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The Highlands Voice

The Monthly Publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Volume 41

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October, 2008

GREENBRIER COGENERATION PLANT BITES THE DUST

By Beth Little

I am reminded of a Tom and Jerry cartoon, where Tom is swatting at a bump (supposedly Jerry) under a rug, but it just pops up somewhere else.

However, my firm conclusion is that the Western Greenbrier Cogeneration plant is dead. They spent 16 million dollars of other people's money, mostly taxpayers. They owe hundreds of thousands more to vendors, not to mention the officer's salaries. They couldn't raise the funding required to qualify for the Department of Energy grant that was the main funding, and the Department of Energy has withdrawn the grant.

I'm not sure how to identify Wayne Brown's role anymore, but he is the only one of the company principals still maintaining that the project is alive. He says he is going to file a claim against the DOE for \$8 million dollars – more taxpayer dollars. He says he and his partners put in \$8 million, but a review of their financial statements shows that it was mostly loans (defaulted and covered by the State of WV – taxpayers again) and capitalized invoices (an accounting finagle that basically turns debts into assets). He says they have a secret investor who is considering financing the project. He has been saying that for over a year, and several funding crises have come and gone with no secret investor materializing.

Cleanbrier, the local group that organized over concerns about the pollution and other problems with the project, is an informal association of representatives from the litigants over the air permit – West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, West Virginia Chapter Sierra Club and Greenbrier River Watershed Association, plus concerned citizens in the Greenbrier Valley.

Our research showed that the plant was not going to use the best available pollution control technology (the basis of our appeal and sub-

sequent suit over the air permit), and we questioned the legitimacy of the project qualifying as a "clean coal" project in the first place, when the only thing about it that was different from standard

dirty coal fired plants was that the boiler was inverted to have a smaller footprint.

We made many comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement – mainly that it was incomplete because there were many critical aspects still unresolved – like

whether there was enough water available. We were unsatisfied with the final EIS and were prepared to challenge it in court if the project went forward.

So, if it ever comes out from under the rug, we will deal with it. But, in the meantime, it is just a cartoon.



FEDS PULL OUT OF GREENBRIER POWER PROJECT

By Ken Ward Jr.

Federal officials have quietly pulled the plug on funding for construction of the proposed Western Greenbrier Co-Generation plant. U.S. Department of Energy officials now list the \$416 million facility as "discontinued."

Developers have for more than five years struggled to come up with private money to match DOE funds, and environmental groups have complained that the project would pollute local air and water.

DOE spent more than \$8 million on project planning, and the West Virginia Economic Development Authority lost \$3 million in a loan guarantee approved in 2004 by the Wise administration.

Editor's note: A longer version of this story originally appeared in the *Charleston Gazette*.

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See What Sticks

Every month I drive over the mountains to Charlottesville, where my mother settled, relatively close to three of her six children, after my father died. US 250, the hundred-fifty-year-old Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike, is a beautiful way to go. Over Cheat, Allegheny, Shenandoah, and many lesser ridges, the old road has been paved but not straightened. Between Huttonsville and Staunton, there isn't much traffic.

At Staunton, the pace picks up: I-81, I-64 over the Blue Ridge, and finally US 29, eight lanes lined with commercial sprawl. I turn into the neighborhood just off 29 that seems to have been zoned for senior living, park, walk down the hall, and already I can hear the TV. This year, at age 90, my mother has become a political junkie. PBS is too low-key for her; she wants the fully-caffeinated MSNBC! blaring the distraction of the day—or not the day, the “news cycle.”

One cycle, it was all about “lipstick on a pig.” Did Senator Obama mean to call Governor Palin a pig? She'd used the word “lipstick” in a joke at the Republican convention, and if you believed her press agents, she owned that word for at least the next few news cycles. Never mind that it was hardly Obama's style of coping with a female opponent. Never mind that it was such a common expression that the TV producers could dig into their video files and find five examples of Senator McCain using it. (I used it myself, back in the day, when the highway department said it would beautify Corridor H bridges over the Shavers Fork by painting the concrete green. Or maybe it was brown. Or camouflage.)

The point was to throw everything imaginable at your opponent, see what would stick—and hope people talked about it on TV. And they did!

Considering all the distractions, you may not have noticed that last month both candidates for president came out against mountaintop removal coal mining.

Campaigning in Florida, McCain was asked if he supported eliminating mountaintop removal mining. “You know, I do,” he replied—though he added that coal companies were behaving much better these days. Asked to respond, the Obama campaign declared that the senator had said he did not support mountaintop removal, either. But Obama's spokesman also felt compelled to soften the blow, in his case calling for investments in “clean coal.”

The candidates didn't emphasize the issue. It didn't last through a whole news cycle. Even in West Virginia, it likely got less attention than “lipstick on a pig.” But the fact that both candidates said they opposed mountaintop removal is a milestone in our campaign. As Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster, put it, “Political opinion has just caught up with public opinion.”

Lake's 2004 survey, conducted for the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment, found that West Virginians who “strongly opposed” mountaintop removal outnumbered those who “strongly favored” it by a 3-to-1 margin.

Four years later, the in-state majority may be even greater. And outside the coal-producing region, mountaintop removal is becoming notorious. The candidates know this—but if it's to stick, they must be asked about it again and again.

On the same day the candidates and surrogates spoke on the issue, Highlands Conservancy members joined a rally at the Capitol to promote wind power instead of mountaintop removal mining on

(Continued on p. 6)

Roster of Officers, Board Members and Committee Chairs

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VICE PRESIDENT FOR STATE AFFAIRS: Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Rd., Charleston, WV 25314, (304) 342-8989; martinjul@aol.com
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SECRETARY: John McFerrin, 114 Beckley Ave., Beckley, WV 25801, (304)252-8733, johnmcferrin@aol.com
TREASURER: Bob Marshall, 886-Z Divide Ridge Road, Kenna WV 25248 (304)545-6817, woodhavenwva@netscape.net
PAST PRESIDENT: Frank Young, Rt. 1, Box 108, Ripley, WV 25271, (304)372-3945, fyoung@mountain.net

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE (Terms expire October 2009)

Bob Henry Baber, 207 Howard St., Glenville, WV 26351, (304) 462-0320, mayorbobhenrybabber@yahoo.com
Dave Fouts, HC 80, Box 993, Maysville, WV 26833, (304) 749-8172, foutsberg@citlink.net
Roger Forman 100 Capitol Street Suite 400, Charleston WV 25301, rdr@citynet.net; (304) 346-6300 work (304) 389-4748 cell.
Larry Thomas P.O. Box 194, Circleville, WV 26804, (304) 567-2602, larrythomas@aol.com
Carter Zerbe, 16 Arlington Ct., Charleston, WV 25301, (304)343-3175; scz3667@aol.com

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE (Terms expire October 2008)

Don Gasper, 4 Ritchie St., Buckhannon, WV 26201; (304)472-3704
Bob Gates, 1117 Virginia St.E., Charleston, WV 25301, (304)342-2624; photonzx@ntelos.net
Russ McClain, 104 Guy St. Elkins, WV 26241, (304)637-2201; mcclainw@davisandelkins.edu
Bill McNeel, 1118 Second Ave., Marlinton, WV 24954, (304)799-4369; wpmcneel@gmail.com
Peter Shoenfeld, HC 70, Box 553, Davis, WV 26260, (304) 866-3484, (301) 642-2820; PShoenfeld@gmail.com

