

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage PAID
Permit No. 2831
Charleston, WV



The Highlands Voice

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

Volume 50 No. 6 June, 2017

National Academies Investigate Health Impacts

By Cindy Rank

It is never pleasant living near any kind of coal mining operation and the smallest mines can cause health and property damage. However, the scale and location of the big mountaintop removal and other large scale surface mines and surface mine complexes approved since the early 1990s have expanded exponentially and so has the harm that accompanies living near that type of mining.

In 2015 after years of debate and after dozens of peer-reviewed and published studies have shown residents near mountaintop removal mines face a greater risk of cancer, birth defects, respiratory and cardiac disease, former West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Randy Huffman and WV Public Health Commissioner Dr. Rahul Gupta asked for assistance from a variety of agencies, including the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

In August 2016 a news release from the US Department of the Interior stated, "At the request of the State of West Virginia, Office

of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) will fund an independent examination of existing research concerning the potential correlation between increased human health risks and living near surface coal mine sites in Central Appalachia. The \$1 million study will be conducted by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) over a two-year period."

NASEM will "examine the potential relationship between increased health risks and living in proximity to sites that have been or are being mined or reclaimed for surface coal deposits" and to "Identify gaps in research and needs for additional research that may assist in the development of new approaches to safeguard the health of residents living near these types of coal mining operations." (from NASEM Statement of Task)

The National Academies study committee held a meeting in Washington D.C. in March of 2017. The first of four additional public meetings was held May 23, 2017 at Chief Logan State Park Lodge in Logan, West Virginia.

(More on p. 3)

What's inside:			
Thoughts from our president	2	Down memory lane	10
Improving the Hiking Guide	4	How to join	11
Win fabulous prizes	5	Get a history book	11
Get some baby trees	5	Planting trees on strip mines	12
Inching toward compliance	6	Learn about carbon sinks	12
Roster of officers	6	Get a Hiking Guide	13
Birds at Canaan	7	Fun giveaways	14
50 Year Celebration program	8	Saving natural gas	14
Celebration registration	9	Legislature makes lucky boo-boo	15
		A great tree	15
		Find a bird's nest, win a prize	15
		Get stuff	16

Ramblin' the Ridges

By Cynthia D. Ellis

Reflection: Mirror, Mirror

An anniversary year calls for taking stock of where we are--- and who we are. We could be inclined to wonder about the state of our group. We might want to look in the mirror.

We believe that we are doing well. And if it is not possible to hold up a mirror to see ourselves, we can examine some numbers.

Membership can be one indicator of the health of an organization.

We have members in 43 states. We have lots of members in these states: Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio and [of course] West Virginia. We have members in the District of Columbia, and so, for the most part, we are holding steady in enrollment of friends in our own and border states. We have double digit members in California, Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, New York, and Oregon. We have 2 members in Hawaii---aloha! and 3 in Alaska--waqaa! [That last greeting is just a single example of many tribal salutations; hope no one feels slighted.] In 15 states, we have lonely members...in each, just one friend of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. Maybe you know someone to join our solitary friends in Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. Hey! I realized that I know someone in one of those! I need to urge them to give a gift membership to a friend or neighbor. There are seven states that are not presently represented. If you are reading this in Nebraska, Vermont, North Dakota, Idaho, Alabama, Arizona, or Mississippi---well, join us! We offer trial memberships; so, check us out.

In our home state, we have members in 51 of the 55 counties. Our support here is strongest in Kanawha and Monongalia Counties; Randolph and Jefferson are stalwarts too. We also do well in Cabell, Pocahontas, Tucker, Upshur, Greenbrier, and Wood Counties. We'd like to recruit folks in Doddridge, Wyoming, McDowell, and Braxton Counties; and there are solo folks in Wetzel and Wirt who would enjoy having company.

The unique and present nature of our group makes it difficult to look beyond the numbers to tell more about who we are. We are a far-flung gang, with all the modern complications that

hinder easy gatherings. So, we see each other only sometimes [or not at all]. The Excel spreadsheet doesn't tell us much about details and demographics. We tend to think we are a graying bunch, but just when we think so, we make a Highlands connection with someone not so gray and find out we have youthful partners after all. Our newsletter, "The Highlands Voice," might help in seeing who we are. The Voice enjoys a robust readership. If editor John McFerrin does not get all the print and electronic feedback he might seek, others of us can chime in with some. At quarterly board meetings, it is rare to not have some issue prompted or complemented by the observation that someone had read The Voice and gotten back to us in some way.

The Voice is quirky, inimitable, and reliably informative. It obviously appeals to a wide audience of those of us who depend upon its presentations of outdoor, legislative, and conservation matters. And poems. And reader opinions. It would be tough to picture a "typical" reader of our newsletter, but there must be some common thread that draws us all to keep on dipping into the pages. So, in our 50th year, we are united in our readership.

Because social media is so inescapable, we could look at demographics at that source. We cannot sift out dues-paid members there from those who just "like" us, but we can get a glimpse of who stops by on the internet. There, 56% of our fans are women and we are most visited by folks ages 35-44! Not so gray! We have friends in the U.S. and 44 other countries. We are resolved to draw these cyber-friends into the fold.

But for now, here's to us all. Three Cheers. Look in a mirror and raise a glass or a mug; a bottle or a jug...and salute all 1400 of us members of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy! Igamsiqanaghhalek! [Another Alaskan tribal phrase; this time it is "Thanks"!]



Strip Mining and Public Health (Continued on p. 1)

After a site visit to a nearby mine (Pritchard/Tyler Morgan) the National Academies committee conducted listening sessions with three afternoon panels (representatives from WV DEP & VADMME, WV Coal Association, and citizen groups – Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Coal River Mountain Watch, and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy).

At the town hall meeting later that evening a dozen or so courageous community members shared their personal experiences. Not to be outdone and even though the hearing wasn't about granting or denying a permit, miners nonetheless appeared in equal numbers to not just present their opinions but to jeer at, deride and belittle those who claimed to be harmed by mining in their communities.

Whether pollution from mining operations results in diminished diversity and the extirpation of aquatic species as in Twentymile Creek or the deformed fish in the Mud River Reservoir, years of data have clearly shown something bad is happening near large scale surface mines. ...Studies from the 2005 EIS should have been sufficient to sound the alarm and call for action not only about damage to streams and water resources, but also about the possible impacts to human health in communities near these same mining operations. But here we are some 15 years later and still mumbling to ourselves..... Let us hope this NASEM study doesn't just kick the can down the road, but seriously provides another step or two forward to resolving these debates and actually saving peoples' lives.

#####

The following are highlights of written comments submitted on behalf of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy:

1) The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy believes that federal and state environmental laws and the regulatory agencies charged with implementing and enforcing those laws are meant to protect human health and welfare by way of protecting the environment, the water, air, land, etc, that we all live in and depend on.

