers.

The real hallmark of the outing was the final day. We broke camp a little before 9:00 and followed an old railroad grade that paralleled

the river and all of its rapids, falls and pools. About 2 miles up we startled a black bear which immediately shimmied up a tall tree. For some reason it immediately decided that was not the place to be and plunged head first to the ground with a thud, landing on its shoulder. Before we could respond it was back on its feet and charging up the very steep hill.

We hiked past Hell For Certain Run and then Slick Rock, a huge flat rock that runs about 30 yards down stream. Even though we were only about 1.5 miles from the cars we took a nice lunch at a small campsite just before the trail veered away from the river and climbed back up to meet the North Fork Trail. By 2:00 we had completed our little excursion and were back at the cars. Next year will do another loop using the Big Beechy and Little Fork Trails to connect with the Middle Fork of the Williams River. I'm sure it will be just as scenic.



THOUGHTS FROM PRESIDENT HUGH

(Continued from p. 2)

the opportunities for growth are much greater. Big or little, though, they only reproduce in the tributaries, and they require temperatures below 20 degrees C. Their range is the whole watershed. Any barrier to fish migration, or to cold water inputs from the tributaries, further impairs their restoration.

The Shavers Fork Coalition had obtained a Columbia Natural Resources/NiSource Environmental Challenge Fund grant to examine the effect of the 100-year-old railroad on cold water inputs. Collaborating with the DNR, volunteers had doggedly inventoried culverts, installed temperature loggers in, above, and below tributaries, and collected data over seventeen weekends. None of it would have been possible without the cheerful cooperation of the railroad's current lessee, the Durbin and Greenbrier Valley RR, which shuttled volunteers to their far-flung sites on the "Cheat Mountain Salamander."

Now we know which "hanging" culverts discourage fish migration. We know where blockages cut off the tributaries and lateral seeps that contribute cold water to the main stem. Through the West Virginia University research, we also know where fish retreat in hot summer weather. In the short run, enhancing such refugias would be more ef-

fective than any attempt to lower the overall temperature of the river. Bridges, culverts, even "horizontal wells" to re-open old seeps—the projects are easy to find; not so, the money to do them.

In the long run, the Partners' concern is the health of the entire watershed—and that brings us back to the red spruce which "drives" this ecosystem, according to The Nature Conservancy's Minney. He had brought black and white aerial photos from the 1940's, 50's, 60's, and 70's, which we compared with a recent color photo. As late as the 1980's there remained significant spruce preserves, but most fell just before the Forest Service gained title. Still, some smaller islands, home to the endangered Northern West Virginia flying squirrel, have begun to spread. On the old strip mines above Cheat Bridge, red spruce is infiltrating the non-native conifers that were planted for reclamation.

From Snowshoe to Cheat Bridge and down to Bemis, the upper Shavers Fork watershed has become a high-altitude lab for red spruce and river restoration. The Forest Service's draft management plan includes both a new prescription for this purpose and a Cheat Mountain Wilderness. Over objections, the DNR suspended its stocking program to permit the brook trout research. Its own stream surveys and sedimentation studies are continuing.

When the Partners get together beside the river, the excitement is contagious. In spite of all obstacles past and present, Cheat Mountain has become again the "veritable realm of enchantment" that Ambrose Bierce remembered.

CIRCUMANBULATING TROUT RUN VALLEY

By Mike Juskelis

This was to be a 27 mile circumnavigation of the Trout Run Valley over 3 days.

We assembled at the Wolf Gap Campground and were walking up Mill Mountain by 10:30. The air was cool but heavy with humidity. The visibility was "zero". Instead of being a day full of vistas, this would be more like a walk in the woods, enjoying the trailside colors of fall as we went along.

We stopped at the overlooks for our breaks and lunch, pretending to see Trout Run Valley to the west and the Shenandoah Valley and Massanutten Mountain to the east. Since we were so socked in, we got to camp by 3:30. We had hiked about 8 miles. The fog was really getting thick and you could almost taste the rain in the clouds. We quickly went about setting up our tents and getting our gear stowed away. As I zipped the fly of my tent closed, it started to rain. We put on our rain gear and went about gathering firewood. Despite the constant rain, Chardonnay was able to get a good, robust fire going. The rain relented after about an hour and the clouds began to break up as the sun set.

