

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy  
PO. Box 306  
Charleston, WV 25321

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 54      No. 8      August, 2021

## Congress Begins to Shape Climate Policy

By Perry Bryant, Climate Committee Chairman

There are going to be many twists and turns in the Congressional battle over climate policy. And anything I write might be slightly outdated by the time you have an opportunity to read this. But here's where things are at the beginning of August, and what you can do to impact climate change policy.

The bipartisan infrastructure bill has passed its first hurdle in the Senate, and appears likely to pass the Senate. This bipartisan bill contains some important down payments on climate policy: investing in the electrical grid to make it more resilient, funding charging stations across the country for electrical vehicles, and investing in public transit and passenger rail.

The bill also reauthorizes the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program for 13 years. Coal companies pay fees to the AML program to reclaim land mined prior to 1977, and these fees were reduced by 20%. However, an additional \$11 billion in AML funding was included in the bipartisan infrastructure bill. Plugging orphaned oil and gas wells was also funded by \$4.7 billion. And, tax credits were provided to encourage manufacturing of clean energy products

(solar panels, and wind turbines, for example) in places that have lost coal mining jobs (48C tax credits).

As important as these provisions are, and they are very important and under appreciated by some, they do not address the need to systematically and drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to avoid the worst impacts of global warming. The \$3.5 trillion budget reconciliation bill, currently being negotiated in the US Senate, is where most of the climate policy will need to be included.

Central to reducing carbon dioxide emissions is adopting a clean energy standard that requires utility companies to generate 80% of their electricity with clean energy - solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, etc. - by 2030.

The problem is that a clean energy standard doesn't pass the Byrd rules governing the budget reconciliation process. The Byrd rules requires any item in a reconciliation bill be directly related

**(More on p. 3)**

### What's inside:

Thoughts from our President	2	Poetry	10
Another movie to watch	2	Officers and directors	10
Darkness descends (in a good way)	4	Endangered species	11
Lightning bugs	5	Atlantic Coast pipeline cleanup	12
Pipeline news	5	Meet the new guy	13
Fun at camp	6	Board highlights	14
How to join	7	Mining declining	15
Get a history book	7	Fines for pipeline	15
Dolly Sods Stewards	8	WVHC mercantile	16



Visit us on the web at [www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org) Find us on Facebook

## Thoughts from our President

By Larry Thomas

The Conservancy is very excited to welcome Cory Chase our Program Director. Cory will be working with the board and its committee chairs as well as our partner organizations providing support and assistance as we continue to tackle the various projects and issues that WVHC has been working on to, as we say on our web page, “Preserving West Virginia for future generations”. Welcome aboard Cory. Look for Cory’s bio in this issue of the Highlands Voice.

Again, I want to extend my thanks to our members and supporters through whose continued support we are able to promote, encourage and work for the conservation, appreciation, and ecologic integrity of the natural mountain landscape of West Virginia. It seems that issues are coming at lightning speed, and it is important to be vigilant.

### Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards Project

The wilderness stewards’ program is well under way as trailhead steward volunteers have been greeting visitors to the Dolly Sods Wilderness. My personal experience has been very rewarding, receiving many expressions of thanks from the visitors encountered at the trailheads. Thanks to David Johnston and members of the US Forest Service in the implementation of this project. See the update for the program in this issue of the Highlands Voice.

Dolly Sods has been a part of the WVHC culture from the beginning and we are pleased to be working on this project with the US Forest Service.

### Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance is Planning for the Future

The ABRA Board of Directors has been looking to the future. A lot of planning has been going on to keep this powerful coalition moving forward after spending six long years ending with the success of the cancelling of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

WVHC has been a member of ABRA from its founding in 2014 and members of the WVHC board are working with the ABRA committees established to ensure continuance of the mission of ABRA which is “Protecting the Heritage, Resources and Economy of the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Region”. The WVHC board feels that this coalition is extremely important to tackle issues that might arise in the region.

### WVHC Files Comments on the Proposed Upper Cheat River Project

The Public Lands Committee continues to monitor the newly proposed Forest Service projects in the Monongahela National Forest as well as those for which WVHC has already submitted comments concerning what are considered major flaws in terms of protecting sensitive resources and potentially conflict with the Forest Plan.

