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The Highlands Voice

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CONSERVANCY HISTORY BOOK READY TO HIT THE STREETS

By Dave Elkinton

Seven years ago, I first broached the idea to the Conservancy Board of Directors of assembling a history of the Highlands Conservancy. At that time, I thought that the research and writing could be completed and published in conjunction with the Conservancy's 35th anniversary in 2002. Everyone with whom I shared this idea was supportive, and many provided helpful suggestions. Shortly thereafter, my wife and I moved to a new state and I began a new job, thus curtailing any leisure time to implement this idea.

In 2005, after moving once again, I quietly retired and re-opened my Conservancy project. This time I would try to produce a volume in time for the Conservancy's 40th anniversary in 2007. I am happy to say that the second wave of activity was more productive than the first. In September, *Fighting to Protect the Highlands: The First Forty Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy* will be published.

The book includes a foreword by Ken Hechler, whose years of public service began

with World War II, continued under President Truman, a distinguished career in the U.S. House of Representatives, and was capped by another decade in state government, serving as Secretary of State. During the last forty years, he and the Conservancy have seldom, if ever, been on opposite sides of environmental issues. It was one of my highest pleasures the day he agreed to write the foreword.

As regular readers of *The Highlands Voice* are aware, during the last two years I have shared many "side-bar" articles with them as I conducted my interviews of past and present Conservancy leaders, and searched through the more than 6700 articles that have appeared in the *Voice* since its inception in 1969. I hope these articles have introduced newer members to people like Lou Greathouse, Tom King, Bob Burrell, Bob Broughton, Bill Bristor, Bob & Lucille Harrigan, Sara Corrie and others. For the old-timers, I hope these profiles rekindled past memories.

I am pleased to say that the book will contain over twenty profiles of Conservancy leaders. Some, like Dave Saville, Hugh and

Ruth Blackwell Rogers, Frank Young, John McFerrin, Julian Martin, Peter Shoenfeld, Cindy Rank, Helen McGinnis, Bruce Sundquist and Buff Rodman are current leaders and better known to the current membership. Others from the distant past like Fred Anderson, Jim Moorman and Nick Zvegintzov will be only known by a few. Linda Cooper, Joe Rieffenberger, and Larry George will be among those known to many since their involvement continued until fairly recently.

Over the last two years, I have profited greatly from the involvement of current board members. All nine chapters have been read and reviewed by at least three people. Long-time newspaper editor Bill McNeel read every word, providing a careful and comprehensive critique for which I, and the readers, will be grateful. Many facts were corrected, new information added, and perspectives modified. I hope the organization's collective memory and wisdom resulted.

It was Doug Scott, the guru of wilder-
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From the Heart of the Highlands

by Hugh Rogers

The Value of a Canyon

Ten years ago, we lost an opportunity to protect the Blackwater Canyon by bringing the remaining portion into public ownership. In the middle of the night, or at least in the middle of negotiations, Allegheny Power, the owner of thousands of acres on both sides of the Blackwater River, quit talking to the Forest Service and its allies and sold instead to a broker who immediately resold to Allegheny Wood Products.

A few years later, the power company attempted to redeem its reputation as a public-spirited organization by selling 250 acres to the state and donating 250 more to be added to Blackwater Falls State Park. The sale established a hefty value per acre that the company could cite in its tax return when it deducted the price of the donation.

Perhaps it's churlish to complain that a utility company did well financially when it did some good for the public. A more serious complaint has to do with the neighbors they brought into the canyon. First, Allegheny Wood Products filed plans for condominium developments. If carried out, those plans would profoundly diminish the natural resource that Senator Byrd once called "The Crown Jewel of West Virginia."

Was it a real threat? Or just another maneuver to jack up the price in case the Forest Service contemplated using its power of condemnation? It remains to be seen.

Next, during the winter of 1999-2000, the company took out timber from its 300 acres on the north side of the canyon between the rail-trail and the river. This was done by helicopter, not by the trail—which is shared down the middle by the company and the Forest Service over five and a half miles. Nevertheless, the company threatened to prosecute hikers, bikers, fishermen, or anyone who used the trail during the logging operation. A huge "No Trespassing" sign greeted trail users at the gate, never mind that by keeping to the uphill side any hiker would remain on public property. (Forty of us trekked down the canyon to make that point and emerged unscathed.)

The following year, Allegheny Wood was pushing the boundaries. Now the company claimed it was entitled to an easement on the Forest Service's side of the trail. It cited ANILCA, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, an omnibus bill that besides allotting Alaskan land also codified some general public land policies of the federal government. The relevant section provided guidelines for access through Forest Service land to private property that couldn't be reached otherwise.

Since the company had already established that its land was accessible by helicopter logging and by foot along its side of the trail, this claim seemed preposterous. Additional access was available through adjacent private land and across a bridge from the south side. Allegheny was not landlocked by the Forest Service. But the Forest Service accepted the claim: both in its scoping notice and in its notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, it declared that it could not refuse access.

In concert with many other groups, the Highlands Conservancy has repeatedly protested the reliance on ANILCA. Just recently, we have learned that the Forest Service agreed—without telling us, and

(Hugh talks more on p. 4)

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CELEBRATING (?)THE STRIP MINE ACT'S BIRTHDAY

By Cindy Rank

On August 3, 1977 President Jimmy Carter signed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). It was a compromise piece of legislation to be sure, but it also held promise for better protection of the soils and water and communities throughout the coal mining areas of the country.

Observers left the Rose Garden that day somewhat skeptical, but also hopeful that the most egregious offenses of previous decades of strip mining would be prevented in the future. Visions of coalfield communities safe from blasting, and a multitude of other abuses and left with land at least as productive as it was before the coal riches were extracted filled the air.

— As the 30th Anniversary of SMCRA dawns many are asking if those hopes and promises have been fulfilled?

West Virginia Congressman Nick Joe Rahall served on the conference committee that wrote the final version of the law and was present for the Rose Garden signing thirty years ago.

On July 25, 2007 Rahall held a Congressional oversight hearing to gather information and opinions from various interest groups about the successes and failures of SMCRA.

The full text of written testimony submitted by the various witnesses that spoke that day can be found on the Committee on Natural Resources website: www.resourcescommittee.house.gov under the link to "hearings".

The following is a brief overview of testimony presented by the four panelists who represented the citizen's viewpoint.

Joe Lovett (Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment in Lewisburg, WV) is known to readers of the VOICE for his many hours of representing Highlands Conservancy and other groups in a multitude of legal challenges since 1998.

After acknowledging SMCRA as "an imperfect but useful law," Joe proceeded to list and describe the many ways poor enforcement of the act has had devastating impacts on Appalachia. "Appalachian coal has world-wide effects: burning coal from only three Appalachian states (West Virginia, Kentucky, and Virginia) accounted for approximately 15% of the total CO₂ emissions generated in the entire United States from all fossil fuel sources (including petroleum) in 2001. Burning coal produces more CO₂ per BTU than any other energy source and now accounts for more than 50% of U.S. electric consumption.

"The local impacts of coal mining, particularly mountaintop removal mining, are just as devastating to the environment of the Appalachian region as coal burning is to the global climate.

"The coal-rich mountains of central Appalachia are home to generations-old communities and con-

tain beautiful hollows through which thousands of pristine and ecologically rich mountain streams flow. Mountaintop removal mining carelessly lays waste to our mountain environment and communities. The deforestation is not only an ecological loss, but a permanent blow to a sustainable forest economy in a region in desperate need of long-term economic development. Mountaintop removal has already transformed huge expanses of one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world into a moonscape of barren plateaus and rubble.

"Appalachian coal is "cheap" because OSM ignores its duty to enforce the Act and allows the coal industry to pass its costs onto workers, communities, local and state economies, and the environment. The mining industry naturally takes advantage of federal regulators' failure to enforce the law. One of the worst consequences of OSM's disregard for the law is the prevalence of mountaintop removal mines, large strip mines with attendant valley fills."

Walt Morris is another lawyer well-known to readers or the VOICE for his tireless efforts on our (and many other citizen groups) behalf since the 1980's.