2) We believe that human health impacts are an essential aspect of the cumulative impacts assessment required

by law. To that end, we have encouraged by action, comment, and litigation that regulatory agencies include appropriate considerations of potential health impacts as part of the permitting process when evaluating mine permit applications.

3) We believe agencies responsible for a balancing of needs required by the Surface Mine Law have, for far too long, ignored and avoided consideration of the human health impacts of coal mining, and of large scale mining in particular.

4) We believe the fundamental principle of the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act is to minimize and then repair harm within the mine permit boundaries and to PREVENT harm off-site, outside of those permit boundaries – including harm to human health of those living downstream and downwind.

5) We support the ongoing research and efforts of Michael Hendrix of Indiana University, Melissa Ahern of Washington State, Bill Orem of US Geological Society, Michael McCawley of West Virginia University, and others who have published peer-reviewed studies that already document the health disparities between people living near big surface mines and communities away from such mines. We believe those studies are well-documented and provide a clear link between large scale surface mines and unprecedented negative public health consequences to people living nearby (e.g. birth defects, cancer, cardiac and pulmonary disease, gall bladder disease, hypertension, mental health and other stress related debilitating problems).

6) It is important to note that, contrary to comments by industry, although non-mining socio-economic factors contribute to health problems in West Virginia and Appalachia, they cannot explain the health disparities reported in these studies. As noted in much of the research, significant correlations between health problems and mining persist **even after statistical adjustment for age, smoking, alcohol consumption, obesity, poverty, education, availability of doctors, and other risk factors**. And health disparities are present not just for men, who experience most on-the-job exposures, but for women and children who live near the mines as well.

7) We support the ongoing research and efforts of academics and scientists such as Margaret Palmer, Emily Bernhardt, Petra Wood and others who are currently documenting changes to (and often decline of) air, water, soil, and forest quality, and changes in the diversity and ecosystem health of aquatic, as well as bird and animal species in and around massive large scale surface mine complexes. We urge consideration of these studies as they contribute to understanding about how changes in the environment can impact the health of people who live near those mine sites.

8) We appreciate that state and federal agencies as well as members of Congress have at long last called for a serious review of the studies that have begun to define and document the human health impacts of large scale surface mines and that they have seen fit to engage the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) to conduct this study.

9) We stand with the communities and residents of West Virginia and Appalachia for whom negative health impacts from air and water pollution are more than just words and numbers on a piece of paper, more than mere issues to be discussed or documented in reports, but rather are devastating real life experiences affecting the health of their families and friends.

10) We encourage the National Academies study panel to regard with great concern the dozens of existing peer-reviewed studies and ongoing research into these matters. And we urge that you recommend as strongly as possible how best to advance what has been and is being done to not only document but also to prevent the deleterious human health impacts of large scale mining and associated facilities; and to impress upon the powers that be, possible ways to avoid that harm.

Go to this website w/ information on the study & how to sign up for updates:
<http://dels.nas.edu/Study-In-Progress/Potential-Human-Health-Effects-Surface/DELS-BESR-16-03>

Trail Truthing, Part 5: Your Turn

By Hugh Rogers

Ever-resourceful Editor John has proposed a contest for hikers who will help us bring our Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide up to date.

Here's some background.

More than ten years have passed since our 8th edition came off the press. Many changes have affected the trails, and hikers' experience, since 2006.

First, we want to draw attention to the three new Wilderness Areas designated in 2009: Roaring Plains West, Big Draft, and Spice Run (although the last has no formal trails). At the same time, Cranberry, Dolly Sods, and Otter Creek were expanded. It was in large part due to the efforts of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy that they gained this protection, joining the five that were created in 1975 and 1983: Dolly Sods, Otter Creek, and Cranberry, plus Laurel Fork North and South.

A number of trails, especially in Greenbrier Ranger District, have been restored and/or rerouted, including a 2.5-mile trail along the Shavers Fork. In the same district, hikers can look forward to a new array of trails on Cheat Mountain, where construction of the first phase began in the summer of 2016. The 41,000-acre (64 sq.mi.) Mower tract, acquired from the Mower Lumber Company in the 1980's, had been extensively timbered and strip-mined, leaving broad vistas more like Wyoming than West Virginia. The Forest Service has done reclamation and some red spruce restoration on the old mines. Now it plans a system of trails that will allow hikers to vary the distance and difficulty of their experience. The first five trails, totaling nearly ten miles, will be located south of US 250 between FR 227, on the western edge of Cheat Mountain, and FR 233 along the Shavers Fork. Later phases include a connector trail to Snowshoe Mountain Resort.

Hikers should be aware of the long-term impacts of major weather events: the flood in June 2016, a derecho and "Superstorm Sandy" in October 2012. Many trails on the Forest, especially on the Gauley and Marlinton/White Sulphur Ranger Districts, will take years to repair. Visitors should call there for conditions and plan to encounter washouts, missing bridges, altered stream crossings, and landslides. Lingering effects of Sandy are mostly downed trees blocking remote trails and "hangers" that continue to fall.

A variety of short but interesting new trails have been added to the National Forest inventory. At the same time, several familiar trails are no longer maintained, or will be rerouted. The best known might be the Blackwater Canyon RR Grade, which is affected by a dispute with an adjoining landowner that wants to make the trail a logging road. Although both sides of the trail are deteriorating (the boundary is right down the middle, for the most part), the uphill side is still public land, and it still sees lots of use by hikers and bikers. We'll continue to include it, to promote it, even, with appropriate cautions.

Also in Cheat Ranger District, South Haddix Trail (TR126) and Shingletree Trail (TR121) will be realigned during Corridor H construction. Details should be available this summer.

So, what about the contest? Well, since the earliest editions, supporters of the Highlands Conservancy have updated trail information, by post card, phone, or online. Some hikers have taken photos to illustrate their experiences (and we *need* photographs!).

Topics have included rare or heavy trail usage, water sources, overgrowth, scenic views, potential campsites, condition of trailhead parking areas, trail erosion, signage, unusual rock formations or botanical oddities, and any problems with crossing private land. We've received suggestions on our style, our maps, and of course the trail descriptions.

It's time to ramp it up. A new edition is an opportunity to correct any lingering errors. This time around, we can't rely on our long-term author-editors, Allen de Hart and Bruce Sundquist, since they passed away. We're counting on you.

Re-read the ad. Maybe you have a pet peeve about a certain trail description. Or maybe you'll simply go out with an eye more sharply focused on what you find and what the Guide led you to expect. Beginner's eye, we could call it.

Given the many inconsistencies in trail DISTANCES*, that's probably not so important. More helpful would be changes in trail CONDITIONS, most often affected by floods and windstorms. Best of all would be mistaken DIRECTIONS, or REROUTES since the 8th edition. Possible IMPROVEMENTS in how we present the material are always welcome.