The rest of the evening was spent eating by the fire and helping Chardonnay relieve himself of some of the excess weight he had been carrying in his pack.

The next day was the exact opposite of the first. We awoke to a wonderful deep blue and orange sunrise. While some pattered around camp, others grabbed their breakfast and enjoyed the view at the Pond Run Vista as we ate. The sun shown brightly on Halfmoon Mountain. We would be there soon enough.

We broke camp and headed down the trail. In a short 0.5 miles we were at the junction of the Halfmoon lookout Spur. We stashed our packs and slack packed up to the top.

The views of Long Mountain, Mill Mountain and Tibbet Knob were grand. Furthermore, the colors in the valley were pretty intense. Last week we had missed the fall peak in the Cranberry by about a week. I think this time we hit it on the head!

We returned to our gear and proceeded down to Halfmoon Run where we topped off our water before proceeding across the base of Halfmoon Mountain to



Doc takes in a view of Long Mountain from high atop Halfmoon Lookout Photo by Mkie Juskelis

Trout Run. We had a leisurely Lunch at a nice campsite along the water before climbing up the north side of Long Mountain. Since the last scouting report I had gotten from a PATC friend indicated that the next camp would be dry, we collected water at a clear stream about one mile out from the day's final objective. We arrived at the clearing snuggled under Ben's Ridge around 5:00. Another 11 miles down!

We set up camp without fear of precipitation. A quick scouting trip determined that the stream that was dry the previous week had been totally rejuvenated. Another night was spent relaxing by the fire and finishing off

Chardonnay's excess baggage. One by one we drifted off to bed, weary from the day's long trek.

We awoke to the sound of light drizzle on our tents. Reluctantly we got up, ate and got ready for the final 8 miles of the trip. By the time we broke camp, the rain had stopped for the most part but a low ominous ceiling hung over for the rest of the day. Surprisingly all we had to deal with were a few bouts of light drizzle and the never ending climb up the backside of Devil's Hole Mountain. Once on top we quickly reached a county road which we used to connect with the Tibbet Knob Trail and the final leg of our trip. We had a quick lunch at that trail head but were soon on the trail again. The dampness was biting and the ceiling seemed to be getting lower ... only 2.5 miles to go before we were back at the cars!

Fortunately we made it to the peak and were able to enjoy a nice view despite the threatening weather. We then put our packs back on and scurried down (more like slid on our butts!) down the front of the knob to something more closely resembling a trail. The remaining 1.5 miles was mostly downhill with one small climb over a rocky sub-summit which provided even more views of Mill and Sluice mountains. We made it back to the cars by 2:30, pretty much dry and in good spirits. After freshening up and downing some of the donuts I had left in my car, we said our good-byes and headed back to reality.

It didn't dawn on me until I sat down to write this that this outing brings an end to another great West Virginia outing season. I have to admit I'm a bit tired but you know what? I'm all ready planning an even better schedule for next year. I hope my fellow leaders feel the same way. I can't wait for 2006!

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:

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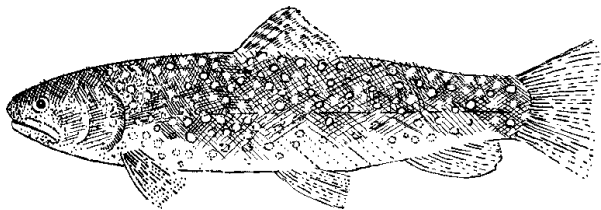
We now have I [heart] Mountains long sleeve shirts in sizes M,L, XL. The shirt is heavy cotton and white with blue lettering. The heart is red. \$15 total by mail. Send sizes wanted and check made out to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy to:

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MARYLAND COUNTS ITS FISH

By Don Gasper from *The Bay Journal*

A recent report by Maryland's D.N.R. described trout streams. This fine work grew out of concern for acidifying streams. Western Maryland gets more Acid Rain than anywhere else. (W. Va. shares this with them.) The study was funded by the State Legislature through a



That's 1

surcharge on all utility bills. Streams are shown as becoming more acid. Mountain trout streams are particularly at risk.

'The brook trout is the most abundant sport fish found in Maryland's freshwater streams. But it might not have much of a future in many parts of the state.