Citing the Committee's report on the Act when it was first passed Walt focused on the role and importance of citizen participation as vital to the success of SMCRA:

The success or failure of a national coal surface mining regulation program will depend, to a significant extent, on the role played by citizens in the regulatory process. The State or Department of Interior can employ only so many inspectors, only a limited number of inspections can be made on a regular basis and only a limited amount of information can be required in a permit or bond release application or elicited at a hearing.... Thus in imposing several provisions which contemplate active citizen involvement, the committee is carrying out its conviction that the participation of private citizens is a vital factor in the regulatory program as established by the act.



What Congress had in mind?

Walt proceeded to list the broad range of public participation procedures meant to empower coalfield citizens to supplement governmental regulatory efforts and ensure effective oversight of approved state programs. Citing specific examples, he explained in some detail the current impairment of that participation, frequent stonewalling of citizen requests for information, the federal Office of Surface Mining's unwarranted deference to state regulators, the injustice of administrative review before state 'multiple interest' appeal boards, and the judicial misinterpretation of SMCRA's citizen suit provision. [The latter of course currently prevents citizens from challenging State regulatory programs in federal court and is the result of the infamous decision by the Fourth Circuit in our Bragg case re: Judge Haden's 1999 ruling to uphold the Buffer Zone Rule.]

Walt further urged the committee to consider and enact various amendments to restore the viability of public participation originally intended by the ACT.

Ellen Pfister, testifying for the Western Organization of Resource Councils is a rancher from the Bull Mountains of Montana who first testified to the Congressional committee in 1972 in support of Ken Hechler's bill to ban strip mining. After Ken's bill failed and with the later passage of SMCRA, Ellen -along with many others - hoped and believed that the law would be enforced. With her property the subject of an ongoing mining permit Ellen continues to be a steadfast voice for stronger enforcement of the law that so directly affects her. Perhaps the most succinct summary

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HUGH SPEAKS MORE (Continued from p. 2)

for somewhat dubious motives. Last October, Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson notified the Fish and Wildlife Service that he had determined that the company had access “adequate to provide for the reasonable use and enjoyment” of its property. Therefore, any access that the Forest Service provided out of the goodness of its heart would not be the direct cause of further logging that might follow; and therefore, any impacts to endangered species on Allegheny’s land would not be the Forest Service’s responsibility. (I haven’t stated this chain of reasons with statutory exactitude, but I hope you get the drift. The consequence is that neither Fish and Wildlife nor the Forest would have to consider any bats, flying squirrels, or special plants that might be taken out with the trees.)

As a general rule, an agency decision maker faced with a controversy would rather say, I had no choice. The devil made me do it! Or anyway Congress made me do it. But now we’re in the realm of discretion. Why would the Forest Service want to do it? Why would it agree to a reciprocal easement, which was the preferred alternative in its draft impact statement of December, 2005? The answer seems to be that Allegheny would fix the road—the road that is now a trail. In the words of Congressman Alan Mollohan, “this claim is basically an assertion that the trail must be destroyed in order for it to be saved.”

The Forest Service appears to have had second thoughts. I don’t mean the abandonment of ANILCA, but rather a belated willingness to ask the company a few pointed questions about their plans if the easement were granted. The draft impact statement had declared, “It is not anticipated that any additional width beyond the existing tread of the railroad grade as constructed would be necessary to accommodate either parties [sic] proposed activities.” The “tread” was six feet wide.

Nuts to that, said Allegheny. In a letter dated April 5 of this year, the company wrote that it would widen the road to ten to fifteen feet on each side of the center in curves, and somewhat less on the straight sections. Thus, a six-foot trail would become a thirty-foot haul road.

In June, the Forest Service invited further comment on the information it had received from the company. The Highlands Conservancy and our allies in this long-running struggle responded again. So did Congressman Mollohan. His letter criticized many inconsistencies in the service’s handling of this matter, and pointed out “other alternatives” to the reciprocal easement. “For example,” he wrote, “I am prepared to support and work for the enactment of funding for the Forest Service that would enable the agency itself to rectify whatever conditions there may be that inhibit the public’s recreational use of the trail.”

It comes down to a question of value. To the Congressman, as to our members, “the trail is highly valued” for both recreational use and historic appreciation. It seems absurd that we’d need to persuade the Forest Service, the public custodian of the trail. So far, though, this has been the agency’s position: “Although the recreational and heritage resource values are high in this area, they are not to the level needed to trigger condemnation”—or effective protection. We’re hopeful that they’re reconsidering, and we’re grateful for the Congressman’s offer.

SMCRA’S BIRTHDAY (Continued from p. 3)

of her testimony is the following snippet from her written submission.

“The three biggest failures in SMCRA are the failure to include the reclamation of the surface effects of longwall mining beyond the mine adit [i.e. face-up/opening] areas, the failure to anticipate the expansion of mountaintop removal and the failure to reclaim underground water resources. ...

“When it passed SMCRA, Congress did not foresee the damages that large scale longwall mining can do or the potential for explosion in size of mountaintop removal. In the West, surface mining removes the underground water aquifer - the coal seam. All of these mining methods are extremely damaging to water regimes. All of these damage the surface, but in different ways. Mountaintop removal is like beheading a person, and longwall mining and surface mining are like dying of liver or pancreatic



What Congress had in mind?

cancer. Beheading is much more spectacular and visual, but one is just as dead from cancer.

Brian Wright (Coal Policy Director with the Hoosier Environmental Council in Indiana) reiterated the belief that “in 1977, the US Congress decided that it would no longer allow the coalfields of this country to be treated as sacrifice zones and coalfield residents to be treated like second class citizens.”

He then recited a litany of examples from the Illinois River basin of instances where the regulatory agencies have failed to protect ground water and citizens’ rights under the law, and failed to address problems associated with longwall mining and the disposal of power plant waste in mines.

As did the other speakers on the panel, Brian recommended several suggestions to return much need muscle and teeth to SMCRA and the enforcement agencies.

Citizen and environmental groups across the nation will be making statements to both celebrate and attempt to revive the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act during this 30th Anniversary year of its passage. Their statements will no doubt reflect the same conflicted message delivered by the Citizen Panel at the July 25th oversight hearing,i.e. a message that contains a difficult mix of gratitude for what good has come from the Act and anger about the dismal failure of enforcement that has allowed water loss and contamination and impacts to the land and communities near mine sites never envisioned by the authors of SMCRA.

SCALING THE ROCKS AT NELSON ROCKS PRESERVE

By Susan Bly

As we crossed through the rock notch and hung suspended in air, we saw a sight that made our jaws drop. The cliff hanger should come later on in a story. Let us begin at the beginning.

Judy Smoot, Dave Jordahl and I began our cliffhanger episode in an uneventful manner on Friday evening, spending the night at Seneca Shadows campground. Saturday dawned bright and cool which gave us satisfaction in knowing that today would be a great day.

We drove down to Nelson Rocks Preserve, missing the road at first due to vandals removing the sign. A group of Boy Scouts from Marion, Ohio, were ahead of us, getting their gear together and then heading up the hill to the climbing site. We learned our climbing lesson from the owner of the Preserve. He explained the importance of being clipped in at all times. In a nutshell: the climber wears a climbing harness to which is attached a yoke lanyard, meaning two pieces of webbing with spring loaded carabiners at the ends of the webbing. The climber then ascends the rock face on steel rungs like a ladder and slides their clipped carabiners along a steel cable, stopping every few feet to unclip and clip around bolts in the rock.

With lessons in our head, we made our way to the base of the rock. Only to see that there were 15 Boy Scouts with leaders ahead of us. What to do? Instead of twiddling our thumbs, we followed the owner's wife up to one of the escape routes. These were created for folks who reconsider their macho desire to face their fear of heights and face reality instead. A Mama, I'm comin' home. We scooted back to our place in line, noticed that it hadn't gotten much shorter, and made a group decision to abandon ship for today. We'll be back tomorrow.

We drove a short distance up to the summit of North Fork Mountain and took a 5 mile out and back hike along the ridge top. North Fork Mountain is a superior backpacking trail offering grand views of Germany Valley with Roaring Plains behind it. We stopped at several of these overlooks, we ate lunch at one. We had front row seats of the limestone quarry action taking place below.