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTORS

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY: Robert (Bob) Handley, HC 67 Box 508 Renick, WV, 24966 497-2266leatherwing@frontiernet.net
PITTSBURGH CLIMBERS: Jean Rodman, 32 Crystal Dr., Oakmont, PA 15139, (412)828-8983; jeanrodman@verizon.net
BROOKS BIRD CLUB: Cindy Ellis, RR 1, Box 163, Red House, WV 25168 (304) 586-4135; ellis_6511@msn.com
MOUNTAINEER CHAPTER TROUT UNLIMITED: Frank Slider, Rt 1, Box 163-A2, Middlebourne, WV 26149, (304) 758-2500; sliderf@ovis.net
WEST VIRGINIA RIVERS COALITION: Don Garvin, P.O. Box 666, Buckhannon, WV 26201; (304) 472-8716; DSGJR@aol.com
DOWNSTREAM ALLIANCE: Craig Mains, 137 Hoffman Ave., Morgantown WV 26505; cmains@wvu.edu
FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE KANAWHA: Cindy Rank, HC 78, Box 227, Rock Cave, WV 26234, (304)924-5802; clrank@hughes.net

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

MINING COMMITTEE: Cindy Rank, HC 78, Box 227, Rock Cave, WV 26234, (304)924-5802; clrank@hughes.net
PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: Bob Marshall, 201 Virginia St.W., Charleston, WV 25302, (304)345-5518; woodhavenwva@netscape.net
OUTREACH/COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE: Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Rd., Charleston, WV 25314, (304) 342-8989; martinjul@aol.com
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE: Frank Young, Rt. 1, Box 108, Ripley, WV 25271, (304)372-3945; fyoung@mountain.net
WIND ENERGY COMMITTEE: Peter Shoenfeld, HC 70, Box 553, Davis, WV 26260, (304) 866-3484, (301) 642-2820; PShoenfeld@gmail.com
ENDOWMENT FUND COMMITTEE: John McFerrin, 114 Beckley Ave., Beckley, WV 25801, (304)252-8733; johnmcferrin@aol.com
RIVERS COMMITTEE: vacant
HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE: Hugh Rogers, Moon Run, Kerens, WV 26276, (304)636-2662; hugh.rogers@gmail.com
OUTINGS COMMITTEE: Jonathan Jessup, 8225 Adenlee Ave. #40, Fairfax, VA 22031, (703) 204-1372; jonathanjessup@gmail.com

MISCELLANEOUS OFFICES

SPEAKERS BUREAU: Julian Martin, 1525 Hampton Road, Charleston, WV 25314, (304) 342-8989; martinjul@aol.com
WEB PAGE: Peter Shoenfeld, HC 70, Box 553, Davis, WV 26260, (304) 866-3484, (301) 642-2820 PShoenfeld@gmail.com and Jim Solley, jamessolley@comcast.net

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: Beth Little, HC 64, Box 281, Hillsboro, WV, 24946 (304) 653-4277; blittle@citynet.net

HIGHLANDS VOICE EDITOR: John McFerrin, 114 Beckley Ave., Beckley, WV 25801, (304)252-8733; johnmcferrin@aol.com

GROUPS SUE TO HALT NICHOLAS-CLAY COUNTIES MINE

By Ken Ward Jr.

Environmental groups are trying to stop another new mountaintop removal permit, this one along the Clay-Nicholas county line.

Lawyers for the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, and Coal River Mountain Watch sought a preliminary injunction in September week to block the permit for two Fola Coal Co. mines.

Together, the mines would bury more than five miles of streams in the Sycamore Run, Ike Fork and Lily fork watersheds, near Bickmore and Gilboa.

U.S. District Judge Robert C. Chambers scheduled a hearing for October 22. 30 in Huntington.

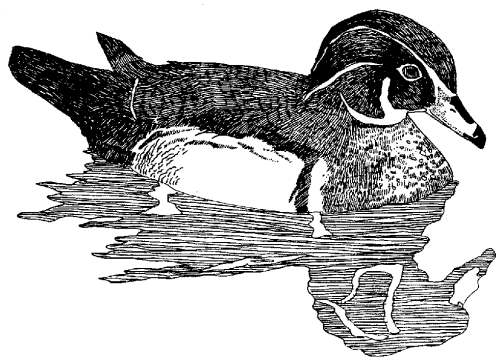
The new court action involving Fola is the second time in a month that environmental groups have sought Chambers' help in blocking a new corps approval for a mountaintop removal operation.

Last month, environmentalists dropped their challenge of a new permit for Hobet Mining's huge operation along the Lincoln-Boone County line after they learned the company had already begun burying the streams there.

Now, environmental group lawyers want Chambers to require the corps to provide earlier public notice of permit proposals to give citizens a chance to review those proposals - and perhaps go to court to stop them - before the damage is done.

Also, they want Chambers to block the Fola permit for the company's Ike Fork No. 1 and Ike Fork No. 2 surface mines.

Among other things, the groups allege that Fola built several sediment ponds at the site without required corps approval. They say that the corps is ignoring potential selenium runoff that would pollute water downstream from the mining operations.



SUPREME COURT REJECTS KATES MOUNTAIN APPEAL

By John McFerrin

The West Virginia Supreme Court has declined to review the decision of the Circuit Court of Greenbrier County in the litigation over Kates Mountain. This means that the decision of the Circuit Court stands. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy had taken a position before the Court in favor of the preservation of Kates Mountain in its natural state.

Kates Mountain is about 3,500 acres in Greenbrier County adjoining Greenbrier State Forest. It is owned by a family in California that has never done anything to develop it. The family has been in California ever since someone emigrated from WV decades ago. Now the family members are at odds on the future of the property.

Some family members want to sell part of the property that is most remote from Greenbrier State Forest for development and sell the remaining 2,500 acres to a buyer who would protect it and ultimately arrange for it to be publicly owned. Such groups as the Trust for Public Lands and the Nature Conservancy routinely take such actions although neither of them has announced any intention to do that at Kates Mountain.

Other family members want to sell the land or develop it with no particular concern for the plants and animals who live there.

The Highlands Conservancy filed a Motion for Brief as an Amicus Curiae. This was in support of the family members who seek to manage the property in a way that would result in its being protected. While the Amicus Curiae was considered by the Court, the Court still rejected the appeal.

Other parties to the appeal have asked that the Court reconsider its decision. Their request is based largely upon their belief that one of the plaintiffs did not knowingly consent to the filing of the action. The Highlands Conservancy is not taking any part in that controversy. While the Conservancy still wishes to see the property remain in its current state, it is no position to participate in any controversy based upon whether or not one of the plaintiffs gave knowing consent.

The *Highlands Voice* is published monthly by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Articles, letters to the editor, graphics, photos, poetry, or other information for publication should be sent to the editor via the internet or by the U.S. Mail by the last Friday of each month. You may submit material for publication either to the address listed above or to the address listed for Highlands Voice Editor on the previous page. Submissions by internet or on a floppy disk are preferred.

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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.

WV HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

2008 FALL REVIEW

October 24 – 26

AFC Retreat Center - Marlinton WV - Pocahontas County
(directions below)

Friday: 6:00 - Snacks featuring locally grown and prepared food in the Recreation Room, which is on the right as you enter the grounds. This will be operation central for the weekend – to gather for outings, ask questions, get directions or just visit with others.

Note: AFC has a policy prohibiting alcoholic beverages at the retreat.

