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# The Highlands Voice

Since 1967, The Monthly Publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Volume 50      No. 5      May, 2017

## Knocking Off the Ridgetops

As part of its proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline, Dominion Resources intends to blast away, excavate, and partially remove entire ridgetops along 38 miles of Appalachian ridgelines as part of the construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Engineering and policy experts have examined documents submitted by Dominion to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and, using GIS mapping software, found that Dominion would require mountaintops to be “reduced” by 10 to 60 feet along the proposed route of the pipeline.

Dominion has yet to reveal how it intends to dispose of at least 247,000 dump-truck-loads of excess rock and soil—known as “overburden”—that would accumulate from the construction along just these 38 miles of ridgetops.

This is a much smaller scale version of the problem the mining industry faces on mountaintop removal sites, where mines typically reduce mountaintops by several hundred feet. There, the industry has “solved” the problem by filling nearby valleys and streams with the dirt and rock that once was the top of the mountain. While Dominion’s problem is much smaller, it has not yet said how it intends to solve it.

The briefing paper was prepared by the Chesapeake Climate Action Network in coordination with the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance, Friends of Nelson, Appalachian Mountain Advocates,

and the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition. It cites data from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement prepared by the Federal Energy Regulatory Council (FERC) as well as information supplied to FERC by Dominion. It also compiles information from GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping software and independent reports prepared by engineers and soil scientists.

Key findings include:

- Approximately 38 miles of mountains in West Virginia and Virginia will see 10 feet or more of their ridgetops removed in order to build the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.
- This figure includes 19 miles in West Virginia and 19 miles in Virginia.
- The majority of these mountains would be flattened by 10 to 20 feet, with some places along the route requiring the removal of 60 feet or more of ridgetop.
- Building the ACP on top of these mountains will result in a tremendous quantity of excess material, known to those familiar with mountaintop removal as “overburden.”
- Dominion would likely need to dispose of 2.47 million cubic yards of overburden, from just these 38 miles alone.
- Standard-size, fully loaded dump trucks would need to take at least 247,000 trips to haul this material away from the construction site.

(More on p. 3)

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**~FINAL EXAM~**

Open Book test. The text: "Fighting to Protect the Highlands: The First Forty Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy" by David P. Elkinton. [texts available in each WV public library]

**TRUE FALSE**

1. West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is West Virginia's oldest environmental advocacy group. True False
2. In 1999, Julian Martin and Larry Gibson biked 490 miles across West Virginia to draw attention to the ills of mountaintop removal mining. True False
3. Five wind turbine facilities [Mountaineer, Beech Ridge, Mount Storm, Laurel Mountain, Pinnacle] are now in operation in West Virginia. True False
4. Regarding canoe paddlers of the 1960's--- all the paddlers in a four- state region [WV, PA, MD, VA] numbered less than fifty. True False
5. WVHC board member Cindy Rank debated Don Trump. True False
6. President Gerald R. Ford signed into law the status of Wild and Scenic River for the New River in 1976. True False
7. In 1999, Judge Charles Haden II declared valley fills illegal. True False
8. Dr. Tom King was the first president of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. True False
9. Corridor H has been under construction for more than 40 years. True False
10. West Virginia Garden Clubs opposed the establishment of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

**FILL IN THE BLANKS**

1. The Davis Power Plan was vigorously supported by \_\_\_\_\_, a member of the Federal Power Commission in the 1970's. [He was later Reagan's Secretary of the Interior.]
2. This Kentucky native, \_\_\_\_\_, has served as both president and newsletter editor for the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.
3. In the year 2000, one of the first replanting of red spruce trees occurred, appropriately, at the old town site of \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Among the most memorable events at a WVHC Fall Review was when four hundred people were gathered at Spruce Knob to hear Senator \_\_\_\_\_ speak, and the generator-supported lights went out.
5. In 1994, the site of The Battle of Corricks Ford was listed on the National Historic Register, thus changing the plans of the proposed highway known as \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition was formed by the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The Stream Buffer Zone Rule had prohibited mining activity within \_\_\_\_\_ feet of streams.
8. In the early sixties, to raise public awareness of the [South Branch Potomac] river valley that would be flooded by a proposed dam, Lou Greathouse and Lee Maynard led \_\_\_\_\_ trips through the Smoke Hole Canyon.
9. The original 90-page Mon Forest hiking guide, printed by the WVHC, cost hikers \$\_\_\_\_\_.
10. Sayre Rodman wrote, about early rafting on the Gauley River, "Oldtimers at Swiss told me that kids had gone down in dead low summer water a long time ago, walking parts and floating pools on \_\_\_\_\_ or something. But they were certain no one was idiot enough to have done it in even moderate water before we did."

**MATCHING**

1. Merlin Tuttle, of Bat Conservation International \_\_\_\_\_
2. Allen deHart \_\_\_\_\_
3. Big Ugly \_\_\_\_\_
4. Julian Martin \_\_\_\_\_
5. Woolly adelgid \_\_\_\_\_
6. Ken Hechler \_\_\_\_\_
7. Helen McGinnis \_\_\_\_\_
8. John D. Rockefeller IV \_\_\_\_\_
9. Mary Wimmer \_\_\_\_\_
10. Cheat Mountain Club \_\_\_\_\_

- a. Helped with the first Monongahela Forest Plan
- b. Locality near the infamous Hobet 21 MTR mine site
- c. Said, in 1970, "I will fight for the abolition of strip mining completely and forever."
- d. "Mother of Dolly Sods"
- e. Ecologist who predicted bat mortality at wind turbine facilities
- f. Sucks sap from hemlock and spruce trees
- g. Site of several Fall Review gatherings of the WVHC
- h. One of the editors of the "Hiking Guide to the Monongahela Nat'l Forest"
- i. Father of the I ♥ Mountains bumper stickers, caps, and shirts
- j. Said, in 1972, about the proposed Rowlesburg Dam, [this dam] "...would destroy the small communities of St. George and Holly Meadows, erode the tax base of Tucker County, create unsightly mud flats and damage one of the most scenic areas in West Virginia..."

**Answers:**

**True/False**

1. True 2. False 3. True 4. True 5. False 6. True 7. True 8. True 9. True 10. False

**Fill in Blank:**

1. James Watt 2. John McFerrin 3. Spruce 4. Robert C. Byrd 5. Corridor H 6. The West Virginia Highland Conservancy 7. 100 8. Horseback 9. \$1.50 10. air mattresses

**Matching:**

1. e 2. h 3. b 4. i 5. f 6. j 7. d 8. c 9. a 10. g

## What's In a Name?

Opinion by John McFerrin

The briefing paper that is the subject of the story on page 1 entitles itself “New Data: Atlantic Coast Pipeline Would Trigger Extensive Mountaintop Removal.” As the document circulated, this title produced some head scratching. Isn't mountaintop removal that abomination that afflicts southern West Virginia that looks like this? That's not what the Atlantic Coast Pipeline is doing, is it?