Bonus topic: Tell us about an unrecognized place in the forest where you would designate a trail.

*Footnote on trail length: Although we hoped to reconcile the lengths quoted by our authors with those provided by the Forest Service (presumably using more advanced mapping technology), that hasn't been possible in every case. For example, trails in the Cranberry Wilderness are listed on a Forest Service brochure map, the brochure text description, and a master trail list. Map and text disagreed on thirteen of fifteen trails (for three, the difference was only 0.1 mile, but others differed by as much as two miles). The master list generally agreed with the text, but on five trails it differed from both text and map. For the Seneca Creek Backcountry, map and text disagreed on twelve of eighteen trails; the master list disagreed with both map and text on seven of eighteen, agreed with map but not text on three, and text but not map on four. Conclusion: regard mileage numbers as helpful but not infallible.

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.

Help Improve the Hiking Guide!!!! Win a Prize!!!!

We are working on a new edition of The Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide. To do it, we need your help. The Guide describes nearly 200 U.S. Forest Service trails (800 miles total). Inevitably, some have changed since our last edition was published ten years ago. Do you know of trail descriptions in the 8th edition that are no longer accurate? (Or, dare we say it, any that weren't completely accurate to begin with?) We have found a few but there are more to be done. We would like to incorporate your observations into the new edition. As a way of thanking you, we are awarding prizes.

Grand Prize: A \$100 Gift Certificate to REI

Semi-Grand Prizes: Five West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Celebrating 50 Years T-Shirts

How to help/enter: Hike a trail in the Monongahela National Forest. Write out your observations about trail conditions, difficulty, interesting features, or anything else you think should be changed in the Hiking Guide's 9th edition. Send your observations to Hugh Rogers, 531 Moon Run Road, Kerens, WV 26276, (304)636-2662, hugh.rogers@gmail.com

Deadline: September 1, 2017

We will draw the winners from all the entries during our 50th Anniversary Celebration, September 15-17.

Thanks for your help, and happy hiking!

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.

Order now with 50% deposit to assure availability

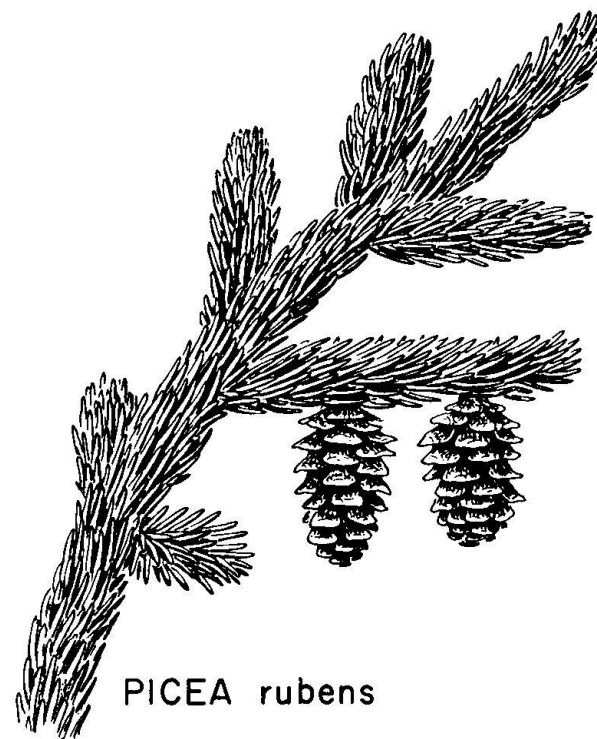
100 - \$220.00; 1,000 - \$1,100.00

After September 1, 2017

100 - \$225.00; 1,000 - \$1,150.00

Available for pick-up in Morgantown during April, 2018.

For more information contact: Dave Saville, david.saville12@gmail.com 304 692-8118



PICEA rubens

Inch by inch

Moving Old Mines Closer to Compliance

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the Sierra Club, and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition have made an agreement with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection that moves seven former mine sites closer to compliance with water protection laws. This puts the mines one step closer to stopping the ongoing pollution that is coming from those sites.

Before they begin mining, companies are required to post a bond to assure that the site will be reclaimed when the mining is over. If the company goes out of business, disappears, etc. then the Department of Environmental Protection forfeits the bond and completes the reclamation. When it does this, it becomes responsible for the site.

That is what happened to seven mine sites in in Barbour, Nicholas, and Preston counties. The DEP forfeited the bonds and assumed responsibility for the sites. There continues to be, however, aluminum, iron, nitrogen ammonia, and suspended solids coming from the site and degrading the nearby streams.

To address this, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the Sierra Club, and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition sued the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection in the United States District Court for the Northern District of West Virginia.

The parties have now reached a settlement in which the DEP agrees to install necessary equipment, etc. by a fixed date and achieve compliance with the water pollution laws by a fixed date.

The bottom line is that the sites are still not in compliance and the streams are still being degraded. The settlement is still a good thing because it puts us on a path to compliance. In theory, DEP had these obligations from the moment that it assumed responsibility for the mines. In actual practice, it needs deadlines, a court Order, and the power of the federal court to enforce that Order if it does not meet the deadlines.

Such is the nature of environmental protection laws. Nothing good happens overnight. Yet inch by inch things move forward. This is another step.

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.

Roster of Officers, Board Members and Committee Chairs, and Board of Directors

PRESIDENT: Cynthia D. Ellis, 3114 Steel Ridge Road, Red House, WV 25168, (304) 586-4135, cdellis@wildblue.net
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT: Larry Thomas, P.O. Box 194, Circleville, WV 26804, (304) 567-2602, larryvthomas@aol.com
VICE PRESIDENT FOR FEDERAL AFFAIRS: Marilyn Shoenfeld, 167 Balsam Way, Davis, WV 26260, (304) 866-3484, marilyn.shoenfeld@gmail.com
VICE PRESIDENT FOR STATE AFFAIRS: Frank Young, 33 Carnian Ford Road, Ripley, WV 25271, (304)372-3945, fyoung@mountain.net
SECRETARY: John McFerrin, 202 Van Tassel Court, Morgantown, WV 26508, (304) 291-8305, johnmcferrin@aol.com
TREASURER: Bob Marshall, 2108 Emma Road, Kenna, WV 25248, (304)545-6817, woodhavenwva@aim.com
PAST PRESIDENT: Hugh Rogers, 531 Moon Run Road, Kerens, WV 26276, (304)636-2662, hugh.rogers@gmail.com