Saturday:

8:00 - Breakfast in the Dining Room

Pick up a bag lunch after breakfast if desired

Outings in the area

Allegheny Trail hike led by Beth Little

Hiking or biking on the Greenbrier River Trail north or south from Marlinton

(bike rentals available in Marlinton at Appalachian Sport)

Other local options to be arranged

5:30 - Dinner at the Opera House in Marlinton – see Elk River Restaurant menu on page 5

7:30 - Program on Marcellus Shale Gas Drilling

Featured speakers:

Katherine Lee Avary, WV Geological and Economic Survey (WVGES)

Dave McMahon, WV Surface Owners Rights Organization (WVSORO)

James Martin, Chief, Office fo Oil & Gas, DEP

Sunday:

8:00 - Breakfast in the Dining Room

Pick up a box lunch if desired

9:00 - Board meeting in the Recreation Room (lunch provided)

Lodging: AFC would like reservations by **Oct 10**, so get them in asap; specify if you want to share

- Bring your bedding and towels (specify bed size in your reservation)
- Dogs allowed on the grounds, but not in the rooms (some people have allergies)
- Motel style rooms with a choice of two twin beds, double bed or queen - \$35/night (there are 26 rooms with twins, 5 with queens and 5 with double beds; one 6 room unit with 5 twin bed rooms and 1 queen has wheelchair access)
- Walker cabin (sleeps 6)– full kitchen, living room with TV (couch folds out into double bed), bedroom with 2 twins, bedroom with queen - \$95/night
- Watson cabin (new) – 2 rooms, one room has 2 queens, 2nd room has queen and bunk beds plus small kitchen (rollaway cot for either room) – full cabin (sleeps 9) \$150/night, room with kitchen (sleeps 5) - \$95/night, room with no kitchen (sleeps 4) - \$70/night
- Nordstrom cabin (sleeps 5)– one room with queen, 2nd room with twins - \$60/night
- RV camping – 30 amp hookup \$20/night; 50 amp \$25/night (shower house access)
- Tent camping - \$15/night (shower house access)

Meals: Please indicate which meals you will be sharing when you make reservations

- Friday snacks (no charge)
- Saturday breakfast - \$7
- Saturday box lunch - \$5
- Saturday dinner - \$20 (limited to 50 people, so make reservations early)
- Sunday breakfast - \$7
- Sunday box lunch - \$5

There is a sign up sheet below to indicate your reservation and a volunteer sign up sheet too. To avoid delay, the best way to make reservations is by email to Beth Little blittle@citynet.net or Cindy Rank clrank@hughes.net You may also call Beth at 304-653-4277 or Cindy at 304-924-5802. Finally, you may mail in your reservation to Beth Little, HC 64 Box 281, Hillsboro, WV 24946.

Directions: From Marlinton (however you get there from southern and southeastern parts), take Rt 39 east 5 miles, bear left on Rt 28 for barely one mile, turn right on Huntersville Rd (road sign on left), immediately after crossing bridge turn left to AFC Retreat (see sign). From the north (like Elkins), take Rt 92 south, turn right on Rt 28 in Dunmore, go about 15 miles and turn left on Huntersville Rd (road sign on right), immediately after crossing bridge turn left to AFC Retreat (see sign).

Fall Review Reservation

Lodging (remember to bring your bedding and towels):

Motel rooms at \$35.00/night (for one or two persons)

Indicate number of persons (if one person, would you like to share a room? Yes No)

Fri night - Check bed size: twins double queen

Sat night - Check bed size: twins double queen

Watson cabin

full cabin (sleeps 9) at \$150.00/night

one room & kitchen (sleeps 5) at \$95.00/night

one room no kitchen (sleeps 4) \$70.00/night

Walker cabin (sleeps 6) - \$95.00

Nordstrom cabin (sleeps 5) at \$60.00/night

Meals – indicate number of persons

Friday snacks – no charge

Saturday breakfast - \$7.00 each

Saturday box lunch - \$5.00 each

Saturday dinner at \$23.00 each (includes tax and gratuity)

Sunday breakfast - \$7.00

Sunday box lunch - \$5.00

Registration fee - \$5.00

_____ Total amount

Name _____

Phone _____

Fall Review Volunteers Signup Sheet

Friday evening for registration

Clean up after snacks

Saturday (in shifts?) for registration, directing outings, etc. in the

Recreation Room

Setting up tables at 5:00 Saturday at the Opera House in Marlinton (dinner at 5:30)

Break down tables and put up chairs before the program 6:30 (program at 7:00)



West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Fall Review Dinner
Marlinton October 25, 2008

Apple Walnut Salad with Gorgonzola
Cheese and Apple Cider Vinaigrette

Black Tea smoked chicken drizzled with
sweet soy sauce

Spinach, leek and cheese enchiladas with
green chili sauce

Jasmine Rice
Spaghetti Squash baked with zesty Creole
sauce

Apple Rhubarb Tart
Chocolate Ganache Cheesecake

Includes iced tea, hot tea or coffee

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.

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.

POWER LINES THREATEN NORTH FORK RIVER

By B. Dan Berger

On this relatively cool overcast morning, I am a few hundred yards downstream from the entrance of Harman's Cabins, fly-fishing for small-mouth bass and any lingering trout that may have survived the summer or my fellow fishermen. My four year old daughter Shelby is with me.

I read again recently about the proposed power lines that will run through stunning North Fork Valley and other parts of our beautiful state. As I stand here in the low, slow-moving North Fork River, I try to envision these massive structures running along Highway 28/55 and subsequently, the river. I am having much difficulty.

I also attempt to visualize the same scene from the top of North Fork Mountain after a hike up, looking down at the large electric serpent snaking below. In my humble opinion, if this proposed power line route is approved, it would be a travesty for our area.

Now, I must be honest with you folks. In full disclosure, my family and I live in a small home along the road in question. And yes, it frightens me that my property's value will drop. It also frightens me that the reason we and others chose to live here, the beautiful mountains, the gurgling river, the gorgeous views, the wildlife, will be forever ruined. And forever is a very long time. As in forever.

As a lifelong outdoorsman and a Teddy Roosevelt conservationist, I have seen small communities and struggling counties that are located in other beautiful parts of our great country become major outdoor-related tourist destinations (so-called ecotourism). This in turn brings reasonable economic development, more visitors, increased revenue for local businesses, more jobs, better education... the list goes on and on. But the common thread with all of these areas is the fact

they don't have anything ugly running through the middle of them.

And a large power line is ugly (unless of course you are the power line's mother. Sorry, just being silly). I understand the need to plan for additional electricity for the people in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC, but their proposed route for this powerline is not wise for OUR area's economic or environmental future. The power companies should use existing routes as opposed to destroying additional lands, rivers and streams.

The kind folks at the Grant County Convention and Visitors Bureau are doing a wonderful job in beginning to aggressively promote all we have to offer in our fantastic part of Wild & Wonderful West Virginia. Their focus is wisely on our area's mountains, Fall colors, rivers and streams, wildlife, fishing, hiking, hunting, the arts, crafts, festivals, camping, etc. I don't see anything in their brochures or on their website about: Come Visit and See Our Big Ugly Power Lines. Don't believe me? Go see for yourself at their new terrific website at www.grantcountywva.com.

As I gently unhook my second fish and release it back to the cool tumbling water, I can feel sadness and anger seeping out my pores. The older I get, and hopefully wiser (though my wife has serious doubts), I realize the only constant in life is change. But I just can't see this proposed change along the North Fork River being good for our local people, businesses or visitors. The math just doesn't add up. Then again, I could be wrong. I never really liked math.

Dan Berger is an avid fly-fisherman and lives in Cabins, WV. All his past published articles can be enjoyed at: www.mtnriverhome.com/Berger_Chronicle

HUGH KEEPS GOING (Continued from p. 2)

Coal River Mountain. Our board had adopted a resolution in support of this project (see the August issue of the Voice). We have been impressed by the work of Rory McIlmoil and his associates at Coal River Mountain Watch, assembling the numbers to make a clear comparison between a wind energy facility and the surface mining that would otherwise devastate the mountain. Besides the forest, soil, and free-running streams saved, the carbon kept in place, and the relief from blasting, floods, and contamination, the wind alternative would be better for the local communities' economic health (employment, taxes) in the long run, i.e., over twenty years or more.

Here's an example of what they're up against, in-state. Last summer, the *Charleston Daily Mail* ran a condescending editorial on the citizens' proposal. Under the bland headline, "Wind farming is not a panacea," the editorial cited familiar problems: wind's inconsistency, turbines' effects on birds, bats, and habitat, industrialization of our most beautiful places. But those arguments were beside the point on Coal River Mountain, where the choice was starkly presented: blow up the mountain, or save it by installing wind turbines.