The Maryland Biological Stream Survey estimated that about 318,000 brook trout live in state streams today. But that may be only about a tenth of the number found a few centuries ago. Trout require cold, clean, undisturbed streams. Much of their habitat has been lost since Colonial days.

Today, according to the survey, streams with good habitat conditions average 599 brook trout per mile. If that number were multiplied by the nearly 5,000 miles of streams in the Piedmont and mountain portions of the state - which historically would have been suitable for brook trout - Maryland streams would have once contained nearly 3 million brook trout, according to an estimate by Paul Kazyak, a Department of Natural Resources biologist.

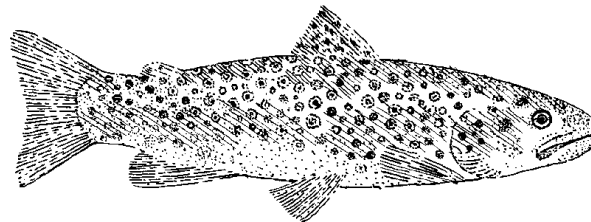
Instead, brook trout are only found in portions of seven of 17 river basins in the state. What's happened to brook trout habitat? In a word, development.

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.

The survey never found brook trout in watersheds having more than 2 percent impervious surfaces - things like roads, parking lots and roof tops. In fact, brook trout were only rarely seen in watersheds with more than 0.5 percent impervious surfaces. For reference, a two-lane road running through a square mile is equivalent to 0.5 percent impervious surface."

Brook trout loss is caused by temperature and sediment. Because impervious surfaces collect heat on hot summer days, the rain hitting them is raised to warmer than normal temperatures. When it runs off roads and parking lots, it can raise the temperature of small streams many degrees.



That's 2

Brook trout require cold streams. In Maryland, the survey never found one in streams warmer than 75 F (23 C). In stream reaches with such maximum temperatures where warmer water minnows are competitively favored, the creek chub replaces brook trout. Brown trout do this too. Brown trout are found in watersheds with up to 5% impervious surfaces. Although brown trout are not as acid tolerant as brook trout, brown trout can tolerate stream temperatures that regularly get up to 78 F (26 C) for a few hours.

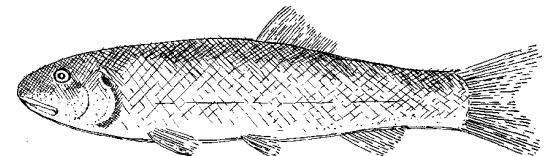
Both trout lay eggs in the stream bottom where they incubate over winter to emerge in March. They are easily smothered by sediment deposits over the long winter. (All other fish spawn in summer and their eggs hatch in just 3 weeks.) As impervious surfaces increase

with settlement there is more flooding and sediment generated from stream bank and bottom scour and from surface disturbance. Not only are trout eggs smothered, but fish hiding places in the bottom are filled with sand, and getting out of the current is very important during the winter.

Blacknose dace is the most common species in Maryland. They estimate today this cool water, acid intolerant minnow averages 1,950 individuals per mile - and 11.6 million in total. It is the most common fish in W. Va. also - certainly in steeper reaches. West Virginia shares other common fish species the survey mentions: the sculpin or mudler minnow, rosieside dace, bluntnose minnow, and the creek chub.

Maryland-wide no stream with over 15% impervious cover (this is low density development) was ever found to rate "good" considering its fish and bottom characteristics and bottom fauna. Those rated "good" had only 4% settlement. Streams with forested streamside cover were colder and had better stream quality scores. The wider the border, the better the quality. They found tree borders on 58% of Maryland's stream miles, but no border on 28%.

They did find 18% of Maryland streams



That's 3

to be "acid sensitive". This generally means suffering from the impacts of Acid Rain. These had an average of 135 fewer fish per mile than comparable richer buffered streams - and they found 17 species were absent from comparable reaches of acid sensitive streams. (They found 3% of Maryland's stream miles to be effected by acid mine drainage.)

BROCHURES

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.

WHAT HAMPSHIRE COUNTY GOVERNMENT REFORM MEANS FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Opinion by Michael Hasty

In September, some members of the bipartisan Committee to Reform Hampshire County Government, including myself, filed suit against the Speaker of the WV House of Delegates and the Senate President.