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE (Terms expire October 2018)
George E. Beetham Jr., 2819 Mt. Carmel Avenue, Glenside, PA 19038, (267) 252-3748, geobeet@hotmail.com
Jackie Burns jackie.burns@frontier.com.
Bill McNeel, 1234 Jericho Road, Marlinton, WV 24954, (304) 799-4369, wpmcneel@gmail.com
John Terry. 907 Grasslick Run, Montrose, WV 26283; farmerstwo@msn.com; (304) 637-3020
Randy Kesling, 116 Farm Meadow Drive, Bridgeport, WV 26330; (304) 622-5982; rkesling@MA.RR.com

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE (Terms expire October 2017)
Adam Casseday, 212 Davis and Elkins St, Elkins, WV 26241, 304-636-4944, dr_casseday@yahoo.com
George Hack; 510 HANNA RD; Bel Air, MD 21014; 443 742-0463 george.hack@db.com
LeJay Graffious, P.O. Box 69, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525, lejay@oldhemlock.org
Rick Webb, 481 Ravens Run Road, Monterey, VA 24465, (540) 468-2881, rwebb@virginia.edu
Mike Withers, Rt 2, Box 328, Grafton WV 26354, 304-265-3750, 1nastynash@comcast.net

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTORS
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY: Vacant
PITTSBURGH CLIMBERS: Buff Rodman, 32 Crystal Drive, Oakmont, PA 15139, (412) 828-8983, buffrodman@hotmail.com
BROOKS BIRD CLUB: Cynthia D. Ellis, 3114 Steel Ridge Road, Red House, WV 25168, (304) 586-4135, cdellis@wildblue.net
MOUNTAINEER CHAPTER TROUT UNLIMITED: Chris Byrd, 292 Magnolia Avenue, Clarksburg, WV 26301, (304) 622-3023, cbyrd@ma.rr.com
WEST VIRGINIA RIVERS COALITION: Don Garvin, P.O. Box 666, Buckhannon, WV 26201, (304) 395-0078, DSGJR@aol.com
FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE KANAWHA: Cindy Rank, 4401 Eden Road, Rock Cave , WV 26234, (304) 924-5802, clrank2@gmail.com
TEAM (Taylor Environmental Advocacy Membership): Beth Baldwin, 222 Westwood Ave Bridgeport , WV 26330; elbrn6e21@msn.com
ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS ALLIANCE: Dr. Wayne C. Spiggle, 3987 Knobley Road, Keyser, WV 26762, 304-726-4868, wspiggle@mac.com
SHAVERS FORK COALITION: Jim Van Gundy, 210 Buffalo Street, Elkins, WV 26241, (304) 636-4736, jjvg01@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS
EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE: Cindy Rank, 4401 Eden Road, Rock Cave, WV 26234, (304) 924-5802, clrank2@gmail.com
PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: Marilyn Shoenfeld, 167 Balsam Way, Davis, WV 26260, (304) 866-3484, marilyn.shoenfeld@gmail.com
WIND ENERGY COMMITTEE: Peter Shoenfeld, 167 Balsam Way, Davis WV 26260, (304)866-3484, pshoenfeld@gmail.com
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE: Frank Young, 33 Carnian Ford Road, Ripley, WV 25271, (304) 372-3945, fyoung@mountain.net
ENDOWMENT FUND COMMITTEE: Larry Thomas, P.O. Box 194, Circleville, WV 26804, (304) 567-2602, larryvthomas@aol.com
RIVERS COMMITTEE: Vacant
HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE: Hugh Rogers, 531 Moon Run Road, Kerens, WV 26276, (304) 636-2662, hugh.rogers@gmail.com

MISCELLANEOUS OFFICES
WEB PAGE – DIGITAL PUBLISHING: Dan Radmacher, (540) 798-6683, dan.radmacher@writingleft.com

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Beth Little, 214 Black Gum Lane, Hillsboro, WV 24946, (304) 653-4277, blittle@citynet.net
HIGHLANDS VOICE EDITOR: John McFerrin, 202 Van Tassel Court, Morgantown, WV 26508, (304) 291-8305, johnmcferrin@aol.com

International Migratory Bird Day at the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge

By Cindy Rank

What fun it was a couple of weeks ago to return to the first bit of land purchased as part of the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge (CVWR) in Tucker County. And what a difference 23 years makes!

I'm embarrassed to admit I've not been back to the Freeland tract since it was purchased in August 1994, the end of my last term as President of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

My first visit back then was in the company of U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) personnel and WV Department of Natural Resources (WVDNR) folks and others who spent years working to protect the unique high elevation valley and wetland complex from development as a pumped storage hydroelectric facility.

Back then we carefully picked our way into the mysterious combination of bog and spruce trees shrouded in fog or low lying clouds typical for the Valley. With the purchase of the Freeland tract the idea of preserving the Valley as a National Wildlife Refuge had become reality.

Shortly after the Freeland tract was secured, dignitaries from all over gathered to listen to the late Senator Robert Byrd praise the many years of work by federal and state resource agencies, local officials, residents, business owners, and environmental groups who worked through difficult times to resolve differences concerning the many conflicting visions for the valley. With the October 1994 celebration the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge was officially dedicated as the nation's 500th Refuge within the national system.

My recent visit was prompted by an unexpected opportunity to spend the weekend with friends who had rented a small cottage in the valley. Two of them were to attend Master Naturalist activities as part of the International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) at Canaan Valley.

This year the theme of the IMBD was Stopover Sites, which highlights the importance of wildlife refuges and other important natural areas like coasts and estuaries that provide resource-rich habitats. These sites give the birds energy to continue their journey, but can be converted to developed areas or agricultural fields if not protected.

We missed the Woodcock watch Friday night. ...The birds and their human counterparts settled into more sane pursuits given the nasty weather.



But Saturday dawned with mere foggy showers and Lauren Merrill, gracious and knowledgeable AmeriCorps volunteer with the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, organized the morning walk while Rich Bailey, WV DNR Ornithologist, served as our guide and later gave a presentation to the Master Naturalists class. (Thanks to both for their time and knowledge --- and thanks to Lauren for the photographs that appear with this article.)

We spent most of our time on the Freeland tract boardwalk that protects the sensitive ecology of the bog area and also allows access for people interested in the birds and diverse ecosystem of the Valley.

Bobolinks were plentiful and had returned to Canaan Valley the week of our visit. We were told the cheerful black and white bird is one of the migrants that relies heavily on stopover sites to fuel its 12,500 mile journey each year.

On a shorter stop in the Dolly Sods area we saw and heard more birds and marveled at gelatinous balls of spotted salamander egg masses and amazingly long stringy lengths of black egg sacks being deposited by American toads.

The numbers and names of the many birds we saw and heard were more important to the birders among us, but absorbing the whole experience, breathing in the morning chill and delighting in the many sights and sounds is what remains with me – especially against the background of the decades of struggle about what should become of this unique and beautiful valley (i.e. beginning in the 1950s when it's reported that WVDNR and USFWS

first set out to protect the area. See: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Canaan_Valley/about/history.html.)