The *Daily Mail* opined, "The concern over mountaintop mining [sic] is one that most people share. Extracting coal is dangerous, transporting coal is hard on the roads, and burning the coal to turn the turbines that generate the electricity is never going to be without some sort of air pollution."

Those "concerns" run to coal mining in general, not to mountaintop removal per se. They'd rather change the subject. Damage to roads is high on their list; effects on people who live downstream, not to mention the environment, are beyond their view, except for this: "They worry that their hills will be topped in the pursuit of the coal . . ." "Topped"! How cute.

Before we present the Euphemism Award, though, we should consider a piece by Bill Raney, President of the West Virginia Coal Association, and Jim Bunn, Chairman of their "Friends of Coal." Writing in the *Morgantown Dominion-Post* on the day before the Coal Bowl, Raney and Bunn extolled "the men and women who, everyday, go underground or sculpt the earth to produce high quality West Virginia coal".

That's right: "sculpt the earth."
It won't stick.

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.



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!

PSC SEEKS INDEPENDENT POWER LINE ASSESSMENT

By Frank Young

The WV Public Service Commission (PSC) is seeking firms to submit a "Request for an Expression of Interest" in evaluating the anticipated application for another new WV power line proposal.

The Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) power line is a proposed 244 miles long, 765 Kilovolt (KV) transmission line that would run from American Electric Power's (AEP) Amos substation near St. Albans, WV, across central and north-eastern West Virginia to northeast of Martinsburg, WV, then from there 46 additional miles of new twin-circuit 500-kV transmission line to a new substation southeast of Frederick, Md.

The PATH project is a joint venture between Allegheny Energy, Inc. and American Electric Power, Inc. It is expected that an application for permits to construct and operate the PATH line will be submitted to the WV Public Service Commission by December 1st.

The staff of the PSC is seeking a qualified firm to evaluate: (1) the need for PATH across the lands of West Virginia, and (2) the economic impact to the state of PATH.

According to the PSC's "Request for an Expression of Interest", the evaluation would include: Load forecasting; New Power Plant projections; Order of generator dispatch to solve overloads; Consideration of greenhouse gas legislation impacts; Evaluation of alternative transmission options, and an analysis of both positive and negative economic impacts of PATH on the state of West Virginia.

This is a significant development. A 500 KV power line, dubbed TrAIL, proposed to run across northern West Virginia, was recently approved by the PSC. But the WV Sierra Club and other TrAIL opponents remain very critical of the WV PSC for alleged insufficient scrutiny by the PSC's own Engineering and Legal division staff.

On August 1st the PSC approved the application for TrAIL. But immediately the WV Sierra Club and other opposing parties filed a Petition for Reconsideration with the PSC. The PSC has not yet ruled on that Petition. And until it does rule, TrAILCo does not have eminent domain authority with which it can procure rights-of-way from unwilling landowners. But according to a late September Associated Press news article, about 38 West Virginia landowners have received letters reminding them that their property could be taken by eminent domain if they don't negotiate with the company building the multi-state TrAIL power line.

The general both regulatory and public consensus is that the recent flurry of proposed new electricity transmission lines is directly related to transporting electricity generated by proposed new coal fired power plants in the Ohio Valley to areas near the nation's east coast.

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 tri-glide buckle closure. Cost is \$12 by mail. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to James Solley, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

TREE PLANTING IN CANAAN VALLEY

By Dave Saville

A tree planting weekend on the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge was held Saturday and Sunday, September 20 and 21, 2008. The event celebrated National Public Lands Day. Over 60 volunteers with the Adventure WV program from West Virginia University and Boy Scout Troop 81 from Kingwood, WV participated and helped to plant over 2,000 red spruce trees.

This is part of the ongoing effort by the Refuge and the Highlands

Conservancy to restore some of the ancient, high elevation red spruce forest. The two day event began each day with a discussion of the historic role of this forest, and why we are working to restore it. National Public Lands Day participants give time and talents to the lands that they enjoy throughout the year.

American Forest's Global ReLeaf program and National Environmental Education Foundation has provided funding for this year's planting effort. Volunteers rode the chairlift at Timberline 4-Seasons Resort to the top of Cabin Mountain where they planted trees in an effort to create a connecting corridor between two areas of spruce forest. The tree planting army also took a hike to Dolly Sods Wilderness where they learned the importance of protecting and restoring these areas of our public lands.



Adventure WV students from West Virginia University catch a chairlift ride back down off the mountain after a day of tree planting. Thanks to Timberline 4-Seasons Resort for partnering with us on this project.



Boy Scouts from Troop 81 in Kingwood take a break from planting red spruce trees to eat lunch on top of Cabin Mountain.



Robb Hampton, National Environmental Education Foundation, hands check for red spruce trees to Refuge Biologist Ken Sturm and WV Highlands Conservancy's Dave Saville. NEEF provided the grant for the National Public Lands Day event. This year's grants focus on tree planting events, in honor of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps efforts for conservation, which included planting of an estimated 3 billion trees.

HIKING SENECA CREEK

By Mike Juskelis

This was to be a simple 5 mile out-and-back along Seneca Creek with a day hike to visit the High Meadows on the slopes of Spruce Knob Mt. For an added treat, we would attempt to find some "Hidden High Meadows" that Jonathan Jessup and others have spoken of.

I was joined by Gadget Gyrl, Moonshine, Skywalker, Indiana Moser, Melissa, Fe2O3 and .com. With the stream crossings rather easy due to the low water, we made great time. It seemed almost every good campsite had at least one tent in it. We arrived at the waterfall camps well ahead of the meet-up group. The first 2 sites were taken. Fortunately the third and

After dinner we got a pretty good fire going. Still, we all drifted off to bed pretty early. The next day we had a casual breakfast, rehung our food and began our trek up the Huckleberry Tr. This was the only climb of note for the entire trip. It was probably close to 1000

spruce needles. In less than 0.5 miles we found ourselves in the middle of "The Mother of all High Meadows".

Looking east provided fantastic views of a valley with Spruce Knob Mountain flanking it on the right and an un-named peak on the left with a large peak in the center of it all. Turning left and walking to the crest of the meadow provided westward views across the Seneca Creek drainage of Allegheny Mt and the tips of Rich Mt beyond that. We kept expecting to hear the Van Trapp family singing "The Sounds of Music". This was definitely a place to eat lunch and soak in the sun.



feet over 1.5 miles, just steep enough to provide a good workout. We stopped at a couple of lesser meadows on the way to the Lumberjack Trail and took in the views while Moonshine, Dottie and others chowed down on a ton of Blackberries.

Once on the Lumberjack trail we quickened the pace. In two miles we left the official trails and continued on the continuation of the railroad grade. First, we found a small, weedy meadow with a nice campsite under some trees. Beyond that was a much wider meadow, much of which was surrounded by Red Spruce.

A barely discernible trail took us across the meadow to a wide trail through the spruce. The tread was covered with a thick carpet of

After lunch we tried to find the continuation of the trail but with no luck. We returned to the official High Meadows trail stopping briefly at every one to take in the views and, yes, graze on more blackberries. The next day we ate breakfast, packed up and headed back to the cars. .com and Fe2O3 headed out in one direction while the rest of us made a bee line to the Gateway Restaurant for a rewarding lunch.

final one was not. It was just big enough to handle our group.

After setting up camp Skywalker, Indiana, and Moonshine took a dip in the pool below the waterfall. They assured me that the water was cold and I believed them as I settled for just washing the sweat off of my legs and arms with my bandana. It was here where Moonshine got his trail name.

Leave a Legacy of hope for the future
Remember the Highlands Conservancy in your will. Plan now to provide a wild and wonderful future for your children and future generations. Bequests keep our organization strong and will allow your voice to continue to be heard. Your thoughtful planning now will allow us to continue our work to protect wilderness, wildlife, clean air and water and our way of life.