Technically speaking, it is. The regulation that defines mountaintop removal does not require that any minimum amount be removed. Were Dominion looking for coal, it would—at least according to the legal definition—be doing mountaintop removal.

Yet we still should not call what Dominion proposes “mountaintop removal.” In the time it has been practiced, “mountaintop removal” has come to mean the practice that blasts off hundreds of feet of mountaintop, destroying land, water, and communities in the process. If we start using it for other things, it loses its force as a description of the abomination that it is.

It's the same reason we don't say Donald Trump is Hitler. Fully aware that over sixty million people would disagree, I am confident in saying that Donald Trump is an ego driven narcissist who was unprepared to be president and places the country in peril. But he is not Hitler. Hitler is Hitler. Donald Trump is just a mistake, one which our country will probably survive. If we start saying things like “Donald Trump is another Hitler” we diminish the power of the term “Hitler” to describe a great evil. If we start describing every time dirt and rock is removed from a ridgeline as “mountaintop removal” we diminish the power of that term to describe the reality of what is happening in southern West Virginia.

What Dominion is doing is harmful, likely to cause extensive damage that it appears to have no plan on how it would avoid. We are right to be concerned about it. It is just not “mountaintop removal.”



## Knocking Off Ridgetops (Continued from p. 1)

“It is astounding that FERC has not required Dominion to produce a plan for dealing with the millions of cubic yards of excess spoil that will result from cutting down miles of ridgetop for the pipeline,” said Ben Lockett, Staff Attorney at Appalachian Mountain Advocates. “We know from experience with mountaintop removal coal mining that the disposal of this material has devastating impacts on the headwater streams that are the lifeblood of our rivers and lakes. FERC and Dominion's complete failure to address this issue creates a significant risk that the excess material will ultimately end up in our waterways, smothering aquatic life and otherwise degrading water quality. Without an in-depth analysis of exactly how much spoil will be created and how it can be safely disposed of, the states cannot possibly certify that this pipeline project will comply with the Clean Water Act.”

Another day, another problem with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline that Dominion either hasn't addressed yet or hasn't shared its thoughts on how it will address it.

*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 elsewhere in this issue. Electronic submissions are preferred.

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

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web page is [www.wvhighlands.org](http://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.



# Legislative Wrap-up

By John McFerrin

The West Virginia Legislature has come and gone, mostly (at press time they still had to finish the budget). It's time to look at what happened.

## **Rights of Surface Owners and Mineral Owners**

This controversy has come up every year for the last few years. It goes by different names—"forced pooling" is one—but it is the same controversy.

The controversy is over how to honor the rights of surface owners and the rights of minority owners of oil and gas. It arises because a gas well is often planned to take gas from several different tracts of land. Each of these tracts may be jointly owned by several different people. This raises the possibility that a minority owner could prevent the drilling. The controversy has become more intense in the last few years because of horizontal drilling. Horizontal wells reach a much larger area than conventional wells, creating a much larger number of landowners who could potentially object to the project.

The proposals would change the law so that a majority (or a super-majority such as 75%) could approve the drilling over the objections of the minority. Proposals from different years differ in details but this is the heart of the controversy.

After much discussion and great controversy, this year's version failed to pass. It will be back next year.

In addition to forced pooling, there was an effort to give gas companies a right to come onto land to survey for possible pipeline locations without the landowner's permission. It did not pass.

## **Water Protection**

There were two bills that loosened protections for the waters of West Virginia. Both passed.

That one of them was commonly referred to as the "coal bill" tells you most of what you need to know: (1) it's bad for water quality; and (2) West Virginia politics still being West Virginia politics, it is likely to pass.

Before the "coal bill", the law on water quality contained the assumption that water must be clean enough to support life, including both that of tiny bugs at the bottom of the food chain as well as that of people. Included within this is the assumption that

if the water cannot support the tiny bugs it won't be good for people either.

To carry out this common sense assumption, the law required that companies not cause a "biologic impairment" of the waters.

The "coal bill" changed that. Although companies must still meet what are known as numeric effluent limits (water leaving the site must contain no more than X amount of this pollutant, Y amount of this pollutant, etc.), the bottom line requirement that there be no biologic impairment is gone.

For more specifics on the bill, see the April, 2017, issue of The Highlands Voice. For insight into why the coal industry thought such a bill was necessary, see "Court of Appeals Enforces Conductivity Rules" in the February, 2017, issue of The Highlands Voice. To see it, go to [wvhighlands.org/highlands-voice-mag/](http://wvhighlands.org/highlands-voice-mag/).

The second water quality bill that passed was the "Cancer Creek" bill. The Cancer Creek bill (now law) does two things. First, it changes how compliance with water quality standards is determined. Compliance with a standard is determined by measuring the amount of pollutant that is in a given volume of water in the stream. If we can assume when granting permits that there is more water in the stream, then more pollutants can be added to the stream.

For years and years, permits were issued based on assumptions that streams were at their lowest flow. Low flow means that fewer pollutants can be added. Cancer Creek changes the assumptions about stream flow so that we assume there is more water in the stream. If we change those assumptions, then industries will be allowed to discharge more toxins into our streams.

Second, Cancer Creek removes mixing zone protections. Currently, toxic dischargers must space out the discharges so that any discharge will be diluted. The dilution allows more pollution while at the same time requiring it to be spread out. The new law allows more toxic dischargers to locate closer together and create larger toxic hot spots.

It is called Cancer Creek not just for alliteration's sake but because some of the toxins are carcinogens. That was not the official name of the bill.

In another water related bill, there was a bill to exempt 2,300 oil & gas tanks from the Aboveground Storage Tank Act. The Aboveground Storage Tank Act was West Virginia's attempt to regulate storage tanks so as to prevent another spill such as the one that happened near Charleston. The bill exempting oil and gas tanks passed.

## **Environmental Advocate**

A bill was introduced to eliminate the Department of Environmental Protection Environmental Advocate. The position the bill would eliminate was aimed at helping everyday citizens navigate the DEP's complex regulatory system. The bill was referred to committee and disappeared.

For more on the position of Environmental Advocate and the precipitous firing of the very effective occupant of that position, see the February, 2017, issue of The Highlands Voice.

## **Local Energy Efficiency Partnership (LEEP) Act**

This bill would have created a method for businesses who wanted to make energy efficient building upgrades to finance those upgrades. The bill passed the Senate 34-0 and was sent to House Government Organizations Committee where it died.