From the planned pumped storage hydroelectric facility that would have flooded the valley and other development plans over the years, to multiple studies and legal challenges, to and through the many difficult Canaan Valley Task Force round table meetings where agencies, scientists, local folks, and concerned environmental groups aired their differences and finally arrived at an agreement to move forward with the idea of establishing a National Wildlife Refuge, this wonder of West Virginia - now close to some 17,000 acres - has held its own.

Note: Chapter 5 (Saving the Promised Land) of Dave Elkinton's book *Fighting to Protect the Highlands: the First Forty Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy* discusses the Conservancy's involvement in the struggle to oppose the Davis Power Project and support the creation of the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge.



Spotted Salamander egg case

Planting the Seeds & Helping Them Grow

50 Years of Tending the Environment in West Virginia

Honoring the Partnerships that formed the Highlands Conservancy in the first place and the ever expanding network of new citizen and environmental partners we've worked with through the past 5 decades.

Program

Tentative - Details are still being finalized

Friday, September 15, 2017

Noon – Registration and Display set-up begins
 1:00pm – Outings organize for departure
 3:00pm Displays, Silent Auction, Photo-sharing, Story Telling, Meet & Greet, Workshops, presentations and Round Table Discussions
 4:30pm Reception Begins
 ✓ **Conservation Leaders, Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow**
 6:00pm Panel Discussions
 ✓ **Canaan Valley – The Promised Land**
 ✓ **Mon National Forest, Wild & Wonderful!**
 8:00pm Keynote Speaker
 9:00pm Music, Outings; Stars & Salamanders

Saturday, September 16, 2017

6:30am Bird walk
 7-8:00am, continental Breakfast
 8:00am, Registration and display set-up (cont.)
 8:00am, Morning and all-day outings organize
 11:00am, Round Table Discussions
 ✓ **Poet's Round Table**
 1:00pm, Afternoon Outings Organize
 1:30pm, Workshops, round-table discussions
 ✓ **Partner's Roundtables**
 4:00pm, **A Celebration of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy**
 5:00pm, evening reception/posters/displays
 6:00pm, Dinner
 7:00pm, Panel Discussion/Keynote
 ✓ **Toxic Soup or a Hearty Broth?**
 9:00pm, Music, Evening Outings

Sunday, September 17, 2017

6:30am, Bird walk
 7-8:00am, Continental Breakfast
 8:00am, morning and all-day outings organize
 9am Panel Discussion
 ✓ **Maintaining Sanity - In An Uncertain Future**
 11:00am Box lunches, afternoon outings



"Celebrating 50 Years"

Canaan Valley State Park

September 15-17, 2017

Field Trips

Scenic Chairlift Rides, \$7 adults

Highlands Car Tour, We'll have a self-guided car tour highlighting regional attractions and scenic destinations.

Half-day outings

Abe's Run Swamp hike
 Canaan Valley and the Davis Power Project
 Canaan Valley State Park Hike
 History of the ski industry in Canaan
 Red Spruce tree planting and restoration tour

All Day outings

Caving – Sinks of Gandy, Stillhouse Cave
Canoeing/kayaking – Blackwater River
Hike - Otter Creek, South Prong Trail
Bike - Blackwater Canyon Trail

Program Highlights

Silent Auction – Consider donating an item.

Raffle – we're open for suggestions.

Displays/Posters – We'll have plenty of space for our partners to set up displays highlighting their organization, research, or projects.

Workshops – We've got time slots and space allocated for talks, presentations or workshops. We want to learn more about what you or your organization is working on.

Round Table Discussions - both structured and impromptu discussions around various topics.

Conservation Leaders,

Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

The past meets the future as conservation leaders from all generations gather to reflect on careers, successes & failures, perseverance, friendships, tomorrow, and that common thread that binds us all - our love and appreciation for this special place. Rather than a formal sit-down dinner, we'll have a reception with plenty of fare.

Canaan Valley – Promised Land

Winning the battle against the Davis Power Project allowed for the creation of the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

The Monongahela National Forest

Strong Forest Management Plans and Wilderness protection help to keep the Monongahela Wild and Wonderful.

A Celebration of the Highlands Conservancy

A celebratory reception honoring and recognizing our History, Founders and Accomplishments.

Toxic Soup or a Hearty Broth?

Where Science, Litigation, Activism and Public Interest Intersect. A Moderated Panel Discussion/keynote address.

Maintaining Sanity - In An Uncertain Future

Climate Change, renewable energy, sustainability. What does tomorrow hold?

Celebrating 50 Years!

Help Us Celebrate!

Help us make the 50th 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.
- Write about an issue that you know about, were involved with, or the success from our efforts you enjoy. Share your 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 to share with us.
- Donate a silent auction or raffle item.
- Get out those old photo albums and bring them with you to Canaan for a photo-sharing display.
- But most of all, JOIN US September 15-17 at the Canaan Valley State Park to help us celebrate 5 decades of Fighting to Protect the Highlands!

Lodging

Canaan Valley State Park, 800-622-4121

- WVHC 50th special rate of \$119/night.
- Cabin Rentals available to sleep 4-12.
- Canaan Valley State Park Campgrounds, Paved, full hookups.



"Celebrating 50 Years"

Canaan Valley State Park

September 15-17, 2017

Join Us!

Contact us at; wvhc50@gmail.com

Celebrating 50 Years T-Shirts!



Heavy weight Black t-shirts
with 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.

Registration

Friday , including outings, workshops, programs, reception and with heavy Hors devours.	\$20.00
Saturday , including outings, workshops, programs, Continental Breakfast, Box Lunch and evening Reception/Dinner.	\$40.00
Sunday , including outings, workshops, Programs, Continental Breakfast and Box Lunch,	\$20.00
All Weekend , including all of the above	\$75.00

Contact us for scholarship, volunteer, and low-cost lodging opportunities. wvhc50@gmail.com

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Send us this form, or visit our website at www.wvhighlands.org for up-to-date information and online registration.