After our hike on the mountain, we decided to ascend the rock climber's land route at Seneca Rocks. See how real rock climbers did things. We climbed the steep hill and while resting, watched teams of climbers ascend the

rock slowly. Most had called it a day by then and were heading back down the hill. We continued to the crest of the rocks and enjoyed an evening view of the valley below. After a moment, our appetites called us back to our campsite.

Sunday morning was no less a gorgeous day, one to praise our Maker for. We headed back to Nelson Rocks to beat the crowds (only 6-8 people were scheduled for today). We loaded up our gear and headed to the rock base. Judy led the way as she has rock climbing experience, with Dave a close second behind her. I brought up the rear, taking my time absorbing the action and scenery and also photographing Judy and Dave's better side as they clipped and ascended the heights.

Judy was the first to arrive at and pass through the notch. She got a real thrill and gave us a verbal description of peering around the rock fin, looking for footing while gazing down at a 50 foot drop. My own experience was similar: as you peer through the notch, you get your first glimpse of the massive second rock fin about 100 feet away, towering in the sun creating shadows on the oak trees below. The next sight that meets your eyes is the 100 foot long suspension bridge between the fins. As if you have stepped into Nepal or some such exotic country.

After gaining confidence from swinging around the corner, the way to the bridge was clear sailing. I hung back a bit to watch Judy cross the shining bridge to the looming rock fin on the other side. We crossed one at a time so that another person's shaking wouldn't give the crossing person the heebie jeebies. The steel cable bridge flooring consisted of 4 inch wide planks spaced about 5-6 inches apart, enough so that you had to look down to watch your footing so that you wouldn't trip and then envision yourself hurtling into the treetops below (the reason for an escape route nearby).

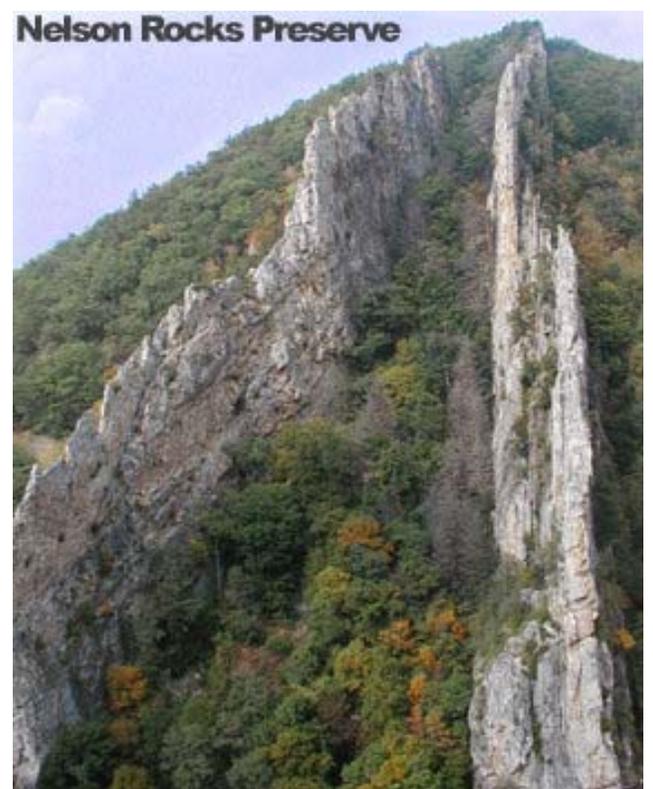
We headed towards the rock that appeared as a falcon head or an older gentleman with a beaky nose, safely on the other side. We crossed over the second fin and glided along a ledge for nearly the remainder of our trip.

We did pause at the Headwall, an optional piece of climbing straight up the rock fin to the crest and back down another ladder parallel to the first. Judy and Dave opted out but after a snack break, I just had to do it. I wanted my money's worth, plus more thrills. A couple of guys from DC were behind us so I had to

show them how it was done. The Headwall requires no fear of heights and ladder climbing strength. Nothing terribly strenuous other than nerves of steel some would say. The view from the top of the four foot wide fin was awesome to say the least. Sheer drops on either side. Safely clipped in to the steel cable ring, I enjoyed gazing down on the swinging bridge to the west, and my climbing companions to the east. I could have remained there for another hour but lunch was calling me.

I descended the Headwall to join the others and listen to the guide who was working this position tell the tale of the young lady who fell to her death right there on that safe ledge. We quickly headed on and eventually reached the end of the via ferrata. It was sad to leave that climbing experience but the guide said that folks could come here and do sport climbing, rigged into an already bolted route on the eastern side of the rocks. Is that the next adventure?

We ascended to an overlook and had a leisurely lunch before taking another trail to the rock fin summit. From here, you had a 360 degree view of the valley. The \$5 day pass to hike up here is well worth it the next time you are in the area. We eventually tore ourselves away and headed back home, stopping to hike to the High Knob fire tower with its outstanding views of WV and VA. Another excellent trip into God's country.



GLOBAL WARMING: IT'S HERE; DEAL WITH IT

By Allan Tweddle

Critics of the now indisputable fact of human induced global warming in general, and Al Gore in particular, routinely distort the message. In doing so, they do a real disservice to anyone who is trying to approach this question with an open mind.

Such critics also ignore what Mr. Gore always says: it is an economic opportunity that most rational and thinking business men would embrace.

If the crib were on fire, would he sit back and rely on the baby's fire retardant clothing or take corrective action? Hearing other editors who are trying to douse the fire might be a better course of action.

Writing about the global warming findings of scientists around the world, Donald Kennedy, Editor of Science Magazine stated: "Consensus as strong as this one that has developed around this topic is rare in science" "There's a better scientific consensus on this than on any issue I know, except maybe Newton's second law of dynamics" reported James Baker, former head of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, agreeing on how unusual the amount of consensus is, even when compared to the rules of physics.

The debate about climate change is essentially over in the world of science. Most of the world's business press has boarded that train might be because the scientific literature, the journals that require all writings to be submitted to rigorous peer reviews and verifiable evidential confirmation, and professional magazines have reported overwhelming evidence of man-made global warming? Those same scientists are advising us that there is still time; economically and technically viable technologies exist to begin to slow and reverse global warming. In fact, an independent detailed analysis was made of all 928 papers published in these professional Journals during a ten year period. Not one peer reviewed paper was ever offered refuting global warming with hard scientific evidence.

During the same period, a similar review of the mass media during the same period revealed a reporting of 53% skepticism. But those reports were of speeches and interviews with anyone with a PhD who would take a contrary point of view. No scientific data or peer reviewed analysis, just talk.

It has recently come out in required SEC filings that EXXON has been supporting some 40+ organizations that would dispatch speakers to refute global warming. They reportedly

offered \$10,000 to any PhD who would write an article or give a speech specifically refuting global warming. One professor took in \$125,000 in one year...even though he claimed to be unpaid and was just doing his professional duty to warn the public. EXXON just recently announced that they were abandoning this practice, and admitted to the existence of global warming!

Global warming is occurring due to human activity. It is particularly due to the injection into the upper atmosphere and the oceans of excessive amounts of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases (GHGs), primarily from the burning of fossil fuels. Any climatologist or atmospheric chemist can tell you, if you would take the time to investigate, that man-made CO₂ has its own identifiable signature. Hard scientific data, which Al Gore relies upon, shows how, in the last 150 years of burning fossil fuels, we have changed the atmospheric balance of CO₂ in the upper atmosphere to 375 parts per million (ppm) today from the historical range of 180 to 275 ppm levels of the last 650,000 years. If we do nothing, scientists predict we will "achieve" 600 ppm within 45 years. 500 ppm is considered a crisis level leading to serious erosion of the coasts, severe weather, droughts and migration of disease.

Mr. Gore asks "Do we have the Political will to abandon the 'business as usual' that is causing the Global Warming condition?" Or are the carbon based industries that are fighting change and disseminating half truths and deception so powerful that they can preserve their narrow self interests by paying lobbyists and lawyers rather than scientists and engineers to correct the GHG emissions?