We took this action because of the Legislature's failure, in both the 2004 and 2005 regular sessions, to pass a bill setting up a referendum in Hampshire County to allow county citizens to vote on changing the form of our county government. This referendum is mandated in Article IX, Section 13 of the West Virginia Constitution, which says that if ten percent of a county's voters sign a petition to "alter, modify or reform" the county commission, the county gets to vote on the change.

This is the first time in West Virginia history that the Legislature has failed to respond to a legitimate petition from a county, and write a referendum for the county's citizens to vote on.

In early 2003, over 1100 Hampshire County voters — more than 10 percent of the voters — signed a petition to change the form of our county government, from a 3-member county commission, elected at large, to a county "tribunal," with members elected from each voting district. There are currently eight voting districts in Hampshire County.

From the beginning, this change has been opposed by most of the county's political establishment. After the petition was sent to the Legislature, this opposition was joined by elected officials statewide.

The reason the Legislature has offered for refusing to act on our petition is that the proposal to elect county officers by district, rather than at large, is "unconstitutional."

But in their response to our lawsuit, the House Speaker and Senate President have implicitly admitted that their own position is unconstitutional, because they have asked the court to overturn a 1981 WV Supreme Court decision, Taylor County Commission v. Spencer. In this decision, the Supreme Court said, "The framers of [the WV Constitution] and the people of the state wisely chose to leave the ultimate determination of the form of government which would best serve the interests of the county in the hands of those most directly affected by it: the people of the county."

Shortly before we filed the lawsuit, I published an op-ed piece in the August 17 Charleston Gazette explaining our action. I also sent a copy of the article to some of my environmentalist friends around the state, for their reaction.

I was surprised by one response. My friend couldn't understand why we wanted to expand the size of our county governing structure. I replied that decentralizing government — moving government closer to the people — is a very "green" idea. (It's even one of the major principles of the national Green Party.)

Her email reply was very interesting. She wrote, "I suppose decentralization is 'very green'—but it seems to me that the issues are mostly the same everywhere, so I really have not seen the point of even having the 3 commissioners or 134 legislators be from different areas—except that you end the tyranny of the most populous places electing all the reps. But what cure is there for the fact that centrists elect all the reps—and right-wingers, because of their alliance with monied interests?...People who are left of center typically are around a third of the electorate, so we get 0% of the representation, virtually 100% of the time."

As the framers of both our state and national constitutions recognized, democracy works best in a small group. That is the basis of

republican, representative government. The problems that we face today, both as a nation and as a county, stem from the fact that our governing systems were constructed for much smaller populations than we now have. When the US Constitution was written, the US population was 3.9 million people. When the WV constitution was adopted, Hampshire County's population was less than half what it is today. Our political problems are often problems of scale.

Our constitutions' framers gave us the means to change our governments to adapt to changing circumstances. What inspired the members of the CRHCG to adopt the specific alterations in our petition — that is, to elect members of the county's governing body by district — is a complaint that we heard all over the county. People didn't feel that they had adequate representation on the county commission.

By moving county representation down to the local neighborhood level — by decentralizing government — we get government closer to the people. One of the deepest secrets of American history is that the governing class has always worried about giving too much power to average citizens. This would explain why political establishments all over the state have lined up against our effort to change the Hampshire County government.

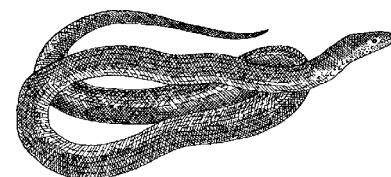
But what could such a change mean for environmentalists? First, by getting government closer to the people, government will (theoretically, at least) be more responsive to the interests of the average citizen. A poll several years ago found that a majority of West Virginians describe themselves as "environmentalists." The average person is more concerned about the environment than the average politician, who is generally more concerned about the interests of his corporate campaign contributors.

A second advantage for the environmental community in our proposed change is that it is easier for activists to organize a small group than a large population. If we are electing representatives by district in Hampshire County, we only have to reach approximately 1500 voters, rather than nearly 12,000 in a countywide at-large election. So it will be easier to target our appeal to particular districts where local environmental issues may be more important.