Mail to: WVHC PO Box 306 Charleston, WV 25321

Memories of the Early Days of the WVHC

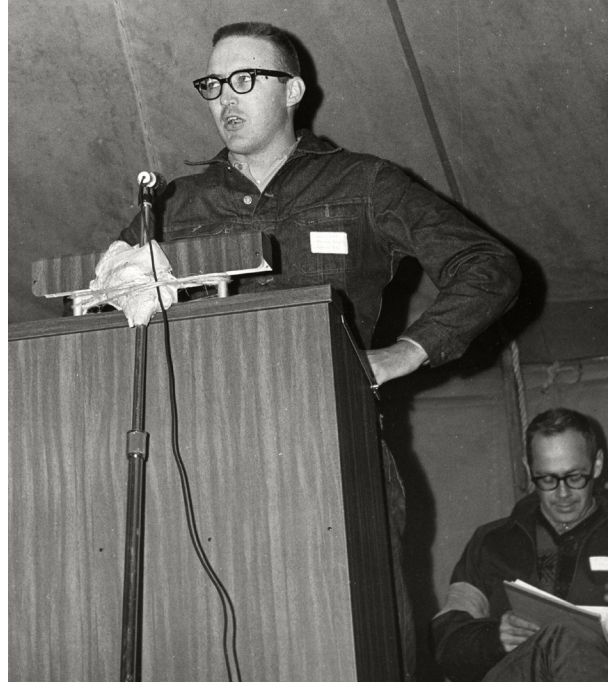
By Rupert Cutler

I was an Assistant Executive Director of The Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C., assigned by Executive Director Stewart Brandborg to help pro-wilderness grass roots groups in the eastern states, when the West Virginia Highland Conservancy was created in 1967. It was my good fortune to fall in with the crowd that became the organization's founders, as I hiked and canoed the national forest roadless areas in West Virginia to identify candidate wilderness areas.

(I'd been the managing editor of the National Wildlife Federation's magazine, *National Wildlife*, previous to 1965, and I left TWS in 1969 to attend Michigan State University where I received my Ph.D. degree in 1972. My dissertation was a study of lawsuits involving the U.S. Forest Service. I was an MSU faculty member until President Carter appointed me Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment in 1977. In that capacity I supervised the U.S. Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service, now the NRCS, and initiated the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation [RARE II] that created the national roadless area inventory.)

Fifty years on, my memories of those early days of the WVHC are fragmentary at best. I do recall brainstorming ideas

for a new West Virginia conservation organization among a half-dozen save-the-back-country advocates in the farmhouse rented by D.C. canoeists Bob



Rupe Cutler speaking at the first WVHC annual review in 1968. Joe Hutcheson (?) is seated behind him.

and Lucille Harrigan near Seneca Rocks. The participants came from Pittsburg, Charleston, Richmond and Washington, D.C. as well as from across West Virginia. Dave Elkinton's book, "Fighting to Protect

the Highlands," jogged my memory with respect to the names of the founders I met with then, including Lou Greathouse, Lee Maynard, Joe Riffenberger, Joe Hutchison, and Bob Broughton.

Elkinton's book does a great job of describing the first Fall Highlands Weekend Review on Spruce Knob in October of 1965 during which this photo was taken. You can see Joe Hutchison seated behind me. Joe was master of ceremonies for the "camp meeting" we had in the cold rain under a big church revival tent. I was reciting a list of all the development projects being proposed for the highlands that we conservationists were concerned about, including the Highland Scenic Highway, Royal Glen Dam and more ARC highways.

Our audience of influential people included Senator Robert Byrd, Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, and Monongahela National Forester Ephe Olliver. We hoped they'd get the point that West Virginia conservationists—and nonresidents who also cherished the West Virginia back country and wild rivers—were in the process of becoming politically organized and that they would hear from us on a continuing basis. That embryonic political force became the West Virginia Highland Conservancy.

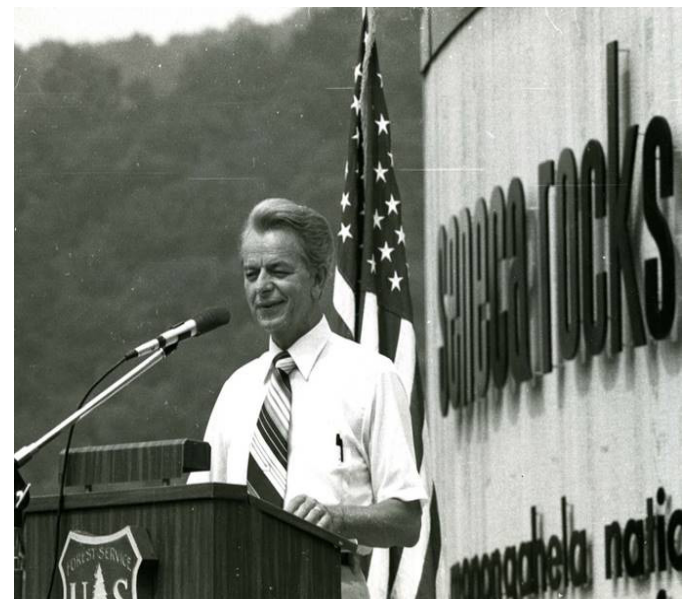
1965 Fall Review

From *Fighting to Protect the Highlands, The First Forty Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy* by Dave Elkinton

As recalled by Maxwell Smith "It was a cold, wet, miserable day; however the attendance of 350 to 400 persons far exceeded our hopes. After the day's activities there was an evening meeting at Gatewood Management Area on Spruce Mountain. Bob Harrigan had arranged for the meal, and the generator for lights. The meal was an excellent barbecued chicken dinner, which was cooked and eaten in the rain, but enjoyed by all. The meeting later in the Revivalist's Tent was well attended, with Secretary of Interior, Stewart Udall, and U.S. Senator Robert Byrd as the main speakers."

Rupe Cutler recalled; I found myself in the role of the "anchor man" of that team of speakers addressing their concerns regarding threats to the Highlands. In the "call and response" speaking style of the late U.S. Senator Hubert Humphrey I did my best to rouse the audience roughly as follows: Do you want a Royal Glen Dam? (Noooooo!) Do you want an Appalachian Corridor Highway? (Noooooo!) Do you want a Highlands Scenic Highway? (Noooooo!) and so forth. We were rocking and rolling, and fervently hoping that our guests from Washington and Elkins got the message. Following that emotional evening, the organizers concluded they had gotten their new group off to a good start.

Senator Byrd once wrote: "West Virginia is one of the most beautiful and unique of all places. It is the most southern of the northern and the most northern of the southern; the most eastern of the western and the most western of the eastern. It is where the East says good morning to the West, and where Yankee Doodle and Dixie kiss each other good night!"



Senator Byrd Dedicates the Seneca Rocks Visitor Center in 1978. Photo from the Senator Byrd Photograph Collection.

Join Now !!!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Membership categories (circle one)

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

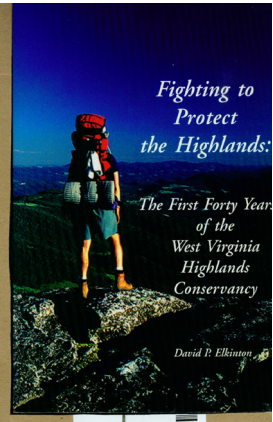
Mail to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321

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

You may also join on-line at 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, 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: _____

Email _____

Your name: _____

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.

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.