He does not suggest, as some critics imply, that his message seems intent on reducing the US economy...to something akin to Soviet era Albania. Quite to the contrary, his message consistently suggests that we do have the technology alternatives to burning and releasing Greenhouse gasses.

Did the recent decision by the Florida PSC, 4 to 0, to reject Florida Power and Light's request to build a new advanced coal fired power plant illustrate political will? The Florida PSC is reported to have said that the State can

no longer be a party to adding to global warming by approving a plant that will emit Greenhouse gasses.

To be sure, there are visionary firms that have the will. British Petroleum's Sir John Brown declared several years ago that "The future of BP is renewable energy!" Shell Oil, GE, Wall-Mart, Toyota, Duke Energy and many other major corporations' CEOs have directed their people to change from business as usual to being part of the solution. They are reaping the benefits—as in profit. These firms have accepted the overwhelming scientific evidence and are moving toward zero emissions in all power generation and embracing renewable energy.

Economists are already predicting that while the price of fossil fuels is rapidly rising daily (oil over \$60 per barrel; coal at an average of over \$56 per ton; natural gas at \$15 per mcf; gasoline at a national average of \$3.40 per gallon), the price of renewable energy is rapidly coming down. European economists are predicting solar energy will be competitive with coal-fired energy by 2012!

How can this be possible? Well first, to curb and eliminate the emissions of Greenhouse gasses, the new coal-fired power plants will cost significantly more per KW to build and operate, as will existing plants if we have the political will to retrofit them to achieve zero emissions. Carbon sequestration, still considered technically unsure, which is pumping tons of CO₂ into underground storage, is predicted to add 25% to the cost in the most optimistic estimates. Australians are estimating that the costs will double the price of coal fired electric power.

Then there is the actual cost of coal. The current contracts for coal to the major power companies are ending and will face a much higher cost than when they were signed a few years ago. Massey's latest annual report cites an average price of \$56.25 per ton.

In addition, there is the rusting and decaying grid. While the profit-protected utilities want to build invasive new transmission lines



More About Global Warming (Continued from previous page)

to send power hundreds of miles, many customers—industrial, commercial and even residential—are beginning to see the value in distributed power ...i.e. generating power at the point of need. This approach will make the antiquated approach of huge power plants with ugly power lines crisscrossing the countryside obsolete. Many visionaries see this as the future of electric power.

It won't happen overnight. But when you realize that the sun delivers enough energy in one day to power the entire Earth for decades, don't you have to ask how we can devote our economic and technical resources to any other form of energy development? The fuel is FREE! It is not subject to nor controlled by a large fossil fuel company, or the wild vagaries of a commodity market or a foreign Sultan and OPEC.

Several other coal mining states, like Pennsylvania and Illinois, that have realized that there are more high paying, safer technician jobs and new businesses to be had IF the State has a commitment to leveling the energy playing field with a renewable energy portfolio standard (RPS). Pennsylvania predicts 3500 new jobs in renewable energy. And they already scored by getting a Spanish wind turbine equipment manufacturer to build their first US manufacturing plant in Pennsylvania partly because they have a renewable portfolio standard. West Virginia does not; we are not considering one. But I am told that we also tried to get that same manufacturer here...but lost.

Instead of simply denying that global warming exists, why not examine the rapidly emerging market for new jobs and new businesses in West Virginians in both the installation and manufacturing of renewable energy systems? They already have been recognized all over the country and the world by such publications as the Wall Street Journal and The Economist, as real economically and technically viable answers to dealing with global warming.

"Let's get real about renewable energy" was a op-ed headline in the Daily Mail recently. Like a recent State Journal editorial, the author implied that renewable energy was inefficient and costly. He claimed that the renewable energy was only 33% efficient. So, how efficient is coal-fired power? The National Laboratory at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory recently reported the efficiency standards for coal-fired power plants—the national average was 33%!

Remember the adage: Follow the money. In California 20 years ago, ten concentrated solar power (CSP) plants were constructed. I was involved. Huge 40 ft. long parabolic mirrors focus the sun's rays on a pipe that generates steam and then electric power. Southern California Edison complained when they were "coerced" into building them, and that they would not be competitive until oil reached \$14 per barrel. Hello?

The German Government just received a two year study that determined that CSP plants in the Sahara Desert could provide all of Europe's energy needs by 2050—at a cost that is competitive with oil...at \$20 per barrel.

Instead of calling Al Gore's followers names, his critics should do their homework on what is going on in energy around the world. My undergraduate economics professor at Michigan, Dr. Clare Griffin (one of President Eisenhower's Council of Economic Advisors) warned us "Beware of those who would inject insults and name calling into their arguments, as theirs is a shallow and probably unsupportable posture, so they resort to name calling as a diversionary tactic...and usually seek to shoot the messenger!"

What IF solar power becomes competitive with coal by 2012, or

2015...or 2020? What then? Will West Virginians be participants, riders, even leaders on that train, or to be left standing at the coal tippie wondering what happened?

West Virginians are special people. They have a work ethic and an entrepreneurial spirit not always found in other States. We also have some resources like alloy metals that are enjoying dramatic sustained growth in the solar manufacturing business by supplying BP Solar and others with photovoltaic (PV) grade silicon. The PV manufacturers have seen a remarkable 35% annual growth for the last 5 to 7 years. Shouldn't we welcome such a growth industry with its excellent paying technician's jobs?

But to entice that industry to our State, we must level the playing field. We must compete with the 31 other States that have incentives and tax policies to attract renewable energy businesses. WV has not done that yet. Most solar manufacturers see no opportunity here, and our youth, looking for careers and reliable jobs are missing out—big time.

If West Virginia is to compete in the rapidly changing energy dynamics of the 21st century, we must remove the barriers to innovation and entrepreneurialism in the renewable energy fields. We could and should be a profitable participant in reversing the single most complex and potentially horrific threat that the human race has ever seen...global warming. It will never happen if we sit idly by, pretend there is no such thing as global warming, and let the economic opportunity pass us by.



T- SHIRTS

White, heavy cotton T-shirts with the ♥ **MOUNTAINS** slogan on the front. The lettering is blue and the heart is red. "West Virginia Highlands Conservancy" in smaller blue letters is included below the slogan. Sizes: S, M, L and XL. **Short sleeve** model is \$10 total by mail; **long sleeve** is \$15. Send sizes wanted and check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy ATTN: Julian Martin, WVHC, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.

Personal Geography
By Bonnie Bowman Thurston

We are marked
by the place we call home,
not the house or the people
(thought that is true, too),
but by the land.

I am the daughter
of the mother of mountains,
child of this land's oldest river,
suckled by Appalachian breasts,
sung to sleep by New River's roar.

The road ended, petered out,
at the top of the mountain
where we lived.
Without noise or street lights
we could hear and see.

Have you heard
a whippoorwill at dusk,
over heard
the conversation of squirrels,
or the wind with the trees?

Have you seen ribbons of mist
hanging on the hills,
waiting for the sun to kiss away
fog's diaphanous drapery
and bring the day to birth?

What, I ask you,
is so lovely
as a patch of trillium
in a stand of oak,
a rhododendron thicket in June;

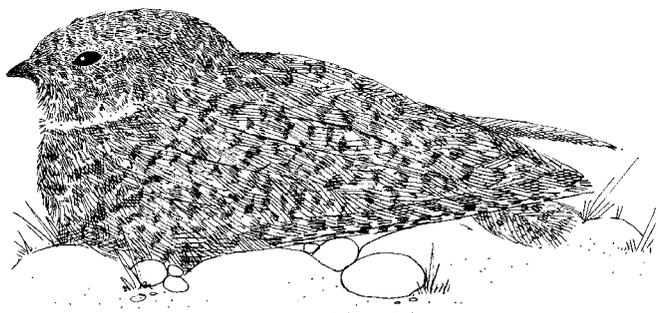
what so fearsome
as a copperhead
coiled in leaves,
a black bear with her cubs
met unexpectedly in the woods?

In the mountains that held black
diamonds of enormous cost
to the good people who dug them,
I have seen these things,
and others too wonderful to tell.

My home was rugged, isolating,
astonishing in its beauty.
It left me with rough edges,
an undeniable earthiness,
a taste for solitude.