## **Tax increase for industrial wind farms**

In order to encourage the development of wind energy, West Virginia had previously set the property tax rate on the equipment for wind farms much lower than the rate for most other businesses. The Legislature had before it a bill that would take away the subsidy and tax the equipment at wind farms just as other property is taxed. The proposal passed the Senate but never made it out of committee in the House.

In another wind related development (or non-development) the initiative to improve the siting rules for industrial wind farms didn't make any progress. There are currently rules which give guidance on where wind farms should be located but they don't work very well. We had hoped that the Legislature would revise those rules to make them more effective. There were not enough Senators or Delegates willing to champion such an effort so it never got off the ground.





Middle school kids at West Virginia State University's Earth Day (above); Preschool kids at Marshall University's Earth Day (right); and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy 50th Anniversary bandana, with staff supermodel (above, right)



## West Virginia Red Spruce Trees for Sale!

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy organizes volunteers to collect seeds from our native plant species. We contract with commercial growers to grow seedlings for ecosystem restoration projects. All proceeds support red spruce restoration efforts in West Virginia.

### Spring 2018 Red Spruce

Red Spruce plugs - 2 yr old container-grown seedlings approx. 10-15 inches tall.

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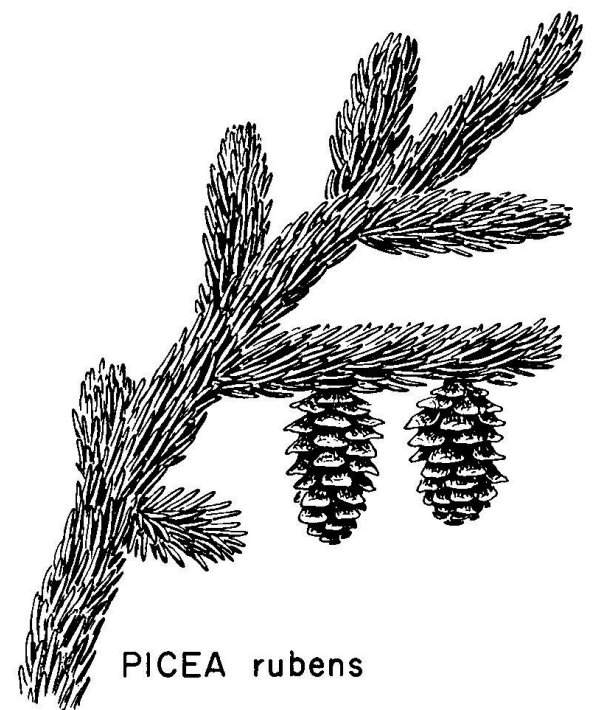
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PICEA rubens



## North Carolina Group Speaks Out about the Pipeline

Most of the opposition to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline that we hear about is from Virginia and West Virginia. This does not mean, however, that all of the opposition is from those two states. There is also opposition in North Carolina. Fortunately, a member who lives in North Carolina has called that opposition to our attention. Groups have formed to oppose the controversial pipeline, including one called No Pipeline Johnston County.

The proposed pipeline would extend, north to south, almost all the way across North Carolina. If built it would enter the state in Northhampton County and go down through rivers, wetlands and farmlands in Halifax, Nash, Wilson, Johnston, Sampson, and Cumberland Counties before ending in Robeson County.

One of the groups that has expressed concern about the proposed pipeline is the North Carolina Coastal Federation. It recently made comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement published by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The North Carolina Coastal Federation is a member-supported 501(c)3 that is focused on protecting and restoring the North Carolina coast. Its mission is to empower coastal residents and visitors to protect and restore the water quality and critically important natural habitats of the North Carolina coast.

In those comments, it touches on some of the flaws in the Draft EIS that other commenters have noted. One is completeness. The point of an Environmental Impact Statement is to gather all the information and let the public comment on it before making a decision. The agency starts with what is called "scoping" where it decides, with the benefit of public comments, what all it is going to study. Then it decides what it will study, gathers all the information on those topics, lets the public see what the information it has gathered, makes some tentative conclusions, and then publishes a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

That is not what the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has done here. The letter to FERC points out that the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) and the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) has requested for the applicants to complete biological surveys for sensitive and state-listed species, including plants, non-mussel aquatic species, and freshwater mussels. These surveys are not completed, as 15.2 miles have not been surveyed, at all, for the aforementioned biological resources. Instead of waiting for the survey, doing an analysis, and then publishing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the Draft simply states that these surveys will be "completed in 2017." Instead of the analysis of information it is supposed to be, FERC has turned the Draft EIS into another request for information.

The comments also discuss the problem of pipeline leaks. They point out that the agency responsible for inspection for leaks is so poorly staffed that the proposed pipeline will be essentially self-inspected. This is not acceptable.

Finally, the comments point out that the project's economic benefits are overstated. It points out that the construction jobs will be temporary and that, once completed, the pipeline will require only twenty permanent workers.

## The Passing of an Old Friend

We note with sorrow the passing earlier this year of Eleanor Bush at the age of 103. She served as secretary of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy for several years in the 1970s.

Ms. Bush spent most of her life in Philippi, WV, the home of her husband, Dr. Kyle Bush. She attended West Virginia Wesleyan College and earned a Bachelor's degree in zoology from West Virginia University and then a Master's Degree in botany from Ohio State University. Her explorations of Barbour County led to "A Checklist of the Flora of Barbour County, West Virginia" which was published in 2004 when Ms. Bush was 91. This was the result of many, many trips throughout Barbour County and West Virginia.

In her younger years she was a frequent field companion of Charlie Baer, Bill Grafton and others famous West Virginia botanists. She is survived by her daughter, Caroline Esposito, a psychologist in Morgantown and her son Dr. Robert K. Bush of Madison, Wisconsin.

## Another Friend Gone

It is with sadness that we pass along the news of the passing of Kaye Thomas, the wife of West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Senior Vice President Larry Thomas. She died at the Levine & Dickson Hospice House in Charlotte, N.C. with Larry at her side. Her daughter reports that her death was peaceful and quick--her greatest wish. She had a wonderful visit with her three sisters, their husbands, and her daughter just an hour prior to her death. She smiled and laughed and napped, and was in good spirits.