The third environmental advantage in our proposal is more philosophical. One of the more disturbing qualities of modern American culture is that Americans have become separated from the land, and from their "sense of place." Whereas when America was founded, most people were farmers, today fewer than 2 people in a hundred fit that description. This destruction of the agricultural economy and culture has had terrible social effects, which have been documented in many academic studies and which can be seen firsthand in Hampshire County and other rural areas.

My personal hope is that, by giving people at a neighborhood level more say in their government, this localized empowerment will have the effect of opening their eyes to what is going on around them in their immediate environment and local ecology, and thus restoring a sense of their place in the world.

And by restoring our sense of place, perhaps we can begin to restore the battered institution of American democracy.



BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

By John McFerrin, Secretary

The Board meeting featured the past, present, and the future. The past came in the form of a presentation by Dave Elkinton on his project of recording the first forty years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. He made a desultory start a few years ago but other projects got in the way. Now he is back, reading old issues of The Highlands Voice, interviewing people, and generally working hard on the project.

The present came in the form of the issue reports, reports by committees on what is happening now. Most immediate is the proposed revised management plan for the Monongahela National Forest. We had had presentations on the proposal the previous evening and the Public Lands Committee had been working on this for months and months so we were all primed. We are also eyeball to eyeball with the deadline for comments (November 14).

Administrative Assistant Dave Saville reported that membership was up to at least 1,800 members. Since people are always joining while others are dropping out, the membership is fluid. Dave can be sure that membership is at least 1,800 and might easily be 2,000.

On mining matters, Cindy Rank reported that we made progress in persuading the Office of Surface Mining to review the permit at the Mettiki mine although people higher up in the Office of Surface Mining



could reverse that decision. [They did; see story on p. 3 of this issue of the Voice.] She also reported on the status of various litigation the Conservancy is involved in. We had sued to prevent the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from approving valley fills based upon a nationwide general permit which allows a minimal review of each permit. Cindy reports

that the Corps is now doing individual permits; these produce more paper but the analysis is not much different.

Frank Young reported on the status of various wind projects. As part of the report, the Board voted to oppose the Beech Ridge project in Greenbrier County on the basis of the inability of that project (and the wind industry in general) to solve the problem of bat and bird kills.

The future came in Don Garvin's presentation on what the Environmental Council's lobby team plans to work on during the 2006 legislative session. It hopes to be able to focus on (a) renew-

able energy and a comprehensive energy policy; (b) sludge impoundments; and (c) stormwater and sediment. This is in addition to efforts in opposition to environmentally damaging initiatives that may arise.

Treasurer Bob Marshall announced that the Finance Committee is working on the budget for 2006. All requests for money that we want included in the budget must be to the Committee by Thanksgiving.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS ELECTED

At the Annual Meeting of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy held on October 22, three of the five Board members whose terms had expired were re-elected to new two year terms. Those were Carter Zerbe, George Beetham, and Barbara Weaner.

New to the Board are Perry Bryant and Buff Rodman. Both are veterans of the Conservancy although in different contexts.

Perry served on the Board for several years although he has not done so in at least a decade. He lives in Charleston.

Buff is the scion of Sayre and Jean Rodman, long time Conservancy members and leaders. She grew up in the Conservancy, routinely attended Conservancy events, and now dons the mantle of leadership her parents wore so well. She lives in Pittsburgh, more or less.

JEAN RODMAN TAKES THE REINS AT THE PITTSBURGH CLIMBERS

Jean Rodman is the new President of the Pittsburgh Climbers. Although the position provides no rides on Air Force One, Secret Service protection, weekends at Camp David, or direct line to the Kremlin, it does entitle her to meet, palaver, confer, and conduct high level diplomacy with such presidents, world leaders, or whatever who are willing to come to Pittsburgh for such activities. She has consistently denied all rumors that meetings of the Pittsburgh Climbers will henceforth begin with the playing of "Hail to the Chief."

Although final campaign financing reports are not yet in, preliminary reports are that Ms. Rodman received no campaign contributions and spent no money upon her election campaign. This equals the most (and least) sum ever expended in seeking this office.

In a related development, Buff Rodman has assumed the office of Snake Princess for the Pittsburgh Climbers.