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 or by real, honest to goodness, mentioned in the United States Constitution mail to WV Highlands Conservancy, PO Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321.

Planting Some Trees on Old Strip Mines

By Beth Little

I just witnessed an operation that has it all: job creation, land restoration, and youth education. The jobs are largely local and varied, from bulldozer operator to tree planting grunt. The restoration is of old strip mined lands on Cheat Mountain, and the youth this day were students from colleges and universities in at least three states (I saw license plates for Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, and West Virginia); high schools from Pocahontas and Randolph Counties; and even a couple of local middle schools.

The list of collaborators includes state and federal agencies, state universities, and private environmental organizations. I hesitate to attempt a list, because I know I'll leave some out, but at least: Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Agency, Fish and Wildlife Service, West Virginia University, Office of Surface Mining, University of Kentucky, Canaan Valley Institute, The Nature Conservancy, Cheat Mountain Club, and American Rivers. Of course it is on the Monongahela National Forest, so the US Forest Service is coordinating; and right at the core is the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy in the person of Dave Saville, the hero who supplies the trees – Red Spruce trees.

As I drove into the Mower Tract, my first view was spectacular – wide vistas of spruce trees and grassy slopes. During the day I learned that the problem is that the trees are Norway spruce, and grass is not the preferred vegetation for what used to be Red spruce habitat; but it was very pretty. Then I rounded a curve and saw devastation - worse than the derecho – all the trees knocked down, roots in the air, rocks scattered on humpy ground – like a prelude to Mordor.

During the day it was explained that the mine lands were so compacted that the trees that had been planted during the original 'restoration' had shallow root systems and were not growing well; plus, nothing else was being naturally seeded – the usual wildflowers, shrubs and hardwoods – only grass. Hence the new approach that looked so awful.

First they bulldozed down most (though not all) of the Norway spruce and then 'ripped' the land with a huge tooth like attachment on the bulldozer. The uprooted trees would supply nutrients to the soil as they broke down, and the Department of Highways was also encouraged to spread any chipped vegetation waste they wanted to get rid of. The tumbled up land surface would collect more

water instead of allowing it to run off into sediment ponds that were also part of the original restoration. Instead, small wetlands were created.

It looked like a huge ugly mess, but when we moved on to areas that had been treated earlier, the results were thrilling. The areas subjected to the treatment 5 years ago were covered with waist high Red spruce, aspen, and wildflowers. The land was still somewhat clumpy, but weathering down, and the old bulldozed trees were much less noticeable. The three year old treated areas had knee-high Red spruce. The areas that had looked so devastated when I drove in turned out to be land that was treated in the last year or two, and it was covered with little foot high Red spruce that I had not noticed amid the raw results of having been recently 'ripped.'

Apparently it took some courage to begin: What? Put a bulldozer on the slopes, knock down all the trees, and tear up the ground? But the results are undeniable, and they are attracting more investment money to treat more and more areas – thousands of acres with tens of thousands of trees.

Quite a bit of science is going into the process, especially hydrology. They are learning as they go, and modifying things accordingly. And what an uplifting thing to see. I look forward to observing it in 10 years, and imagining what it will look like in 40 years.

The press was there, and had been at the earlier plantings, to get the word out and PBS has done a special about it. The best thing for me was the education of the students who were there to help with the planting. The Forest Service also had them scattering milkweed seeds to attract Monarch butterflies. That brought back memories of blowing on the milkweed pods to watch the parachuted seeds float away (and devil the nearby farmers).

I almost missed out. It had rained all night the night before and was still raining when I got up, so I came close to bagging it. But I checked the weather, and it looked like it might clear up in the afternoon, so I headed out. When I got to the planting area in the Mower Tract, there was a glorious blue sky with little puffy white clouds and a refreshing breeze. They (the Forest Service) served lunch, and they even had brownies.

What a fabulous day!

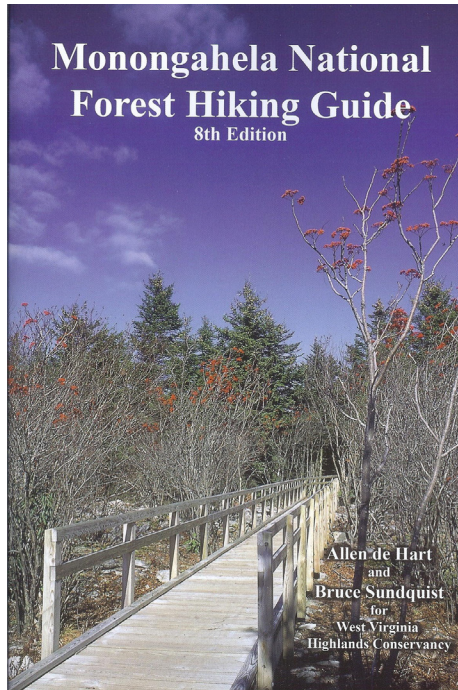
Learn important stuff without being bored

Forest Management and Carbon Sinks

What is the role of forest management in carbon dioxide sequestration? We all know that trees play a big role in how much carbon dioxide is in the air. They spend their days and nights taking in carbon dioxide, storing the carbon, releasing it.

Trees take in carbon dioxide, store the carbon, and release carbon dioxide and oxygen at different rates during different times of their lives. Because of this, forest management can have a big effect upon how effective forests are as carbon sinks.

To help you understand all this without having to plod through a bunch of technical papers, there is a presentation by Chris Bolgiano, a nature writer and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy member. It starts with a brief history of the eastern National Forests, talks about carbon sequestration by forests, and ends with a proposal that managers of National Forests consider the role of carbon sequestration in all forest management decisions. It is about 12 minutes and well worth watching. See it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK76Yh7cTac>



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 \$15.95 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

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. 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.



Stuff We Have Been Giving Away

In 2016, in addition to our woody species seed collections, volunteers helped collect some wildflower seeds we have been able to make Pollinator seed packets from. We have handed these out at Discover Nature Day, Sustainability Fair and other events this spring. They contain Downey Sunflower, Yellow Coneflower, Jerusalem Artichoke, Cutleaf Coneflower, and Common Milkweed.



The red spruce seedlings also make great outreach hand-outs at Springtime festivals and Earth Day events. Of course springtime is also tree planting time. This year, along with our partners with the Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative (CASRI), we planted over 80,000 red spruce trees. These were planted on numerous restoration projects across the West Virginia Highlands including on the Monongahela National Forest, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Kumbrow State Forest, Blackwater Falls & Watoga State Parks,

The Nature Conservancy's Preserve at Cranesville Swamp, and several other conservation properties. We've even helped the City of Richwood, and our friend, Mayor Baber, with trees for flood recovery work. Our West Virginia red spruce is also being used in Western Maryland on State Forests and Parks, as well as on the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania.