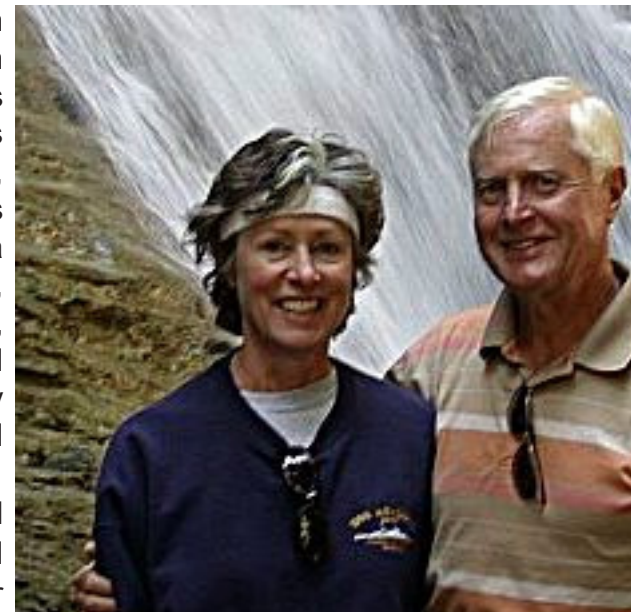
Kaye had a life-long love of the mountains and enjoyed hiking, traveling and just sitting on the deck watching the changes in the seasons and the infinite stars in the sky.

She was preceded in death by her brother, Thomas Lemuel Hollifield. She is survived by her husband Larry, daughter Robin Hill (Michael) and their son Aaron and daughters Elizabeth and Emily, daughter Kelly Leavy and daughters Madison and Brooklyn, stepson Joshua Thomas (Jaime) and son Brandon and daughter Caroline, stepdaughter Jennifer Thomas and son Jayden, stepson Jonathan Thomas (Jennifer) and sons Matthew and Ryan, sisters Linda Mills (Mark), Angelina Lewis (Claude), Geneva Puras (Jeff), brother Wylie Hollifield (Cheryl) and many special nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held in North Carolina for family only, and then in

West Virginia this summer where all are welcome. More details to come.

Donations in her honor may be made to the Levine Cancer Institute. Make checks to "Carolinas HealthCare Foundation" and send to LCI Carolinas Ovarian Cancer Fund, c/o Carolinas HealthCare Foundation, 208 East Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28203, or give online at [www.givecarolinas.org/find-your-cause/cancer](http://www.givecarolinas.org/find-your-cause/cancer)



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Patron	\$250	\$500	\$500
Mountaineer	\$500	\$750	\$1000

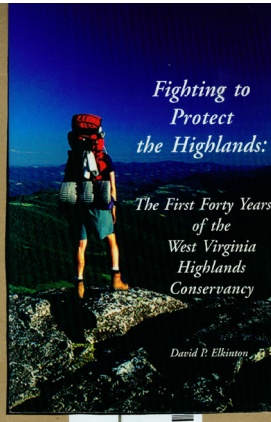
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West Virginia Highlands Conservancy  
Working to Keep West Virginia Wild and Wonderful

You may also join on-line at [www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org)

GET A GREAT HISTORY BOOK

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.



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 \$15.95, plus \$3.00 shipping, visit the Conservancy's website, [wvhighlands.org](http://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.

SUCH A DEAL!  
Book Premium With Membership

Although *Fighting to Protect the Highlands, the First 40 Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy* normally sells for \$15.95 plus \$3.00 postage. We are offering it as a premium to new members. New members receive it free with membership.

Existing members may have one for \$10.00. Anyone who adds \$10 to the membership dues listed on the How to Join membership or on the renewal form will receive the history book. Just note on the membership form that you wish to take advantage of this offer.

Tell a Friend!

If you have a friend you would like to invite to join the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy just fill out this form and send it to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.

Person you wish to refer: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Filling out the form, etc. is, of course, the old school way of doing things. If you prefer, just email the information to Beth Little at [blittle@citynet.net](mailto:blittle@citynet.net).

The way it works: Anyone you refer gets *The Highlands Voice* for six months. At the end of the six months, they get a letter asking if they want to join. If they join, we're happy. If not, then maybe next time.



## From the Archives

Most issues of our monthly newsletter, *The Highlands Voice*, beginning with Volume 1, in 1969, are archived on our website at [www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org).

Enjoy the following highlights taken from;

### 1981

#### Cranberry Wilderness Bill

The Cranberry Wilderness Bill, which sailed unopposed through the House got bottled up and died in the Senate before it adjourned. The Bill would have added the Cranberry, as well as three other areas, a total of 70,000 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Bill included the Seneca Creek area (21,800 acres), Laurel Fork north and South (12,200 acres) as well as additions to Dolly Sods and Otter Creek Wilderness Areas (30,200 acres). The defeat was a bitter disappointment for those who had been working on the Bill for over 10 years. The Bill was complicated because the Chessie Corporation owned the mineral rights beneath the Cranberry area.

#### Davis Power Project, Canaan Valley

The US Department of Energy determined that alternatives to the Davis Power Project in Canaan Valley could meet the load needs of the region through the 1990s. Linda (Cooper) Elkinton said that she was glad to see the report state unequivocally that there are alternatives and that it affirmed what the Highlands Conservancy has been saying all along.

#### Highlands Scenic Highway

An archeological survey determined that the proposed extension of the Highlands Scenic Highway north along the mountaintops of Pocahontas and Randolph Counties would impact the historically significant site of the old logging town of Spruce.

#### DLM Coal Libel suit

Highlands Conservancy Board of Directors member, Rick Webb was sued for Libel for \$200,000 by the DLM Coal Corporation. They claimed that tremendous losses were suffered by the industry because of needless environmental complaints. They claimed that Webb's charge that mining was hurting trout streams was "totally false and untrue, defamatory and libelous, intentionally and maliciously published, calculated to be damaging to the plaintiff's

relationship with its employees and key personnel," and was also part of "a conspiracy to harass intimidate and destroy plaintiff's business by degrading it in the business world and crippling it financially."

#### Shavers Fork Mining

The Mower Lumber Company began mining on Glade Run, one of the 30 mines it has plans for. The Highlands Conservancy has been fighting, including law suits, over these mines for over 12 years at this point. Mining is being done under a special agreement with the State's DNR, an agreement the DNR's Director described as "assuring the future environmental integrity of the Shaver's Fork." The agreement limits to 6 the number of mines that can operate at any one time. The Highlands Conservancy is seeking to stop mining of National Forest lands in the Shaver's Fork watershed. WVHC sued the Secretary of Interior contending he did not have the right to allow Mower to open up its mines. It lost. Mower filed a suit against the Highlands Conservancy contending that its court actions were taken only to harass the firm and impede the opening of its mines. US District Judge Maxwell, in Elkins, turned aside their suit noting that the Highlands Conservancy's suit was not instituted in bad faith or for the sole purpose of harassing Mower.

#### Blackwater-Canaan Trail Opens

A new, 10.5 mile cross country ski trail has been opened connecting the two popular State Parks. A dedication took place with a XC ski workshop sponsored by the WV DNR.

#### Monongahela National Forest Plan Revision

Twenty One different issues, from Wilderness designation to law enforcement have been identified by officials of the Monongahela National Forest. "New Plans need to be prepared at intervals to respond to the changing national needs and the changing resource situation," commented Forest Supervisor Ralph Mumme. Forest Planners organized small working groups of interested citizens to offer well-informed, ongoing opinions.