I was formed
by a land so grand
that it broke the boundaries
between me and mountains
clean open

and still calls me
to soar like a hawk
above the narrowness of self,
to rise on the wind
and sing and sing and sing.



MOUNTAINS

By Joseph Gatski
no-one repeat
no-one loves mnts
more than I, tho some
have really scared me, and
I ain't ever going back up
to that godforsaken place
again, ever.

You're invited to:

The Garden Party

at Walnut Farm

Saturday, August 25th, 1:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Live Music featuring

Wolf Creek Session

Sam Lamont

Food provided by:

Whitegrass Café - Canaan Valley
 Black Bear Burritos - Morgantown
 Siriannis Restaurant - Davis
 Bright Morning Inn - Davis
 Mt People's Coop - Morgantown
 Hell Bender Burritos - Davis

Raffle and auction

items donated by wilderness supporting businesses including:

Adventures Edge - Morgantown
 Whitegrass Ski Touring Center - Canaan Valley
 Pathfinder - Morgantown
 The Art Company - Davis
 Piannafiddle - Lewisburg
 The Outfitter at Harper's Ferry - Harper's Ferry
 The Wild Bean - Lewisburg
 Morgantown Cloth Diaper - Morgantown
 Appalachian Woodenware - Williamsburg
 Patchwork Films - Lewisburg
 Mark Muse Photographs - Shepherdstown
 Patagonia

Hot Air Balloon Rides by Mountaineer Balloon Company,
 Activities for Children
 Special Guest

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan, U.S. House of Representatives (invited)

The Garden Party at Walnut Farm
 is a benefit fundraising event for the
West Virginia Wilderness Coalition

Keeping the "Wild" in West Virginia

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, West Virginia Sierra Club
 The Wilderness Society, Campaign for America's Wilderness

Look for your invitation in the mail, or contact Dave Saville at 284-9548 or dave.saville@wwwild.org

"If you can make time for breathing, you can make time for music."—Briscoe Darling

So Who's Doing the Picking?

Sam Lamont

Sam has been making music for over 15 years. Largely self taught, he learned the three-finger picking style and a few chords from his Dad, who also introduced him to the sounds of Woody Guthrie, Odetta, and Ramblin' Jack Elliot. He has been a guitarist and singer for rock and blues bands, and even a string band, Tanglewood, who played their version of bluegrass and acoustic roots music throughout West Virginia. As a solo artist, Sam mixes his own songs with old time folk and country blues and performs regularly in the Morgantown area, where he currently resides. He recently released a self-produced CD of eleven original songs. More information can be found at www.samlamont.com and www.myspace.com/samlamontmusic.

Wolf Creek Session

From the mountains of northern West Virginia, Wolf Creek Session is a four-person group that offers up an exciting and unique blend of traditional Appalachian tunes with traditional and contemporary Celtic roots music sprinkled with original songs and stories. Bridging the common roots and branches of Appalachian and Celtic music, their choice of songs and tunes demonstrates the heavy influences of Celtic roots music on the rich Appalachian heritage. Wolf Creek Session creates a wonderful infusion of instruments and vocals with Mike Broderick on fiddle, Alice Fleischman on a variety of Irish flutes and whistles, Keith Pitzer on guitar, harmonica, mandolin and vocals and Joan Pitzer on fretless bass and vocals.

Since the 2004 release of their debut recording, *Between Two Shores*, Wolf Creek has been gaining recognition that's landing them on such prestigious American stages like the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., a 2004 international tour of southern France, and a 2005 scheduled appearance at the Charleston Cultural Center. From the mountains of West Virginia to the rest of the world, Wolf Creek Session highlights the lineage of Celtic to American traditional music with passion, reverence and skill. Visit them on **the web** at www.wolfcreeksession.com

Healthcare Professionals Supporting Wilderness Expansion

The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition is conducting a "Healthcare Professionals for Wilderness" mini-campaign, an idea put forth by volunteers during the 5th Wilderness Workshop, held in June at The Mountain Institute, near Spruce Knob.

Over 150 businesses and organizations across West Virginia have formally supported Wilderness expansion in the Monongahela National Forest due to economic and quality of life benefits. But volunteers pointed out that the health benefits provided by Wilderness areas were being overlooked.

A general support statement has been developed to highlight such health benefits. An excerpt: "Clean air, clean water, physical exercise, relief of stress, anxiety and other pressures of daily life, and development of self confidence and self esteem are important for maintaining and improving the physical and mental health and well-being of West Virginians, as well as helping prevent a variety of chronic diseases that afflict the health of many of our citizens... The undeveloped wild lands of our state, especially the public lands accessible within the Mon, can provide all of the above health benefits."

This statement was placed online July 26 and within three days 26 healthcare professionals were already signed-on, according to Mary Wimmer, one of the volunteers leading the effort. The goal is to grow the support list to over 100, she said.

— *Interested healthcare professionals can sign-on to the proposal in minutes at www.wvwild.org.*

Thanks to Sen. Byrd for recent remarks

By Robert Handley

Last week, Sen. Byrd addressed the U.S. Senate in honor of West Virginia's 144th birthday. In his remarks, he described the beauty of West Virginia so vividly that it brought back warm memories of the many outings I've taken throughout our state's wonderful wild places.

The Monongahela National Forest is one such place, and is truly a treasure that is our legacy, showcasing West Virginia's geological and natural history. The forest gives us an opportunity to connect with our ancestors and others who have loved this land before us, not to mention our friends and families. The Monongahela is a beautiful place to explore, and it provides opportunities for hunting, fishing, and recreation for millions of people. It is a valuable resource and it must be preserved.

I'd like to thank Sen. Byrd for his poignant remarks, and encourage all readers to join me in supporting the protection of our forest wilderness, so that our children and their children can continue our legacy and enjoy the wild and wonderful West Virginia that we love.

— *This letter to the editor appeared June 29 in The Register-Herald, Beckley.*

Speakers Available !!!!!

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

Monongahela National Forest DVD

God's Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land

Christians for the Mountains has produced a new DVD, "God's Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land," the story of West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest told from a Christian perspective.

The Monongahela National Forest contains some of the wildest remaining forestlands in the eastern United States. Its native ecosystem gives life to plants and animals and its rugged terrain embraces the headwaters of five major river systems. For decades this forest has provided a fragile oasis for calm, peace, and solitude in a world where these values are increasingly hard to find.

"God's Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land" uses stunning photography, moving hymnal music, and personal testimonies to articulate the way we feel touched by God in our wilderness experience. Scriptures show that the insights discussed are elaborations of Biblical themes. Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, and others had powerful, life-forming experiences in the wilderness. And Jesus also turned to the wilderness.

The film highlights proposed Wilderness areas in West Virginia and shares with viewers the need for permanent protection of wild places in the Monongahela National Forest through congressional Wilderness designation. Viewers will learn more about what makes these areas special and why their advocacy can protect them for current and future generations.

This film is now available free of charge for West Virginians who want to help safeguard our forest wilderness. We are looking for people who will be inspired to share this wonderful resource with their church, organization, or Bible study group, or a group of friends and neighbors. Information to guide discussion and action will be included with the DVD.

Request your copy of "God's Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land" by sending an e-mail to godsgift@christiansforthemountains.org, and include your name, mailing address, and phone number. For more information, please visit www.ChristiansForTheMountains.org, or contact Jason Keeling at (304) 989-3262, godsgift@christiansforthemountains.org.

Christians for the Mountains is a nonprofit, grassroots organization that encourages the preservation of God's Earth and its human communities. Learn more at www.ChristiansForTheMountains.org.

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 with the SASE and get 2 bumper stickers. Businesses or organizations wishing to provide bumper stickers to their customers/members may have them free. (Of course if they can afford a donation that will be gratefully accepted.)

Also available are the new green-on-white oval Friends of the Mountains stickers. Let Julian know which (or both) you want.



BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

By John McFerrin, Secretary and Scribe

After the call to order and approval of the minutes (which took seconds) we got down to business. President Hugh announced that Dave Elkinton had completed his book on the history of the Highlands Conservancy. It is called *Fighting to Protect the Highlands: The First 40 Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy*. It has 540 pages and will sell for \$25.95. It comes out in September and will be available for purchase at the Fall Review in October.