Editorial Faux Pas
In last month's issue of *The Highlands Voice*, the location of the annual meeting of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy was incorrectly listed as the Opera House in Marlinton. This was incorrect. The meeting will be AFC Campground, not the Opera House. Everything else in the notice was true, as was everything else in the *Voice* (more or less).

THE NORTHERN FLYING SQUIRREL: CELEBRATE OR LITIGATE?

By Glenn Smith

It was great to see a fair article on the front page of your September issue of the West Virginia Highlands Voice, regarding the delisting of the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel. The survival and recovery of the squirrel is truly a success story for West Virginia and Virginia and deserves to be celebrated as such.

The delisting process has been a rewarding and frustrating process that has crept steadily along for more than 5 years. The entire biological review and decision-making process has been 100 percent untainted and completed according to well established legal standards. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a complicated statute and challenging for those who don't work with it. Given this inherent complexity and an often cynical view of "the government," along with the hyperbole voiced by numerous local, regional and national environmental groups, it is no wonder the public is left wondering what to believe.

I can tell you based on my personal knowledge as project manager for the delisting process that the appropriate legal standards were followed in this process and that there was none of the political interference that tainted ESA decisions in other parts of the country. This decision has been scrutinized by the Department of Interior's Inspector General's Office and the Government Accountability Office. It was the subject of congressional investigations and inquiries over the past 2 years. These investigations have uncovered no wrongdoing, no illegal or unethical behavior and no political interference. The reason for that is simple – there was none.

Service biologists independently reviewed the best available scientific and commercial data (the legal information standard of the ESA) available, considered all information submitted during the comment period, coordinated with their state and U.S. Forest Service counter-

parts, and concluded that the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel had recovered and is no longer threatened with extinction. Once that conclusion is reached, the appropriate step was to remove the species from the endangered species list. For better or worse, the ESA does not allow consideration of the popularity of a decision with the public, nor does it take into account local political desires. The decisions are based solely on the best available science. So I hope that the squirrel will become the "poster child" for resilience, persistence and restoration of the flying squirrel and its highlands ecosystem, and not for litigation based on a misunderstanding of ESA standards.

Mr. Smith is the Assistant Regional Endangered Species Coordinator, Northeast Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Hadley, Massachusetts.



COURT OF APPEALS HEARS MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL CASE

On September 23, 2008, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit heard an appeal of earlier decisions by United States District Court Judge Robert chambers that would restrict mountaintop removal strip mining practices.

Bush administration lawyers, Massey Energy and coal industry groups are appealing two 2007 rulings by U.S. District Judge Robert C. Chambers to toughen regulation of the practice.

Judge Chambers concluded in one ruling that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had not fully evaluated the potential environmental damage before approving four Massey permits. In the second order, Chambers ruled that the Clean Water Act does not allow coal operators to build in-stream sediment ponds at the bottom of valley fills.

This is the fourth major mountaintop removal ruling by a federal judge in West Virginia to go before the 4th Circuit. Appeals court panels in the three other cases overturned rulings

that would have more strictly policed the practice.

The outcome of this case may be different because of the makeup of the panel of judges that heard the case. Although there are fifteen judges currently on the Court (including four who are retired but still occasionally hear cases), only three hear each case. In this case, one of the judges selected was Blane Michael, a West Virginia judge who previously joined in criticism of lax federal regulation of mountaintop removal coal mining is part of the three-judge panel hearing a review of the latest court ruling on the issue.

Neither Michael nor the other West Virginia judge on the 4th Circuit — Robert B. King — served on panels that heard the previous three mountaintop removal cases. But in 2006, the entire court was asked to reconsider a three-judge panel's decision to overturn a ruling by U.S. District Judge Joseph R. Goodwin that mandated more complete environmental reviews of mining permits considered by the

corps. The court voted 5-3 not to reconsider the case. But King and Michael issued a dissent that criticized lax regulation of mountaintop removal.

In the dissent in that case, Judge King wrote, "This case is of exceptional importance to the nation and, in particular, to the states of the Appalachian region."

"The Appalachian mountains, the oldest mountain chain in the world, are one of the nation's richest, most diverse, and most delicate ecosystems, an ecosystem that the mountaintop coal mining authorized by the corps' general permit may irrevocably damage," the dissent said. Judge Michael joined in that dissent.

HIKING IN SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

By Mike Juskelis

We couldn't have asked for better weather. The daytime temps for Saturday and Sunday were in the low 80s. A cold front with high winds blew in Sunday night dropping the daytime temps down into the 70s. We had clear skies for the majority of the trip. Wesiana Sunshine, Cognac Jack, Moonshine, Don and Cindy joined me for some or all of the adventure. We had several deer visit us, the best was a large 10 point buck. Also had a young black bear visit us a couple of times. Never got a camera on "Junior" though.

The hiking was great. We did the standard Rip-Rap Hollow loop on Sunday. Great views were had at both Calvary Rocks and Chimney Rocks as well as an extended view along Rock Mt created by a recent forest fire. Here we were also treated to an added attraction: Showy Goldenrod lined both sides of the trail.

By the time we descended to the low point of the hollow I was ready for a dip and the stream flowing through the hollow provided us with a nice pool to relax by/in. The 2.5 mile climb up Wildcat Ridge was a bit tedious but the final leg along the AT was quite pleasant.

That night the campground was buffeted by high winds (but no rain!). When I awoke I had to pull the picnic canopy out of the woods and peg it to the ground and re-secure the tent. After eating a breakfast of pancakes and sausage made by Janet, Cognac Jack, Moonshine and I drove down to milepost 97 on Skyline drive to begin our trek up to Turk Mountain.

We used the AT to reach the spur trail. We took in some views along the way. As we crossed Skyline Drive we took in the view from the Sawmill Run Over-

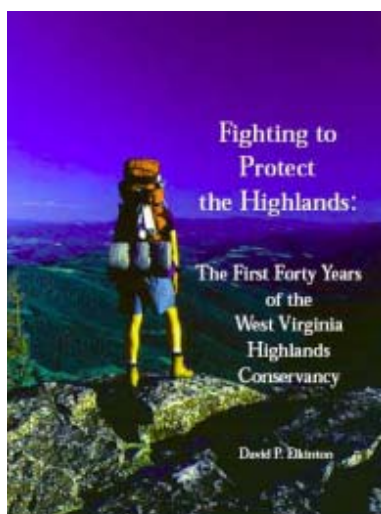
look. We stopped a couple of times climbing up to the Turk Mt Summit.

Our first view was to the south and east and was a bit disappointing. Cognac Jack suggested we scramble out onto the rocks at the true summit. There we found a great 180 degree view. We had lunch there (I took one of my patented 10 minute power naps.) before descending back to the AT.

We soon crossed Skyline Drive again and descended to the Moormans River using the Turk Branch Trail. During periods of high water this section is probably pretty picturesque. Near the bottom we found what would probably make a nice waterfall uphill from a pair of old bridge abutments. Both Turk Branch and the river are mere streams here so crossings were not an issue. The remaining 1.8 miles was a gradual 600 foot climb along the fire road back to the cars.



Panoramic view from the top of Turk Mt.



For the first time, a comprehensive history of West Virginia's most influential activist environmental organization. Author Dave Elkinton, the Conservancy's third president, and a twenty-year board member, not only traces the major issues that have occupied the Conservancy's energy, but profiles more than twenty of its volunteer leaders.

Learn about how the Conservancy stopped road building in Otter Creek, how a Corps of Engineers wetland permit denial saved Canaan Valley, and why Judge Haden restricted mountaintop removal mining. Also read Sayre Rodman's account of the first running of the Gauley, how college students helped save the Cranberry Wilderness, and why the highlands are under threat as never before.