#### Stonewall Jackson Dam

"The defeat of the resolution opposing



construction of the Stonewall Jackson Dam in the State Legislature was by far the biggest disappointment of the Session," said Perry Bryant, Highlands Conservancy Vice President. "If this resolution had passed, and if the dam is constructed (God forbid), this resolution could have saved the State \$50 million in construction costs and interest." The Corps of Engineer's dam flooded 450 farms and displaced 1,800 West Virginians.

#### Corridor H

A series of meetings is being organized to address the recently released Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Corridor H. The study says it would be cheaper for the road to go north through Parsons than through Wymer. "Not building the Highway" is the preferred alternative of the WV DNR.

#### Holy Grove Mine, Little Kanawha River

Cindy Rank, with Friends of Little Kanawha (FOLK) and mining Chairperson for the Highlands Conservancy wrote that, "The technical data is complete but the EPA is unable to make a decision at this time due to the national issues involved and the changing Administration." The Company was proposing new strip mining techniques where hazardous overburden is packed between layers of alkaline material and the whole "sandwich" suspended several feet off the floor of the pit before it is backfilled. Over 300 people attended a public hearing at WV Wesleyan. Citizen lawsuits prompted the US EPA to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, the first such prepared in the eastern US.

#### Fall Review 1981

"Watoga State Park provides the opportunity for Highlands Conservancy members and friends to focus on timely environmental concerns during group outings and workshops," according to Skip Deegans, the Review's Coordinator. Bill McNeel reserved 6 cabins at the Park for Conservancy members. During the Board of Directors meeting, Don Gasper agreed to Chair an Acid Raid Committee.



# Celebrating 50 Years!

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy was officially founded in 1967 but the people and Groups that came together to form the organization actually began to meet in 1965 while the first issue of The Highlands Voice appeared in 1969. For many years we were THE environmental organization in the state and tackled issues as diverse in topics as in geography. Some of its major roles were defined early in its existence. Protecting Rivers, Coal Mining, the Monongahela National Forest and other public lands, Highways,

Wilderness and Canaan Valley all have deep roots that permeate our history. We will be highlighting some of these issues, the places, and the people involved, in upcoming issues of The Highlands Voice. We'll also be visiting some of these places throughout the year to see the successes, or sometimes failures, of our work. We'll get together to celebrate and reminisce with each other at the Canaan Valley Resort State Park, September 15-17, 2017.

## Help Us Celebrate!

We are seeking help and input from our members. Please participate in the outings and events we are planning, but also help us make the 50<sup>th</sup> Celebration extra special.

- Contact us with the names and contact information of people you know who have some connection with the Highlands Conservancy who may not still be engaged. We are creating a list of folks to reach out to, from Agencies, Organizations, and others we've worked with, to invite to join our celebrations.
- Using Google, or the Archives for The Highlands Voice, research an issue that you know about, were involved with, or the success from our efforts you enjoy, and write an article or just share personal memories or experiences.
- Offer to lead an outing to one of the places we've fought to protect over the last 50 years. Share your stories or experiences working with, or even against, us on some issue.
- Clean out your closets for memorabilia, or other items to bring to the Canaan Celebration in September and donate to a silent auction.
- Get out those old photo albums and bring them with you to Canaan for a photo-sharing display.
- Send us your photos of people, places, or events from our long and storied history to include in the Celebration's publications and Web pages.

Contact us at; [wvhc50@gmail.com](mailto:wvhc50@gmail.com)



*"Celebrating 50 Years"*

Mark your calendar!

## Canaan Valley State Park

September 15-17, 2017

Outings  
Workshops  
Round-table discussions  
Expert panels  
Partner displays  
Music  
Food  
Good company  
Reminiscing  
Old Friends  
Good times  
Beautiful Places

## Celebrating 50 Years T-Shirts!

Heavy weight Black t-shirts  
with our new color  
"Celebrating 50 Years" logo

S, M, L, XL & XXL. \$20 each, postage included



21" square black bandana  
with color "Celebrating 50 Years" logo.

\$5.00 postage included.



# White Nose Syndrome Update

## April 2017

By Craig Stihler

The fungal disease White Nose Syndrome (WNS) was first documented in West Virginia in early 2009. Since then, there have been significant declines in the numbers of bats observed in hibernacula. Species most impacted have been the little brown bat, Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, and tricolored bat. During winter 2016-2017, WVDNR biologists conducted bat surveys in 20 caves, including the state’s most important bat hibernaculum, Hellhole. Nineteen of these caves were also surveyed in winter 2014-2015. The results of the 2017 surveys contained both good news and bad news.

Virginia big-eared bats, an endangered species, do not seem to be impacted by White Nose Syndrome, and their numbers are increasing. The winter count was the highest on record with 15,354 Virginia big-eared bats tallied. Over 13,000 were in Hellhole. Unlike other bats in the state, Virginia big-eared bats also form summer maternity colonies that use caves. West Virginia Department of Natural Resources biologists monitor the bats in these colonies each June using nightvision equipment to count the bats as they emerge in the evening to feed. The June 2016 count was also the highest summer count on record.

Little brown bats were once one of the most common bats in the state. By 2014, White Nose Syndrome reduced the population by around 97%. Winter surveys conducted in 2016 showed that the number of little brown bats in caves surveyed in both 2014 and 2016 increased 17%



Little Brown Bat

between the two surveys. The number observed in cave surveys this past winter showed an increase of 19% over the 2015 total. While the number of bats remaining is still much lower than pre-WNS numbers, an increase in numbers is a welcome change.

Unfortunately, we are still not seeing increases in other species. The winter 2017 surveys documented a further 50.8% decline in Indiana bats and a 23.9% decline in tricolored bats (formerly called eastern pipistrelles) since 2015. Hellhole has the largest concentration of endangered Indiana bats in the state. There used to be over 18,500 Indiana bats hibernating in the cave; the 2017 survey counted only 794 Indiana bats, a decrease of nearly 96%. Northern long-eared bats are not often observed in caves in West Virginia, so winter surveys don’t provide a good way to monitor their populations. Summer bat mist netting data suggest that this species has declined, but the decline does not seem to be as severe as it has been for little brown bats.

Because White Nose Syndrome affects bats during hibernation, migratory bats that move south rather than enter hibernation are not affected. Migratory bats include the eastern red bat, hoary bat, and silver-haired bat.