We have **elections** coming up at the Fall Review in October; we will be electing five new Board members. President Hugh appointed a nominating committee: Marillyn Shoenfeld, Frank Young, and Bill McNeel. Since the total campaign spending in recorded history for all of these offices is zero, this election promises to be both shorter and less expensive than the current race for the United States presidency.

Treasurer Bob Marshall reported on the state of our finances and the state of our endowment. He thinks that we had a pretty good quarter and are in sound shape financially. He also reported that Mae Ellen Wilson has done a lot of work whipping our endowment into shape. She has got it all invested, diversified, etc. just as we had discussed at a previous meeting.

Administrative Assistant Beth Little was off leading a Highlands Conservancy sponsored hike and could not be present so she sent a report. She is finding the work manageable and seems to like doing it.

We discussed the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web site and what we refer to as the "blog." It is not what most people would call a "blog" since it is not really a forum for discussion. Our **digital guru**, Jim Solley, posts articles from the Voice and an occasional other item of interest. Unlike a true blog, there are no opportunities for someone who reads it to reply to the web site. They could write for the Voice but there is currently no way to respond directly and immediately. This policy was approved by the Board at the October, 2006, meeting.

This time the Board considered whether we should change things so that people could respond. There was no formal action but it appeared that the majority sense of the Board that we should leave well enough alone. It is our web site; although discussion is useful, it would not be useful to allow our web site to be a place for information that is contrary to our purposes.

DG Solley also announced that the CD's for the new Hiking Guide are out. He had some to pass around. During the meeting Peter Shoenfeld conducted a virtual field trial of the new CD and pronounced it "fast, good resolution."

Voice editor John McFerrin reported that the deadline for the August issue was fast approaching but Board members still had time to go home and finish the articles they were working on. He also articulated the Voice policy on letters and articles. As a general rule, members can get published. The Voice articles are not exclusively Conservancy positions. Only the Board makes policy. Since all of our members share the goals of the Conservancy, the letters reflect those goals although there may be disagreement over the specifics.

Outreach Director Julian Martin was unavoidably detained and

could not attend. He reported indirectly that he and the interns are making lots of presentations, setting up lots of tables at events, etc. President Hugh mentioned that Julian is threatening to retire from his Outreach position to pursue other options when his term as Vice President for State Affairs ends in October, 2008. This will leave a large opportunity for service.

The **Fall Review** is shaping up. The focus will be on the history of the Highlands Conservancy, including the debut of Dave Elkinton's book on the history of the Conservancy and visits by leaders from the past. Nostalgia will be tolerated, as will the telling of war stories, both true and embellished by time.

On to issue reports. Cindy Rank presented a list of the **mining** related issues in which we are involved. It was impressive. The coal industry may be too big and too ornery to ever be fully held to account but we are giving it our best shot.

Hugh reported a widely accepted rumor that the J.F. Allen Co. **quarry** that had been proposed for Shavers Fork is not going forward. The company has the necessary rumors but for some reasons (presumably economic) has de-

ecided not to proceed.

Peter Shoenfeld reported on pending **wind energy** projects: (1) Beech Ridge, Greenbrier County—approved by the Public Service Commission; that decision is being appealed to the West Virginia Supreme Court; (2) Liberty Gap—denied by the Public Service Commission; no appeal to the Supreme Court yet; (3) Rich Mountain—the developer has apparently lost its enthusiasm for this project; there are rumors of another developer looking at the site but nothing substantial; (4) Laurel Mountain, near Elkins—there is a rumor that a developer is looking at it but nothing substantial yet; (5) Briery Mountain, Preston County—the developer intends to file with the Public Service Commission in the fall of 2007; (6) Nedpower Mount Storm and Shell Energy, Grant County—now under construction. Nearby residents sued, claiming it was a nuisance. While not agreeing that it necessarily was a nuisance, the West Virginia Supreme Court said that it might be and sent the case back to Circuit Court to determine if it was a nuisance.

Frank Young reported on the TrAIL power line project. Some individuals have intervened before the Public Service Commission although we have not. There was some discussion of our intervening but no decision was made.

Dave Saville reported on **public lands**. The campaign for wilderness designation is cooking along. No bill has yet been introduced in Congress; several people have been in contact with Congressmen to inform them about the issue.

Christians for the Mountains has done a video offering a Christian perspective on wilderness. The Wilderness Coalition is distributing it.

Dave reminded us of the Garden Party on August 25.

The public lands committee is also looking at possible wilderness sites in the New River National River, the Canaan Valley Wildlife



(Continued on the next page)

HIKING IN THE SOUTHERN SHENANDOAH

By Mike Juskelis

Brown Mountain - Rockytop BP Loop:

We have been neglecting the exploration of the southern district of Shenandoah National Park for quite some time. This was our first foray as an organized group into this area. Although only a little over 18 miles in length, the ruggedness of the terrain and the distance between campsites compelled us to design this outing as a three day trip—a moderately long day sandwiched between two short days.

The landscape had been drastically altered by a devastating fire in 1986 that totally wiped out thousands of acres of oak forest. A few skeletons of trees still stand to remind us. An unintentional consequence of the forest fire is that it left behind sweeping views of the surrounding ridges, the Shenandoah Valley, Massanutten Mountain and the beginnings of the Allegheny Mountains.

I was joined on this one by Ted E. Bear, Cognac Jack, Roger Ram Jet and Dick. We arrived at the Brown Mountain Overlook around 11:00. There was still a bit of a haze but the views were nice nonetheless.

We took our time hiking the Brown Mountain Trail, savoring every vista we came to. One that still amazes me is rather simple, looking across a valley in the Park with a view of a miniature of West Virginia's Seneca Rocks. The descent was a little longer than we cared for but we pulled into camp at 3:00 P.M.

Three of us took the spot by the natural Jacuzzi on Big Run while the other two headed upstream about 500 yards to another secluded campsite. After setting up camp we spent a good bit of time relaxing in the stream and let-

ting the ripples massage our backs. After dinner and some campsite camaraderie (no fires allowed in the SNP) we all went to sleep to the sounds of a distant whippoorwill.

Knowing that we had a major climb without the aid of a canopy before us, we all arose early the next day and were on the trail by 8:45. The climb was worth it. A cold front had come through the area during the night leaving the skies crystal clear.

Once we reached the main ridge line it seemed the entire Shenandoah Valley, the



southern end of Massanutten Mountain and the easternmost ridges of the Allegheny Mountains lay before us. The higher we climbed the better the view became. On the northern end, the trail was a mixture of sand, talus rocks, heavy brush and a few patches of deep woods. We took lunch at what can be considered "The back" of Rockytop, a huge talus rock outcrop with an unabated panorama of everything we had seen

to that point.

After lunch there was a little more climbing on rocky trails until we reached the true summit. From there the trail became mostly grassy and, for the most part, downhill.

We were into camp by 3:30. It was a slightly overgrown area but with enough good ground to hold us all. Topo maps suggested that there might be a better spot a little further downstream but not having the chance to check it out beforehand I elected to stay with a sure thing. We all went to bed early that night. Halfway through we were awaked by the constant calls of two great horned Owls and a screech owl apparently having some kind of disagreement. I think the great horned owls won.

The first two miles of the last day was an easy downhill romp along Big Run. As suspected, in about 0.67 miles we passed the best campsite in the entire watershed. It was on a long flat bench under some still surviving hemlock trees. It was huge with little or no rocks and a dense carpet of needles as a floor.

After marking the spot on my GPS unit we continued on. We checked out a swimming hole below our turn-off point but the 60 degree air temperature caused us all to vote in unison to forgo the previously planned last dip. About an hour later we probably all regretted it. We climbed for the last three miles back to the cars. The first mile wasn't too bad but this hiker was really huffing and puffing at the halfway point. Still, we all made it out of the woods by a little after 12:00. We were all in good shape and ready to try some good food at the Thunderbird Diner.