With a foreword by former congressman Ken Hechler, the book's chapters follow the battle for wilderness preservation, efforts to stop many proposed dams and protect free-flowing rivers, the 25-year struggle to save the Canaan Valley, how the Corridor H highway was successfully re-routed around key environmental landmarks, and concluding with the current controversy over wind farm development. One-third of the text tells the story of the Conservancy's never-ending fight to control the abuses of coal mining, especially mountaintop removal mining. The final chapter examines what makes this small, volunteer-driven organization so successful.

From the cover by photographer Jonathan Jessup to the 48-page index, this book will appeal both to Conservancy members and friends and to anyone interested in the story of how West Virginia's mountains have been protected against the forces of over-development, mismanagement by government, and even greed.

518 pages, 6x9, color cover, published by Pocahontas Press

To order your copy for \$24.95, plus \$3.00 shipping, visit the Conservancy's website, wvhighlands.org, where payment is accepted by credit card and PayPal.

Or write: WVHC, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.
Proceeds support the Conservancy's ongoing environmental projects.

West Virginia Mountain Odyssey



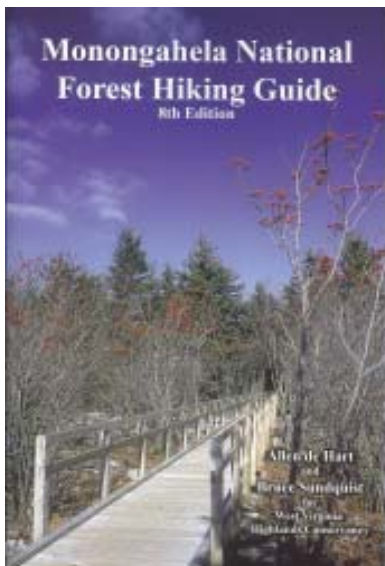
Outings, Education and Beyond

Saturday to Monday 10/25-27/08 Cold Mountain/Mount Pleasant Backpack Base Camp w/Day Hike, George Washington National Forest, VA: Easy 3 mile backpack into and out of camp with a sensational moderate 12 mile day hike in between with some of the most breathtaking views in central VA. Suitable for experienced hikers who wish to move up to backpacking. Leave from the Broken Land Parkway/Rt 32 Park and Ride (West Side) at 10:00. Pre-registration required. Contact Mike Juskelis at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com or 410-439-4964.

October 24-25 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Fall Review Near Marlinton, Pocahontas County. Varied activities and outings. For details see the announcement elsewhere in this issue.

Saturday to Monday 11/01-03/08 Hog Camp Gap to Spy Rock Backpack/Base Camp: Strenuous rating but with low daily mileage. We will hike 7 miles over scenic Tar Jacket Ridge and set up a base camp at the Seeley-Woodworth shelter. The next day we will hike packless to Spy Rock. The round trip will only be about 6 miles. If the weather is good we will linger a bit at Spy Rock, enjoying its 360 degree view for as long as we can. On the hike out we will add Lovington Spring Tr to add some variety to the third day. . Leave from the Broken Land Parkway/Rt 32 Park and Ride (West Side) at 7:00. Pre-registration required. Contact Mike Juskelis at mjuskelis@cablespeed.com or 410-439-4964.

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 MTR. 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) 542-1134; (304) 549-3287.



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
Charleston, WV 25321
OR

Order from our website at
www.wvhighlands.org

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
 - All new, full color topographic maps have been created and are included on this CD. They include all points referenced in the text.
 - Special Features not found in the printed version of the Hiking Guide:
Interactive pdf format allows you to click on a map reference in the text, and that map centered on that reference comes up.
 - Trail mileages between waypoints have been added to the maps.
 - ALL NEW Printable, full color, 24K scale topographic maps of many of the popular hiking areas, including Cranberry, Dolly Sods, Otter Creek and many more
- Price: \$20.00 from the same address.

A TREE FOR ALL SEASONS

By George E. Beetham Jr.

"Chestnuts roasting by an open fire, Jack Frost nipping at your nose ..." That's the opening line of a Christmas song.

You are to be forgiven if you have not experienced roasted chestnuts. It's been a long time since the American chestnut tree succumbed to a blight brought to this country from Asia.

Unlike Bert Lahr's cowardly lion in "The Wizard of Oz," chestnuts were once true kings of the forested Appalachian Mountains.

Chestnuts grew to tremendous size in climax forests up and down the chain, and even eastward on the Piedmont Plain.

Early settlers discovered the chestnut and its many wonders. Truly trees for all seasons, chestnuts were prized for their wood, bark, and their sweet, fleshy nuts.

First, the wood: chestnut wood is very hard, very dense, and extremely resistant to rot. It was prized for logs to build cabins. Perhaps settlers had little idea how good it was, but they would learn in time.

Chestnut logs were hewed up to two feet wide, their sides trimmed, to form the walls of log cabins. Planks for flooring, doors, and window trim rounded out the harvest of chestnut wood. Pegs were shaped to join boards together or a place to hang clothing.

The hard, dense chestnut logs, if chinked properly with mud or other materials, kept out the cold of winter, providing a relatively cozy home as snow and wind howled outside.

There was another use for chestnut. Split into rails, it was used to fence in pastures. What became known as snake rail fences were once a staple of the Appalachian landscape.

Rails would be stacked at angles to form fences with zigzag patterns.

During the Civil War, many of these snake rail fences were torn down by the armies, the wood used to fuel campfires. Too, the settlers who built with chestnut used it for fires. The dense, hard wood takes a long time to burn, forming a bed of hot coals as the wood is consumed. Chestnut logs kept fires burning through the night.

As it turned out, chestnut log cabins stood for more than 200 years, seemingly impervious to decay. Rails used in fencing are still used for fires when they can be found in the woods.

Chestnut was used by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s as cribbing that formed a base for sections of Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park in Virginia.

It lasted well into the 1980s when a project to rebuild the drive began. After 50 years of being in the ground where moisture, fungus, and insects could attack, the chestnut cribbing was still structurally sound, although it would not have lasted a lot longer.

The bark of chestnuts was separated from the logs. The bark was useful in the process of tanning leather. The tannin contained in the bark was the active ingredient that tanned leather, making it pliable and durable.

Unsurprisingly, tanning operations were spread throughout the mountain regions at the height of the trade.

We've saved the best for last. The fruity nuts, when roasted, are tasty treats. Chestnuts could be roasted and used as stuffing for turkey or chicken. They could be peeled and used as a snack. Or they could be used in other recipes, or as fodder for hogs.

The blight hit the chestnut forests in 1919. By the 1930s, only gaunt skeletons of trees still stood defiantly, the resistant wood defying decay.

When President Franklin Roosevelt traveled to the new Shenandoah National Park for a dedication ceremony, a forest of dead chestnuts stood on what is now known as Big Meadows. The president noted the gaunt, gray trees, labeling it a ghost forest.

Chestnuts never wholly succumbed to the blight. Shoots would sprout from old stumps, grow to not quite sapling size and then succumb to the blight. Here and there trees grew to a point where nuts were produced for a season or two before they, too would succumb.

Since the blight, botanists have continued to work in an effort to produce blight resistant chestnut trees. Happy to say, results to date are encouraging.

Editor's note: This column originally appeared in the author's "Adventures on Earth" column in *The Review*, a weekly newspaper serving the northwest section of Philadelphia.



T-SHIRTS

White, heavy cotton T-shirts with the **I ♥ 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. Short sleeve in sizes: S, M, L, XL, and XXL. Long sleeve in 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 ATTEN: James Solley, WVHC, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT CLEAN COAL

By Don Gasper

I was very excited as I read a regular solicitation of support from the League of Conservation Voters in Washington — it was anything but regular. They are working to translate your environmental values into national priorities. This mailing addressed one issue - the use of coal!