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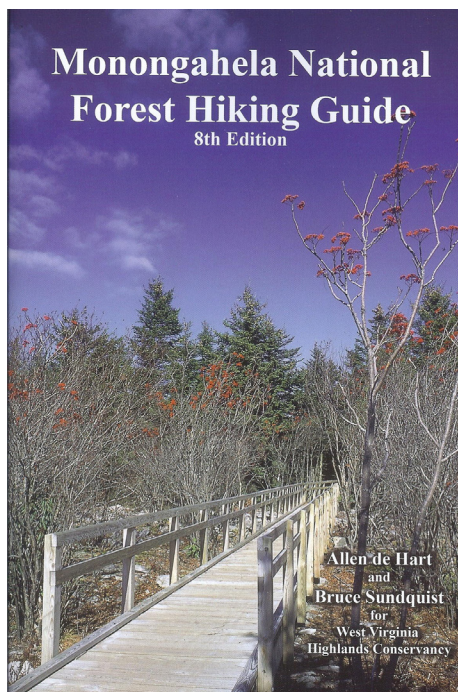
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## The Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

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)

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 P.O. Box 306  
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[www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org)

### 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.

### VOICE AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY

The Highlands Voice is now available for electronic delivery. You may, of course, continue to receive the paper copy. Unless you request otherwise, you will continue to receive it in paper form. If, however, you would prefer to receive it electronically instead of the paper copy please contact Beth Little at [blittle@citynet.net](mailto:blittle@citynet.net). With electronic delivery, you will receive a link to a pdf of the Voice several days before the paper copy would have arrived. The electronic Voice is in color rather than in black and white as the paper version is.

### 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.



## Trail Truthing, Part 4: Up On Cheat

By Hugh Rogers

Looking for obscure trails such as the Flame Azalea Trail I wrote about last month (see the follow-up below), I have old-fashioned encounters. Instead of plugging in coordinates, I ask strangers for directions; instead of timeless, placeless voices, I hear people say, “I’ve lived here all my life.”

Old joke as told by Brother Dave Gardner:

Q: Have you lived here all your life?

A: Not ye-et.

That goes double for me. I got here after the beginning and I haven’t reached the end. And although I have lived forty years in sight of Cheat Mountain, until this month I had never hiked the four National Forest trails that begin on its crest and wind down to Shavers Fork. Built in cooperation with the Division of Natural Resources, they were, and on some signs still are, called Hunter Access Trails. They are parallel and more or less identical. See their descriptions in the Hiking Guide’s 8<sup>th</sup> edition: “through a forest of hardwood and red spruce;” “its entire distance is through a mixed forest;” “it is similar in terrain and vegetation;” “mixed hardwood and spruce.”

In order, driving north on FR 92 from US 250, they are now called Stonecoal Ridge Trail, Whitmeadow Ridge Trail, Crouch Ridge Trail, and Yokum Ridge Trail. The two northernmost have connector trails, but the basic pattern is a ladder, with FR 92 as the west rail and Shavers Fork as the east rail. The whole arrangement tilts toward the northeast.

Additional rungs are two graveled forest roads that go all the way to the river, FR 47 and 49, plus another, FR 188, that is blocked to vehicles halfway down but continues as a trail. The roads dead-end at simple campsites. The same is true, but moreso, on FR 209, the Shavers Fork Road, which begins on US 250 a few miles east of the FR 92 intersection. That road has many well used camping sites dispersed along its five-mile course. The three dead-ends are connected by a trail.

### Shavers Fork Trail (TR366)

On the USGS topographic map (Wildell Quadrangle, 1995), it appears as an unnumbered informal trail. It wasn’t included in the Guide’s 8<sup>th</sup> edition (2006). Now it shows up on the Monongahela National Forest (MNF) recreation map (2007) with its numeric designation.

The complete trail is 2.5 miles. The best part is the southern, upstream half, from FR 209 to FR 47. A round-trip on that section makes a beautiful, partly strenuous, short

hike. An ambitious loop can be put together by hiking the full distance of Whitmeadow Ridge Trail (4.5mi) and Stonecoal Ridge Trail (3.7mi), connecting them along the river by adding a short piece of FR 209, and at the upper end a little more than two miles of FR 92; altogether a hike of about twelve miles. Either choice could lure you away from fishing.

Since I was also exploring the hunter access trails, I began the Shavers Fork Trail from the north. The campsite at FR 49’s end had a picnic table, fire ring, and two signs: “14 day limit;” “catch and release.”

From there to the intersection with TR 361, on a sketchy transition from the river bank to an old road well above it, I had to fight through a series of blockages. Even when the trail dipped back toward river level, it was removed behind a thick screen of spruce and rhodies. Vertical or horizontal, the distance seemed constant. There were glimpses of the railroad on the opposite bank. The river announced its presence by sound.

TR 361 came steeply downhill to join, or, more accurately, to take over the Shavers Fork Trail. After a turn upstream, it crossed a small tributary. The track’s width practically doubled; from that point, allowing for erosion, it could have been called a hunter-access road. Young spruce lined the grassy trail.

Whitmeadow Ridge Trail ended at FR 47. A wide-open area had space for group camping (and parking), with easy access to the river. The clue that Shavers Fork Trail continued was an inconspicuous blue plastic diamond back in the woods off a camp site. The little path meandered over to Whitmeadow Run. After rock-hopping the run, I poked along in the bottomland until I encountered another twist, a switchback and a steep climb to a narrow path high above the river. The view was across to Shavers Mountain’s spruce-topped silhouette.

After that stretch came an equally steep descent. The trail crossed a ravine and leveled out, much closer to the river. Hundred-year-old railroad ties appeared. Wherever the current railroad on the opposite bank shortcut across a bend or ducked behind a fringe of trees, the view was free of its naked limestone ballast. At one point the trail offered a rare combination of access to a grassy bank and a natural opposite shore. (Apparently, fishermen and –women camping along FR 209 do not mind the glaring rocks.) Near the trail’s end at the FR 209 turnaround, one relatively private campsite had its own bridge over a little run.

### Flame Azalea Trail (no longer maintained)

A sad footnote on this trail came from Matt Edwards, South Zone Recreation Manager for the MNF. He had promised to consult retired staff and historic records on the unusual history of this unusual trail. He wrote:

The trail was part of a system of temporary roads and skid trails that meandered through an oak stand that had been thinned in the early 1980’s. Apparently, the thinned canopy released these azaleas and allowed them to thrive for a time. Mr. De Hart discovered the area and wrote a proposal to designate a trail. The Forest Service worked with Allen to make this trail an official system trail. Blazes and signs were installed . . . sometime around 1989. The azaleas only lasted a few years due to the canopy closing in. At some point in the early 2000’s, the Forest Service was encouraged to downsize our trail systems where possible, and this trail, along with the Sugar Camp Trail nearby, were logical targets. The decision was discussed with Allen. The trail was removed from the trail system later in the 2000’s.