MORE HISTORY (Continued from p. 1)

ness, who urged me to look for a commercial publisher. It was Rupert Cutler who suggested Pocahontas Press in Blacksburg, Virginia. When I contacted Mary Holliman, the Pocahontas president, I knew we had a relationship when she told me she would do anything to help stop mountaintop removal mining. She had been a former Sierra Club member, and was a veteran editor at Virginia Tech. Over the past year, and especially in the last six months, she and I have become frequent email correspondents. The finished book will be a first-class product thanks to Mary.

After the release, on or before September 1, together Mary and I will be working to share the forty-year history of this organization throughout the region. Already we know that the Conservancy's Fall Review in October will feature a significant look back through time. Several special guests will be invited to share their memories with those assembled. Earlier in October we will be part of the West Virginia Book

Fair, at the urging of Board member Bob Gates. If there are events or marketing opportunities that you know of, please email me.

And of course, we hope the former and current members of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy will want to own a personal copy. The Conservancy will be selling individual copies through its website and through the mail.

My final thanks go to the Board of Directors, who together have been consistent and enthusiastic advocates of this project. The Conservancy is financing this project, and all proceeds will be used to continue the Conservancy's important environmental efforts.

It has indeed been a pleasure to assemble the distinguished record of the Conservancy. I hope you will be as inspired as I have been by the reviewing how the Conservancy has fought to protect the Highlands. I shudder to think what the region would be like today had there been no Highlands Conservancy.

Dave Elkinton welcomes comments at daveelkinton@hotmail.com.

Join Now !!!

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Membership categories (circle one)

	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Org</u>
Senior	\$ 15		
Student	\$ 15		
Introductory			
Other	\$ 15		
Regular	\$ 25	\$ 35	\$ 50
Associate	\$ 50	\$ 75	\$ 100
Sustaining	\$ 100	\$ 150	\$ 200
Patron	\$ 250	\$ 500	\$ 500
Mountaineer	\$ 500	\$ 750	\$ 1000

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

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

MORE ABOUT THE BOARD MEETING

Refuge, and the George Washington National Forest. They are required to consider what lands they have which might be suitable for wilderness. We are trying to help them.

Marilyn Shoenfeld reported on the planning process for the **Canaan Valley Wildlife Refuge**. They are still planning: they have been having public meetings and gathering comments. The next step is to do "alternatives for action." There is much discussion about trails. People want more. There is apparently some confusion about the purpose of the Refuge. Some view it as a playground and want more trails. Some view it as a safe haven for animals. Presumably (none attended the planning meeting so we don't know for sure) the animals are either indifferent or hostile to the idea or more trails.

There is talk of further land acquisition. The acquisition area is 24,000 acres; the refuge currently owns 16,000.

Don Garvin was in Wyoming in his perpetual quest to land the perfect rainbow. In his absence, Frank Young reported on matters legislative. During the **Legislative interims** Don had been scoping out what rules the Department of Environmental Protection was proposing. Maybe what's good will get a little bit better, and maybe what's bad will get gone.

Dave reported that he is providing spruce seedlings for plantings by WVU students.

Hugh reported on **Corridor H**. He did comments on the Parsons to Davis draft Environmental Impact Statement. There is also a proposed bridge over the upper reaches of Blackwater Canyon. We/Corridor H Alternatives may have to go back to court.

Finally, we made comments on the proposed conversion of the trail down **Blackwater Canyon** into a logging road. There is a story about this on page 2.

Cindy Ellis made **brownies**.

BROCHURES

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has joined with the Sierra Club, Coal River Mountain Watch, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Voices, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, Keeper of the Mountains Foundation and Christians for the Mountains 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 distribute them.

Your comments and opinions are important to us.

Please email any poems, letters, commentaries to the VOICE editor at johnmcferrin@aol.com

OR

send honest to goodness, mentioned in the United States Constitution U.S Mail to WV Highlands Conservancy, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.

FUN AT SENECA CREEK

By Susan Bly

Our Spruce Knob adventure began with four adventurers: Ann Devine-King, Bryan Bishop, Karin Birch and yours truly. Even though this adventure had been packed to the gills with interested folks beforehand, due to no shows, no responses and last minute cancellations, we boiled down to four.

After meeting up at the Allegheny trailhead, we car pooled to the Seneca Creek trailhead and headed out. Due to the change in weather fronts, we had a dry, cool, low humidity weekend ahead of us. At a nearly 3 mph pace, we reached Judy Spring in a little over an hour; there we took a rest break. While there, we spotted four endangered, although potentially violent chartreuse "herons", guarding a camper's tent.



As we rock hopped across the Creek for the last time above the Upper Falls, I remarked on this being the first out of 4-5 times I've hiked this Creek that I did not have to remove my boots. It's been a dryer summer here as well as elsewhere in the state.

Below the falls, we encountered a pack of military clad personnel with a German Shepherd, scouting along the creek—the Civil Air Patrol doing search and rescue training. (Later when they returned past our campsite, they "lost" their campsite due to a false trail which they followed on the ridge above us. Too funny.) I wondered inwardly whether the blue tarp and orange t-shirt we saw on the opposite bank of the Falls was part of their training. Turns out it is only part of the detritus we were to find in several places of this area.

While scouting up a hillside for a campsite I had in mind, I came across the well hidden Civil Air Patrol camping area. Back to the creek for one of the well used campsites. After setting up our tents, we lounged around a bit and ate supper. (Another item left behind by campers was a blue/red blanket. Using a rope clothesline, I hung it out to dry before taking it home for my dog to use.)

Sunday was our day of exploration along Seneca Creek. This section of railroad grade is a continuation of the Seneca Creek trail.

However, it has been abandoned by the Forest Service due to many washed out areas. Nevertheless, an abandoned trail makes for great exploring. We set off in water shoes and followed what turned out to be a well traveled trail. Was the Civil Air Patrol down this way recently?

Along the way we came across a campsite which is not unusual. What was eye catching was another blue tarp up under a rock alcove containing cooking pots, a grill rack, cooking spray, a tea kettle and solar shower among other things. You'd need a wheelbarrow to lug that stuff in 5 miles from the trailhead.

The rest of the trip provided much more interesting scenery however. This nearly 5 mile section of the Creek has interesting geological features, one of which is the nearly perpendicular ridge of rock running along the creekbed. In one location we could see a waterfall going off one side of the "ridge" and then falling over the other side of the ridge further downstream. The rock also formed chutes similar to The Flume in New Hampshire. The green mosses and ferns added to the fairy glen type appearance.

There are several 5-10 foot waterfalls along the way which create great swimming holes. We paused for lunch at one of the small waterfalls, letting its white noise drown out our everyday concerns.

After lunch we reached our objective and headed back upstream to camp. The stinging nettles gave the walk a bit of a swagger to one's step and allowed you to practice your golf swing as you struck them out of the way.

Monday morning dawned clear and cool and we assembled under clear blue skies. Our first challenge was crossing a recently made tripod style bridge over Seneca Creek. A tree had fallen across the Creek and improvising persons improved it by adding a handrail balanced on tripods of logs. One simply walks sideways on the log holding onto the guardrail and, voila, no wet feet.

Our 1,000 foot ascent up the Horton trail made us shed our long sleeves and work up a sweat. We took a couple of rest breaks to cut up some offending fallen logs. Later, we encountered a trio of trail maintainers from the Mountain Institute. Thanks very much for your hard work folks. At the intersection with the Allegheny, we rested again and filled up our water containers at a cool clear spring. Even though the spring was at a trickle flowing over the ground, it was a continuous one, so we dug a hole, allowed the mud to settle, and pumped away. Amazing how much water comes out of a 6" diameter by 6-7" deep hole.

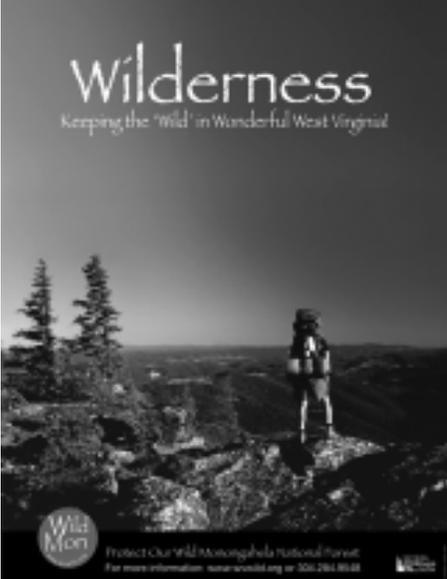
Our walk continued through wildlife clearings, forest, past trail intersections, around mudholes, along horse hoofed ruts and eventually spit us out at our waiting cars. Another perfectly splendid time spent in the Mon.