Cindy Ellis gave away some red spruce seedlings at the Sustainability Fair in Huntington.



Congress Refuses to Unfix a Problem

By John McFerrin

In March, 2017, *The Highlands Voice* reported that Congress was about to unfix a problem with the waste of natural gas on public lands. The Bureau of Land Management had done regulations to correct the problem. There was, however, a resolution in Congress to prevent the regulations from taking effect. It zipped through the House in three days and was up for consideration in the Senate. The story assumed it would pass.

In the Senate, however, it was a different story. With the Democrats (including Senator Manchin) along with three Republicans (Lindsey Graham (S.C.), Susan Collins (Maine) and John McCain (Ariz.) voting against, the resolution did not pass. The original regulation goes into effect as planned. The March, 2017, story turned out to be fake news.

The problem that the regulations hope to correct is the waste of natural gas from public lands. The Bureau of Land Management manages leases and sales of natural gas that is located on federal lands. One of the problems with this program is that we are wasting a lot of the gas. Some of it is flared (burned on site), vented (released to the atmosphere) or leaked. Gas that is leaked, flared, or burned is not sold, depriving the United States of royalties.

Royalty loss is not the only problem. The wasted gas harms local communities and surrounding areas through visual and noise impacts from flaring, and contributes to regional and global air pollution problems of smog, particulate matter, and toxics (such as benzene, a carcinogen). Vented or leaked gas contributes to climate change, because the primary constituent of natural gas is methane, an especially powerful greenhouse gas with climate impacts roughly 25 times those of carbon dioxide (CO₂), if measured over a 100-year period, or 86 times those of CO₂, if measured over a 20-year period. Thus, measures to conserve gas and avoid waste may significantly benefit local communities, public health, and the environment.

To fix these problems, the Bureau of Land Management proposed a rule that would require gas companies to stop or reduce the flaring, venting, and leaking at gas wells and compressor stations on public lands.

Correcting the problem could be done at a relatively small net cost. The additional equipment and operational changes required to comply would have a cost. At the same time, the gas that had been wasted could be sold. According to Bureau of Land Management estimates, the value of the additional gas captured and sold would not entirely offset the additional cost of compliance. It estimates that gas company profits would decrease by an average of fifteen hundredths of one per cent as a result of the rule.

Thanks to the efforts of the Senate, the regulations addressing this can remain in effect.

Legislature Does Good by Accident

There were two water quality bills in the 2017 Legislature which the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy opposed. This led to weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, etc., some of which was expressed in the May issue of *The Highlands Voice*. When the dust cleared, however, lawmakers discovered that when they passed the second bill (removing a restriction on the coal industry) they had accidentally removed controversial language that could increase the amount of toxic chemicals discharged into West Virginia's rivers and streams,

The first piece of legislation, House Bill 2506, gave the West Virginia Manufacturers Association and other industry groups a long-sought victory with language to move the state Department of Environmental Protection to the use of an average stream flow called "harmonic mean" when setting water pollution permit limits. For years, the DEP has used a more protective low-flow stream figure in calculating those limits.

Under the bill, the state's water quality standards — the legal limit for in-stream contamination — won't change. But because the average flow is always higher than the low-flow measure, the change allows the agency to approve increases in the discharges allowed by specific industrial facilities.

The second bill (labeled as SB687 but known as "the coal bill") changed the rules for the coal industry. It eliminated the requirement that water leaving a mine not cause "biological impairment" of receiving streams (regulationspeak for not kill what lives in the stream). For more information on both of these bills, see the April issue of *The Highlands Voice*.

The problem (if we can call it that, depending upon perspective) arose because both bills changed the same section of state code. SB 687 re-enacted the same section of state code that included the harmonic mean flow changes that were made by HB 2506, replacing the changes with the language that was in the law prior to this legislative session. This nullified the changes made by HB 2506.

Since the Regular Session of the Legislature ended the Legislature has been in Special Session off and on. Mostly they were there to work on the budget but have worked on a few other things. There has been talk of adding this issue to the agenda but so far nothing has come of that.

Note: Much of the material for this story first appeared in *The Charleston Gazette*.

Beauty is Where You Find It

By Charlie Feldhake

I have left the 12-foot bole of a dead scarlet oak standing about 20 feet from the back of my house. Leaving it stand is not a popular decision since I live on the edge of a housing development and some sanitized version of healthy ecosystems is expected. However, my back yard includes the edge of a steep hill that starts the 400-foot elevation drop to Beaver Creek and that hill is largely wooded with few homes.

When alive, this tree had a well-placed branch from which I hung a couple of bird feeders that provided much enjoyment during winter months with the feeding activity viewed through the large windows in my back room. I have even seen hawks pounce on birds feeding on the bird seed. Grey and Red Squirrels sometimes frequented my back yard by the dozens.

So, this ragged rotting eyesore is an ecological resource, even though it can no longer support bird feeders. On the back side overlooking the hill there must be a couple of holes because I see Flickers and Robins disappearing from the air, presumably to feed young in nests. This rotting stump is a rare resource in my neighborhood.

It has been interesting to observe the ecology of my neighborhood during the nearly 30 years of my residence. One thing I thought was good was that Raleigh County enacted a leash law for dogs and there were a lot roaming the neighborhood that were sometimes a nuisance. However, with the dogs gone people thought it was safe for cats so we now have cats out the wazoo.

With a neighborhood plagued with cats I no longer have bunny nests in my yard to mow around. I don't see garter snakes, salamanders, or wood frogs. Without dogs to keep the cats under control the neighborhood has become a wildlife desert. Most people probably don't notice this unintended consequence of the leash law but we do have some coyotes around that may restore the balance.

I had my dead tree topped a few years ago so it wouldn't lose branches that would fall on my house. It has a big open gash facing my house that is ragged and shows rotted red wood within. There are remnants of dark bark with bright green lichens still growing that give an interesting contrast in color. Most people think it is unsightly but I think it is beautiful.

Find Bird Nests, Win Prizes!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

It's time once again for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Funky Nests in Funky Places. This contest focuses on the quirky places birds sometimes build their nests. Participants have found nests on tiny skyscraper ledges, in barbecue grills, traffic lights, wind chimes, flower pots, an old motorcycle helmet, or just about anywhere.

To enter, find a bird's nest and then send in a picture, video, poem, or artwork about it. There are prizes, including binoculars, bird feeders, online courses, posters, and much more.

Nesting season is well underway, so everyone is invited to head outdoors to enjoy nature and find nesting birds in unexpected places. Participants don't have to be bird or photography experts.

All ages are welcome to participate as individuals or with a class, community center, or afterschool program. Entries are being accepted from anywhere in the world.

Find more information about how to locate nests, approach them without disturbing the birds, and how enter the contest at www.funkynests.org.

The entry deadline is June 30.

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

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