The trail was retained in Allen’s revised copy for the 9<sup>th</sup> edition, and it still appears on the MNF’s official trail list. However, there’s no doubt it has been dropped from the Marlinton-White Sulphur Ranger District list – and the azaleas are gone. I’m no botanist; when I saw the isolated clump of rhododendron (the species Allen always referred to as rosebay, it’s also known as rhododendron maximum), I hoped that later in the spring or early summer the flame azaleas would somehow pop out of hiding amongst them. Fat chance.

What remains is the example of Allen’s lifelong dedication to trail-building. As we wrote in our appreciation (“A Friend Hikes Away,” December 2016), “When he was twelve, he and his brother hacked a trail through the woods so they could walk to school, avoiding an hour and a half (each way) bus ride.” Much later, he founded a Friends group for one of his favorite projects, North Carolina’s Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

Can you think of an unrecognized place in the forest where you would designate a trail?



## Beth Baldwin Wins an Award

By Cindy Rank

Congratulations to Beth Baldwin.

She and her cohorts in the nursing profession worked tirelessly at the WV state Legislature these past few years to achieve greater recognition, acceptance and authority for Nurse Practitioners, and nurses in general, professionals who have much to offer our rural communities in particular.

In December 2016 WVAHC (West Virginians for Affordable Health Care) awarded Beth the association's Rockefeller award for her work on behalf of WV Nurses in advancing better and more accessible health care throughout West Virginia.

*"I have spent my life goals working to improved healthcare outcomes for all" wrote Beth. "I have met the most wonderful supporters in the journey, physicians, nurses and environmental experts. I have learned and shared from every new adventure. It will take us all to get to where we need to be with healthcare delivery and primary prevention of illness in this country. Especially with the current political turn. So we double up on the fight and the victory will be that much sweeter. We will get there together someday."*

Beth's strength, tenacity and endless energy is worthy of recognition. She not only worked full time in her profession, and spent endless hours at the legislature, but

also along with her husband Larry maintained a beautiful 65 acre farm in the Grafton area.

For members of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Beth is best known for her service on the Board of Directors representing the local community group called TEAM (Taylor Environmental Advocacy Membership).

For more than a decade Beth fought tirelessly alongside her neighbors and TEAM members to educate the community about their rights and responsibilities in the face of the disturbance and destruction caused by the expansive Leer longwall coal mine they challenged but were unable to stop when the permits were applied for in 2004. She assisted with the multiyear effort to monitor streams and wells and springs in the area to be undermined and wrote several stories for the Highlands Voice recounting the ongoing efforts to preserve the communities in the area.

Many will recall Beth's painful recounting the coal company's excessive



**Beth – second from right – and her family at the WVAHC awards dinner**

but unsuccessful attempts to protect the home she and her husband Larry built and the farm they loved – disruptive measures of trenching and boarding up and wiring together the house, efforts to rescue valuable fish from the disappearing pond, and the final irreparable harm to both house and farm.

As Beth heads east away from the painful reminders of a dozen grueling years of doing battle with Arch Coal we add our voices to those of WVAHC in recognizing her beautiful and strong presence that has enriched us all..

## Congratulations to Angie Rosser, West Virginia's 2017 River Hero

The River Network, a Colorado-based national nonprofit organization that supports local and statewide organizations involved in restoring and protecting rivers and streams, has named WV Rivers Coalition's executive director Angie Rosser as one of its 2017 River Heroes. The River Heroes Award was created in 2001 to recognize and celebrate people whose efforts to protect and restore their local waters have been extraordinary in scope, scale, impact and heart.

Angie Rosser joined West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WV Rivers) as the Executive Director in 2012, after serving on the Board of Directors. With a background working in West Virginia on social justice issues in the non-profit sector, Angie brings a professional commitment to clean water for the common good as well as a uniquely personal desire to protect the waters of the Elk River that flow through her backyard. As the statewide voice for water-based recreation and clean rivers and streams in West Virginia, WV Rivers Coalition unites diverse people who understand the connection between our public recreation lands and the waters on which we all rely. When the 2014 chemical spill occurred on the Elk River in

West Virginia, Angie was there to bring voice to the hundreds of thousands of people without water.

Serving also as the West Virginia Headwaters Waterkeeper, Angie's work is instrumental in the protection of the six rivers within the Monongahela National Forest which provide drinking water for millions of Americans. With Angie at the helm, WV Rivers broadened its reach and impact at both the state and federal levels, within challenging political climates. As the WV state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation, Angie serves as Co-Chair of the NWF Water Caucus. She is also the current Co-Chair of the Choose Clean Water Coalition, which works to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Angie works to create partnerships with leaders from across the region and country, but it's her deep passion for the work that inspires others in West Virginia and beyond.



## Board Highlights

By John McFerrin

The spring Board meeting was a mixture of the same old, same old, issue reports, and excitement for the future.

For same old, same old we had the treasurer's report and the Voice Editor's report. Treasurer Bob Marshall said that there was nothing out of the ordinary about the expenses or revenue. Money going out; money coming in. Meeting our bills. Voice editor John McFerrin made a plea for more stories. Much of the Voice is about litigation, issues, etc.; he would welcome stories about issues, etc. but also about just having fun, hiking, and things like that.

We got hope for the future from reports on membership, the Hiking Guide, and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

For previous editions, we had depended upon Allen De Hart and Bruce Sundquist to do the Hiking Guide. Since they have both died since we published the eighth edition, we were a bit at sea for the ninth edition. Frank (who has done prodigious work in getting the Guide distributed) used to start Board meeting reports on the next edition by shaking his head.

Now Hugh Rogers been working on the ninth edition. Although he was not there, he had submitted a report that gladdened our hearts and gave us hope. He has done considerable editing and we are making progress toward being able to print a ninth edition. He is approaching the point where the services of someone who knows a lot about layout and readying it for publication are required. He has been in conversation with a professional who says she can whip it into shape for between \$2,000 and \$2,500. We decided to go ahead and hire someone to do that.

We still don't have pictures selected, etc. and there is more editing and layout to do but we are moving forward. If we run out of books before we get the 9<sup>th</sup> edition finished we will do a limited reprint of the 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Frank reports that we have enough of the 8<sup>th</sup> edition in stock to carry us through the end of this hiking season, more or less through October.

We talked briefly about Allen de Hart's royalties. In his will he had directed that they be paid to Louisburg College. It was the sense of the Board that we would continue paying those royalties on the 9<sup>th</sup> edition.

We were also heartened by the report of administrative assistant Beth Little. She distributed reports comparing membership numbers over the past several years. Membership has gone up since the last report.

Her duties have expanded since she began, mostly with the additional duties involved in the on-line store. She had been subcontracting some of her work, particularly the writing of thank you notes to large donors. Now the person she was subcontracting with can't do it any more. She and some others are casting about for a way to solve the problems that not having this person

any more has caused and, more generally, dealing with Beth's expanded workload. One thing that we are going to try is letting Board members take home the supplies for writing thank you notes and assuming responsibility for writing thank you notes for a while. Cindy Rank took the supplies and will try out this system to see how it works.