Conservancy Older (and wiser, see p. 3) than Office of Surface Mining

WEST VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY PLANS BIRTHDAY WINGDING

The federal Office of Surface Mining is not the only one having a big birthday this year. The Conservancy turns 40 this year. While there will be no Congressional hearings, ours will be more fun. Join us **October 26-28th** at Cheat Mountain Lodge.

Featured will be Dave Elkinton's brand new book *Fighting to Protect the Highlands: The First 40 Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy* as well as visits by past leaders. Don't miss it!



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Ordering Questions?
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"Wild Mon" T-Shirts

The back of this black shirt reads "Keeping the 'Wild' in Wonderful West Virginia," and is available in S, M, L, and XL.

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HATS FOR SALE

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has two models of caps for sale.

One is khaki and the pre-curved visor is forest green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy in gold above We ♥ Mountains. The heart is red; and lettering is black.

The other model is tan with a muted green pre-curved visor. The front sports the lovely, in color, logo that appears on the VOICE masthead. Beside the logo is "West Virginia Highlands Conservancy" in green. The lower back of the hat has the We ♥ Mountains slogan.

Pictures of both appear on our website www.wvhighlands.org. Both are soft twill, unstructured, low profile with sewn eyelets, cloth strap with triglide buckle closure. Cost is \$12 by mail. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to Julian Martin, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306



The Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

By Allen de Hart and Bruce Sundquist

Describes 180 U.S. Forest Service trails (847 miles total) in one of the best (and most popular) areas for hiking, back-packing and ski-touring in this part of the country (1436 sq. miles of national forest in West Virginia's highlands). 6x9" soft cover, 368 pages, 86 pages of maps, 57 photos, full-color cover, Ed.8 (2006)

Send \$14.95 plus \$3.00 shipping to:
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

P.O. Box 306
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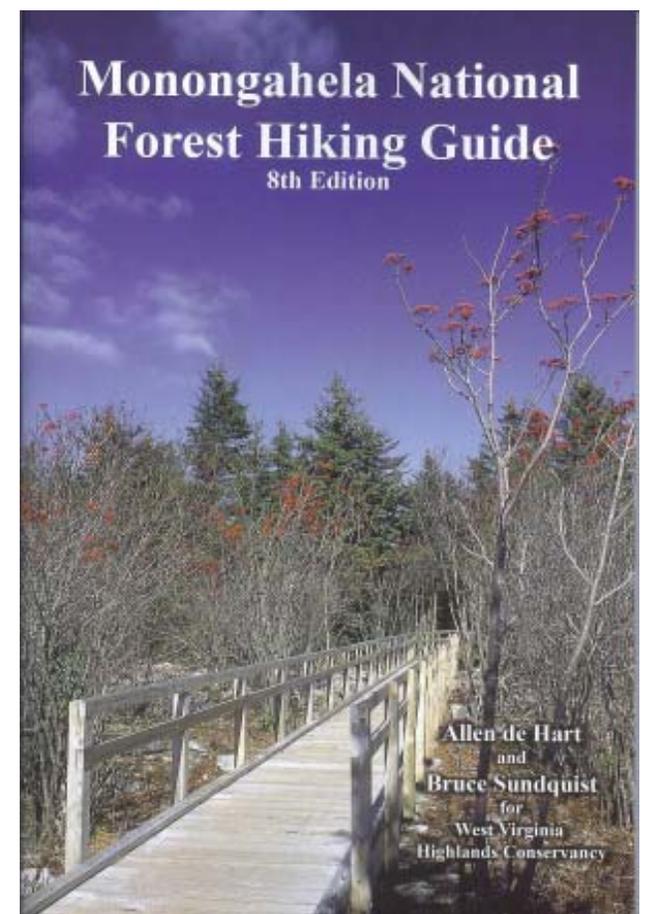
New 8TH Edition Now Available on CD

WV Highlands Conservancy proudly offers an Electronic (CD) version of its famous Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide (8th Edition), with many added features.

This new CD edition includes the text pages as they appear in the printed version by Allen deHart and Bruce Sundquist in an interactive pdf format. It also includes the following mapping features, developed by WVHC volunteer Jim Solley, and not available anywhere else:

- All pages and maps in the new Interactive CD version of the Mon hiking guide can easily be printed and carried along with you on your hike
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- Special Features not found in the printed version of the Hiking Guide:
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West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



Outings, Education and Beyond

Open Dates: 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 Mountaintop Removal. Bring lunch for a picnic on Larry's mountain. Call in advance to schedule. Julian Martin (304) 342-8989; martinjul@aol.com or Larry Gibson (304) 586-3287; (304) 549-3287

September 1-3 (Sat – Mon Labor Day): MNF, WV, Laurel Fork Wilderness /Allegheny Trail Backpacking Trip: Approximately 28 miles. Main trails are old railroad grades that parallel beautiful streams. Cross-connectors are a mixture of footpaths and old woods roads with modest elevation gains. Approximately 5 miles of road walking and rail trails required to close the loop. Some potentially challenging stream crossings. Pre-registration required. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or E-mail at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

September 15-17 (Sat – Mon):MNF, WV, Roaring Plains Backpack/ Base Camp: Day 1 – Backpack in 2.5 miles on the east segment of the South Prong Tr visiting several vistas along the way and set up a base camp in a pretty hollow next to a stream. Explore a seldom-visited vista of the South Prong drainage. Day 2 – 11 mile day hike over some of the most rugged and beautiful terrain on the east coast. Day 3 – Backpack out from whence we came. Pre-registration required. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or E-mail at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

October 6 - 8 (Sat-Mon) BACKPACK, Otter Creek Wilderness, WV: Enjoy the fall colors at their max in a justly famous Wilderness. Count yourself among the lucky ones to see brilliant golds, russet reds and rustling rusts as we backpack 20.6 moderate miles in the Wilderness. INFO: Susan Bly (sbly@shepherd.edu) 304/258-3319 7pm - 9pm.

October 6-8 (Sat – Mon Columbus Day): MNF, WV, Cranberry Backcountry Backpacking trip: 31 mile strenuous trek with 4500 ft elevation change utilizing the beautiful Pocahontas and Fork Mt trails. Several vistas. Three miles of road walking required to close the loop. Tentatively, the trek starts at Summit Lake near Richwood. Pre-registration required. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or E-mail at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

October 13 Lake Sherwood: Day trip to 165 acre lake, particularly beautiful in the fall. Meet in White Sulfur Springs at the intersection of Highway 92 and 60 at 11:00 a.m. We will tour and then drive up Highway 92 to Neola and out 14/1 to the lake for lunch. We will also hike about a mile up a native brook trout stream. Most of us would leave at 5:00 p.m. although there are facilities for those who want to extend their visit. Leader Don Gasper, (304) 472-3704

***October 20-22 (Sat – Mon): GWNF, VA, Cole Mt, Mount Pleasant Backpacking Trip:** Day one – Backpack approximately 4 miles and set up base camp at Cow Camp AT Shelter. Day 2 – day hike approximately 12 moderate miles visiting 3 magnificent vistas: Cole Mt, Mount Pleasant and Pompey Mountain. Day 3 – backpack back down the mountain. Note: Elevation Gain on day one is approximately 2400 feet over 3 miles. Pre-registration required. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or E-mail at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

***November 3-4 (Sat – Sun): GWNF, VA, Big Schloss Overnight Backpack:** 12 mile moderate backpacking trip. This may be suitable for novices if you are experienced hikers. The hardest part is a 1400 foot climb over 4 miles on the first day. The short out and back to the primary vista will be packless. Pre-registration required. Contact Mike Juskelis at 410-439-4964 or E-mail at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com.

Items with an (*) are VA trips.