Its heading says “Stand up against big coal’s filthy lies.” Wow! Someone in Washington is listening. They say, “as you well know there is no such thing as ‘clean coal’. It is dirty when you mine it. It’s dirty when you transport it. It’s dirty when you burn it in any form.” First they want us to sign a petition to our W.Va. Senators. (Fat lot of good that will do, but listen what they want us to sign.) I will be happy to sign the petition, and write the same to everyone working on the new energy policy - Rep. N. Pelosi, Sen. Harry Reid, the presidential candidates, everyone.

The petition says, coal to liquid fuel is a bad idea. It doubles the carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions over the production of regular gasoline - just when we must quickly and practically reduce these emissions even globally. These new emissions can not realistically be pumped underground. Ecologists tell us generally “there is no away”. The petition says - I oppose guaranteeing billions in the construction of these plants, a minimum price for this new fuel, and big government purchases for the next 24 years. We do not need coal to liquid fuels. Instead of protecting the special interests of Dirty Coal - reduce global warming and promote clean energy. Cap global warming pollution, and encourage clean energy by redirecting the billions in tax credits and subsidies to develop clean, renewable energy.

Second, in their enclosed letter, they furnish added information. Coal

to Liquid is not new, it was the fuel used by the Germans in World War II. Now energy firms are lobbying to have it become a favored fuel in the United States. From 1998 to 2003 they spent \$400 million lobbying. Our members of Congress have received millions in campaign contributions. In return energy companies had received billions in tax credits and subsidies. Right now these special interests might spend \$132 million to influence citizens and lawmakers so the “status quo” is maintained and the “change” we must have is crippled.

We must fight back. We need to support legislators who will fight for our interests. They will need our help to get elected. Electing a president who wants a vague cleaner energy policy is not enough, The Congress must be in a position to help, and even push the President to get the mandatory cap legislation,* to support the needed crucial renewable electrical sources, and greatly and promptly reduce our global warming emissions. The billions given now to promote fossil fuel should be redirected to modern, today’s, renewables. The cost of renewables to the environment is small.

Wind, solar, hydro and geothermal (often called “alternatives”) replace harmful fossil fuels. There is a free component, but up front costs are large, and subsidies are needed.

Finally they enclose a single-page “fact sheet”, a poster almost, entitled “The Dirty Truth about Liquid Coal”. Coal is not cheap, its true cost is incredible. They note it is not “a bridge to the future of energy, but liquid coal is a toxic return to the past”.

WILDERNESS: IT’S A GOOD THING

By Rev. Dennis D. Sparks, Robert Bitner Jr., Mike Price and John Manchester

Congress still has time to preserve wilderness with Wild Monogahela Act

As West Virginians we believe that preserving our wilderness is one of the greatest things we can do for our state. That’s why we have all come together in support of the Wild Mon bill. We think it is the best thing for all of us, including future generations of West Virginians.

Election season is upon us and while it seems that we are bombarded by information about the presidential candidates, Congress still has time to get some great work done on the Wild Monogahela Act before the end of the session.

Senators Byrd and Rockefeller have an opportunity to help move legislation through the Senate that would forever protect some of America’s greatest wild public lands including 37,000 acres of the Monongahela National Forest right here in West Virginia.

The Wild Monogahela Act has been crafted to support many interests — going to the table and making compromises, but all with the final goal of preserving some of West Virginia’s most “wild and wonderful” places.

As West Virginians we believe that preserving our wilderness is one of the greatest things we can do for our state. That’s why we have all come together in support of the Wild Mon bill. We think it is the best thing for all of us, including future generations of West Virginians. That is why

we testified in favor of this legislation in the Congressional hearings. The citizens whom we represent support the permanent protection of our wild and wonderful heritage.

The AFL-CIO unanimously voted to support wilderness designation because they believe it will help with the economy and development of rural communities. People are attracted to, and businesses want to locate or stay in, places that offer a high quality of life, are clean, beautiful and where there are ample opportunities to connect with nature.

These wilderness areas provide outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing and hiking, which improves the quality of life for West Virginians. They also increase the tourism economy here in West Virginia — protecting these areas and the outdoor recreation opportunities they provide not only keeps West Virginia competitive in regional and national markets, but also provides a much-needed and affordable outdoor experience for our local residents.

Among the many draws to areas like Roaring Plains are the hunting and fishing opportunities that can be found there. Trout fishing in the Mon can’t be beat and that is why the Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited wholly supports the Wild Mon bill. This legislation would protect and help to restore some of the finest Eastern Brook Trout streams in the world.

The appeal for these wild areas does not stop there. Many members of the faith community, including the West Virginia Council of Churches, have also come out in support of wilderness protection. As Jesus of Nazareth often drew apart to wild places to pray, we recognize the continuing power and importance to the human spirit of our remaining wild lands. It is a place where you can find spiritual inspiration and meaningfully connect with God. These examples are just a sampling of the varied and well-rounded support that the Wild Mon Bill has received.

It would be a shame to make it this far in the legislative process only to come away empty-handed because Congress ran out of time. We, who testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee in support of the Wild Monogahela Act, as well as all of the citizens of West Virginia, are counting on Sen. Byrd and Sen. Rockefeller to try their best to get this bill passed and leave the lasting legacy of West Virginia’s most gorgeous wild lands for future generations to enjoy.

Mr. Sparks is executive director of the West Virginia Council of Churches; Mr. Bitner is vice president of the Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited; Mr. Price is president of United Steelworkers Local 8-89 and a member of the AFL-CIO; and Mr. Manchester is mayor of Lewisburg.

SOME THOUGHTS ON ENERGY POLICY

By Don Gasper

In July, 2007, Governor Joe Manchin created a West Virginia Division of Energy, a part of the Department of Commerce. It includes an energy efficiency program, Coalfield Community Development Program and promotion of oil, gas and coal and renewables to provide energy security for the nation. It has a Public Energy Advisory Authority that consists of agency heads, experts and citizen representation.

The Advisory Authority finished its first report to the Governor late last winter. It had held a series of open public hearings. Quite a few citizens advised using alternative sources of energy and less dependency on coal. However they also listened to the importance of coal to W.Va. and the nation. Because the Governor favors it, the Authority considered the coal to liquid process. He was not advised otherwise, although the requirements for water were great and the carbon emissions have to be pumped underground for safe storage (as yet an unproven technology).

The advisors' report was useful in some ways. At the same time, it was so disappointing to citizens in its direction that they prepared a Citizen's Report, that they would support. This was hastily done as its "release" to the press had to quickly follow the Governor's new program announcement. The citizens' report was a good start.

The new Division of Energy promotes the use of compact fluorescent light bulbs; insulating and reducing air leaks; efficient heating and cooling units; and turning off lights – particularly in public buildings. Finally hybrid car use is encouraged.

At the same time, it is noted that there is no state rebate fund for hybrids to add to the federal incentive for their purchase. There is no noticeable use of hybrids in the state's own fleet. It was not noted that the electric car that can be recharged at night, when electricity should be cheaper, can greatly improve our air very quickly.

The new Division is aware of the Cool Cities Program of the U.S. Dept. of Energy, but there is no support or implementation for public transportation with busses running on natural gas. School busses should also be run on natural gas. (This is a little odd in our "coal state", as gas vehicles produce less harmful emissions, and could produce power plant pollution allowances.) The West Virginia Dept. of Energy program does not even mention solar panels, geo-thermal wells or hydro.

It is promising to learn that two hydro-electric turbines may be placed in Sutton Dam. It would seem that this new Division of Energy is in a good position to encourage large stores such as Lowes, Home Depot and even Wal-Mart to install solar panels on their huge roofs to off-set a bit their huge carbon foot-print. Some schools, where these lessons should be taught, should also have panels. Some government buildings should also. Solar panels should be sold just as paint, lumber, etc. are—with instructions or contacts with installers.