Finally, we heard about plans for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Dave Saville is going to be the event coordinator so he was there to talk about plans. He and the committee had made up a list of people and organizations to invite. They passed around the list and we all got to sign up for those we would be willing to invite. We will receive instruction on making the contacts, etc. The idea is that we will offer people and organizations different ways

to be engaged. They could attend, encourage members to attend, sponsor, etc. He would also like to have a display of memorabilia—WVHC T-shirts from different eras, old brochures, old documents, etc. Should anyone have something to display, he or she should contact the committee.

Dave also had 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary items—T shirt and bandana—for sale. They are already available on the web site. See photo on p. 9 or photo with



supermodel on p. 5.

While these things gave us hope for the future, the present (at least the Legislative present) was another story. Frank reported that e-council lobbyists had been beaten severely about the face and head (figuratively speaking) at the West Virginia Legislature. Three bills which may or will degrade water quality passed. About the only good news he had to report was that proposed laws on forced pooling and the right to trespass did not pass. The LEEP bill to create incentives for energy efficiency came close to passing; in the context of this Legislative session, this is considered a victory. Our initiative on new siting rules for windfarms didn't make any progress. The e-council lobbyist could not find enough Senators or Delegates willing to sponsor the bill to give it any chance of passing, or even being considered. For details on legislative matters, see the story on p. 4 of this issue.

We also had reports on what we are doing. Marilyn Shoenfeld talked about monitoring federal legislation and our role in it. She reported that West Virginians for Public Lands (Formerly Birthplace of Rivers) and the Wilderness Society were actively working on this issue and that we could be most effective joining in and supporting their efforts.

In matters of outreach, Cindy Ellis reported that she had tabled at the West Virginia Legislature, West Virginia State University, and

**(More on the next page)**



## More Highlights (Continued from previous page)

Marshall University. She gave away WVHC pens, bookmarks, and copies of *The Highlands Voice*. There were receptive passers-by at both events, with an especially lively turn-out at Marshall.

We had a report from the webmaster. He still has been dealing with the aftermath of the hack from last fall, getting everything restored, etc. We are pretty well over that and most of the website has been restored.

In matters of coal, Cindy Rank reported that we had reached a settlement on litigation about old mines where West Virginia had agreed to assume responsibility for cleanup. West Virginia has not been as diligent as it agreed to in previous settlements but now there is an additional agreement with a revised timetable on when it has to have the problems at several sites corrected. She also mentioned that the study by the National Academy of Science of the impact of surface mining on public health has begun. There will be a series of public hearings, including one May 22-24 in Charleston, WV. It is not clear the format of the hearing.

In matters of oil and gas, Frank and Cindy Ellis reported that there is not much visible, public opposition to the Mountaineer

XPress Pipeline in 14 western West Virginia Counties. We noted that we had joined in with other groups in filing comments on state as well as federal permitting for pipelines such as the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast Pipeline that pass through West Virginia.

George Hack had been reviewing the Summary of Proposed Action routinely issued by the Forest Service. They list projects that the Forest Service is considering or undertaking on the Monongahela National Forest. The latest one shows mostly ongoing projects. There is a new proposal to re-do the picnic area at Dolly Sods. George will check further into the details and potential impact of the project.

Lunch was pot luck. Helen Ann Graffious had provided dessert and drinks and several Board members brought stuff. It was a feast.

Since we were in or near the epicenter of all things buckwheat, the door prize was a collection of buckwheat themed items, provided by our hostess Helen Ann Graffious. Frank won.

The July 22<sup>nd</sup> Summer Board meeting will be at the Yew Mountain Center in Hillsboro, WV.

### This month there's good news and bad news

#### **Seven West Virginia Parks to Charge Entry Fees—NOT**

In mid-April, the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources announced that a \$2-per-car entry fee would be charged at Coopers Rock State Forest and at Babcock, Blackwater, Cacapon, Little Beaver, Pipestem and Valley Falls state parks. This was to be a pilot project, expected to raise \$1.1 million in revenue in 2017 to help with maintenance and upkeep costs. This was a pilot project with the possibility that the program would be extended to other parks. The program was to go into effect Memorial Day weekend.

A few days later, Governor Justice announced that the fee had been cancelled.

Which part of this story is the good news and which is the bad news depends upon your view of entry fees on public lands. In the past West Virginia Highlands Conservancy members have expressed different opinions on the subject. It has always been our position that West Virginia should provide adequate funds for parks from some source.

### **Maryland Bans Fracking**

Maryland has, by statute, permanently banned the practice of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. There had been years of protests by landowners, health leaders, and environmentalists.

This makes Maryland the first state with proven gas reserves to use legislation to ban fracking. New York has banned the drilling process via executive order. Vermont has a statutory ban but the state has no frackable gas reserves at present.

Maryland only has gas reserves in the far Western end. This makes the ban less significant than it would be in states such as South Dakota, Texas, or even West Virginia but a ban is a ban no matter how small.

### **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.

### **Send Us a Post Card, Drop Us a Line, Stating Point Of View**

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

# HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY BOUTIQUE



- The baby shirts are certified organic cotton and are offered in one infant and several toddler sizes and an infant onesie. Slogan is “I ♥ Mountains Save One for Me!” Onesie [18 mo.]---\$25, Infant tee [18 mo.]---\$20, Toddler tee, 2T,3T,4T, 5/6---\$20
- Soft pima cotton adult polo shirts are a handsome earthtone light brown and feature the spruce tree logo. Sizes S-XL [Shirts run large for stated size.] \$ 25.00, 2XL \$26.50

To order by mail [WV residents add 6 % sales tax] make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Online Store, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306

The same items are also available at our on-line store: [www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org)

## 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 \$18 by mail; **long sleeve** is \$22. West Virginia residents add 6% sales tax. Send sizes wanted and check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy ATTEN: Online Store, WVHC, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.



## HATS FOR SALE

We have West Virginia Highlands Conservancy baseball style caps for sale as well as I ♥ Mountains caps.

The WVHC cap is beige with green woven into the twill and the pre-curved visor is light green. The front of the cap has West Virginia Highlands Conservancy logo and the words West Virginia Highlands Conservancy on the front and I (heart) Mountains on the back. It is soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure.

The I ♥ Mountains The colors are stone, black and red.. The front of the cap has ♥ MOUNTAINS. The heart is red. The red and black hats are soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure. The stone has a stiff front crown with a velcro strap on the back. All hats have West Virginia Highlands Conservancy printed on the back. Cost is \$20 by mail. West Virginia residents add 6% tax. Make check payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Atten: Online Store, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306