Further, as this new Dept. of Energy seems to be charged with a Coalfield Recovery Program, in Germany 250,000 jobs are reported (C.N.N. News) now in the field of renewables. Solar panels could be manufactured there. Wind-tower power generators could be placed on some strip-mines. They could lastly promote gardens. Growing your own food, reducing transportation costs and packaging and processing costs.

The garden is a way each of us can help. As with the "Victory Garden" of World War II, nearly every family had one, we all pulled together, united in the war effort. We are in no less a war today. To save the planet we must all pull together.

A new federal energy policy shows much promising relief. Our new W.Va. Energy Department may show some promise, and W.Va. will be dragged along by the nation's clean-up. The nation is in no mood (2 to 1 against) for more Mountain Top Removal that has buried streams and transformed huge expanses of one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world into a moonscape of barren plateaus and rubble. A new federal energy policy is hopefully forth-coming for this nation next year, and citizens must begin asking for it now. Sadly our presidential candidates seem presently not to recognize the extent and urgency of this problem and the real "change" that is needed.

Local power that does not depend on power plants or transmission lines will be encouraged. Solar and wind are themselves intermittent, but are independent of brown-outs and grid failure and frustrate terrorists.

We will have more efficiency, building eco-friendly homes with geo-thermal wells for heating and cooling at 54 degrees and use of sunlight in their design. We will have cars that plug in to recharge at night. All vehicles will be cleaner, using more bio-fuel (not from corn, perhaps algae) and natural gas. They will get better mileage. There is much Research and

Development awaiting a fair hearing in a new administration, and more funding for it will quickly put an end to the terrible grip fossil fuel has had on America – and the world.

We can suggest ways that each of us can help. A shower takes only 25% of the water used in a tub-bath. Planting just three shade trees strategically around your home can cut your power bill by 40% - and they take up CO2. A list follows, and we must all help.

Switch to CFL bulbs. Turn off lights when you leave the room. Set the thermostat at 68 degrees in winter, 78 degrees in summer. Turn down the water heater to 120 degrees. Wash clothes in cold water and air or line dry them. Use rechargeable batteries. Recycle. Compost. Take mass transit. Ride your bike. Carpool. Drive 55. Walk to the store. Set your fridge to 37 degrees. Set your freezer to 5 degrees and keep it full (use containers filled with water). Turn off the dry cycle on your dishwasher. Unplug "energy vampires" like TVs, DVD players, and iPod chargers when not in use. Install motion-activated light switches. Use low-flow showerheads.

Use a power-consumption meter to track down energy vampires. Choose a power supplier that uses renewable energy. Support renewable power by paying a premium on your electric bills ("green pricing"). Insulate your home. Eat local. Use a laptop. Learn to drive stick-shift autos. They get better mileage. Convert your fridge to run on propane. Switch your home energy source from electric to gas. Buy only Energy Star-rated appliances. Get a front loading washing machine. Install an on-demand water heater. Install double glazed windows, or retrofit old ones.

Install a gray-water system...or two-stage flush toilets...or composting toilets. Use "daylighting" products such as solar tubes, and a parabolic reflector. Install photovoltaic panels on your roof, Install a condensing boiler for central heat. Replace your fireplace with a high-efficiency wood stove. Power your fridge with cold air from outside with a Freeaire system. Replace your furnace and AC with a geothermal heat pump—and upgrade it to heat your water. Plant a tree. Produce your own energy from biogas. Get yourself a wind turbine. Vote for candidates that are aware of our planet's environmental crisis and offers effective leadership.

HIKING FOR VIEWS ON ROARING PLAINS

By Mike Juskelis

This trip was identical to the trip we did almost a year ago to the day. I was joined by Shortstack, Judge N. Amy, Everybody Loves Raymond, Ted E. Bear, Lance (AKA Kia Kaha to some) and Indiana Moser.

The weather was great although we did not see freezing nighttime temps as was the case last year. On the 2.5 mile hike in, we found a new vista that looks back towards the north. I am not sure if this is the one called the Pancake Vista or not but the trail in now is quite obvious and I know from previous visits that it wasn't in the past. This made up for another easterly view that has now mostly grown in.

We hiked casually and made it to camp by 3:00. After setting up our tents, we hiked down the South Prong Trail to the Hidden Vista which offers a nice view of the South Prong drainage and its surrounding ridges.

We arose the next day, ate breakfast, rehung the bear bags and headed out for a 12 mile day hike over some of the most rugged yet beautiful terrain in all of West Virginia (if not the entire quad state area). Halfway through the Hidden Passage we met Conrad and his friendly dog, Shadow. (If you did not pet him he would nudge your leg with his muzzle!) He was very excited about finding a great view overlooking the North Fork valley. Jonathan Jessup told me about it when he first introduced me to the area but I never attempted to find it.

This day our group left the trail and began probing the woods for a way out to the vista. Just as we started to see daylight through the trees, Conrad and Shadow jumped in front of us and lead us through the rocks and heath thickets. The first probe took us about 200 feet

too far south but offered a very nice scene framed with large boulders.

We backtracked a bit and finally found the spot that Conrad was looking for. Below us the valley was filled with fog. We could see other easterly ridges behind those of North Fork Mountain. After taking in the view for a while we returned to our packs, said "Thanks and goodbye" to Conrad and Shadow.

We soon found ourselves at the "Meadows" and the great campsite on its rim. The views were nice but pretty hazy. Such being the case and having spent some valuable time looking for "Conrad's Vista" we opted to bypass the usual Pipeline vista and begin our exploration of the Canyon Rim as soon as possible.

Along the way we found yet another new vista to explore with a pretty nice campsite. Technically it's a dry site but there are at least 2 streams within a ½ mile of it that were flowing when we hiked by them. After a short break we continued our hike out to "The Point" where we took lunch and enjoyed the views. Anyone who has hiked this trail before (with or without full packs) knows how rugged this terrain is. They also know about all of the outstanding views. We stopped at most of them but didn't take a real break until we reached a spot I call "The Crevice Overlook". Here some of us took a 10 minute siesta.

From there, we hiked to the junction of the Tee-Pee Tr where we took a short 5 minute break before tackling that never ending talus slope from hell.

Whenever we do this hike, I have intentions of extending it to explore more of the Roar-

ing Plains Tr and the trail that leads out to the microwave tower that my friend Jim Kirk always tells me about but, as usually is the case, when I finally get off of that pile of rocks I do a "gas tank check" and figure I have just enough fuel to finish the base hike. Today was no different. Collectively, we mustered our remaining energy and rubbery legs and continued on. Some how we found ourselves off-trail. We looked at our GPS units and compasses and decided to head due north up and through a nice spruce forest until we hit the Roaring Plains Tr. Judge and Lance were ahead of the rest of us and in minutes found themselves standing next to a tree with a blue diamond on it.

From camp to this point our total speed, including breaks, was a mere 1.5 mph. For the rest of the hike we must have averaged over 3.0 mph (w/o counting breaks). Our legs and feet must have been really happy to be on something that felt like a real trail for a change.

Around 3:00 o'clock most of us were awakened by the sounds of baying dogs and shouting hunters. We didn't know it at the time but the WV DNR opened bear season a week early. We have no problem with that but I am pretty sure that it is illegal to hunt for ANYTHING at night. The sounds moved away from our area around 6:00.

We broke camp a bit earlier than usual. I think the rough hike the day before really had our appetites going. We made good time getting back to Ted's van and made a bee line off of the mountain to a great breakfast at Mallow's Roadside Café in Cabins. I can't think of a better way to end another WV hiking season. I'm already looking forward to next year.



Siesta time at the Crevice Rock Overlook

Your comments and opinions are important to us.

Please email any poems, letters, commentaries to the VOICE editor at johnmcferrin@aol.com or real, honest to goodness, mentioned in the United States Constitution mail to WV Highlands Conservancy, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.