On July 30, WVHC provided scoping comments to the Forest Service on the proposed Upper Cheat River project. WVHC comments included the following:

- Thoroughness of the Scoping Package
- Timber Harvest, Early Successional Habitat, and Old Growth
- Watershed and Soil Issues
- Surveys for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plants
- Climate Change

- 30 X 30 Initiative

WVHC committees are also monitoring other issues that could have negative impacts on the highlands such as the current effort to allow the use of motorized vehicles on the public lands of West Virginia.

### Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland

The appointment of Secretary Deb Haaland has been received very well by the environmental community, touting her as a visionary leader now at the helm of the Department of the Interior.

Secretary Haaland is a passionate advocate for climate solutions, environmental justice, Indigenous People’s rights, access to the outdoors and the protection of public lands. As the head of the Interior Department she will oversee management of approximately 500 million acres of public lands. The environmental community is looking forward to working with the Secretary to solve the climate crisis, improve protections of our shared lands and waters, and to ensure that everyone benefits from and has access to our public lands.

### July WVHC Board Meeting and 2021 Fall Review

At the July board meeting, it was decided that WVHC should have a fall review this year and the committee is working on a venue and agenda for the event. Watch future Highlands Voices for information as the planning progresses and please plan to attend.

2021 continues to be another busy year for the Conservancy as well as the highlands of West Virginia and we will keep you informed, as events occur, through the Highlands Voice.

## You’ve Seen the Movie; Now See the Sequel

In the June issue of *The Highlands Voice*, there was a notice of a short movie about an ongoing controversy over a proposed Mine Research Facility on the border of Pocahontas and Randolph Counties, near Mace, WV. To see the movie, you could go to [Tinyurl.com/NIOSH-MACE](http://Tinyurl.com/NIOSH-MACE). When you get there, click on “Maps.”

In a nutshell, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) wants to build a pretend coal mine. Once it does that, it can use the pretend mine to do research on mine explosions, mine seals, mine rescue, ventilation, diesel exhaust, new health and safety technologies, ground control, and fire suppression.

Now there is a sequel. It is posted on the Snowshoe Mountain Facebook page. To see it, go to <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=snowshoe%20mountain>. It is like the first one but with more talking so there is more information.

If you prefer written information, go to old *The Highlands Voice* stories: May, 2019 <https://wvhighlands.org/2020/01/02/2019/> February and April, 2020, <https://wvhighlands.org/2021/01/04/2020/> and January and April, 2021 <https://wvhighlands.org/highlands-voice-mag/>

## More About Climate Change (Continued from p. 1)

to the federal budget. The Senate cannot adopt a policy, such as a clean energy standard, that is not directly related to the federal budget.

Some Senators believe that adopting a Clean Electricity Payment Program would be a version of a clean energy standard that complies with the Byrd rules. A Clean Electricity Payment Program would set a national benchmark of having 80% clean energy by 2030, reimbursing utility companies that invest in clean energy sources, and penalize (tax) utility companies that don't make adequate progress towards this goal.

Under a typical clean energy standard, utility stockholders and customer would be responsible for funding these new, clean sources of energy. Under the Clean Electricity Payment Program, the federal government, and not utility customers, would pay most of the cost for transitioning to clean energy.

The other critical part of a Clean Electricity Payment Program is that it's a national average, and not a requirement for each individual utility company. So a utility company like Monongahela Power Company that is heavily reliant on coal-fired power plants will need to invest in (and be reimbursed for) clean energy, but won't be required to be at 80% by 2030, which is probably unrealistic given how reliant they are on coal-fired power. It is unclear what level of clean electricity will be required by 2030 for Mon Power and Appalachian Power Company, the two largest electricity generating utilities in West Virginia. But the recognition that not all utilities start at the same place in their journey to clean energy, and providing flexibility to those who start with a low percentage of clean energy (think West Virginia), is really important to the utility companies in our state and their ability to maintain reliability.

The companion policy to reduce greenhouse gases is tax credits for installing a whole host of clean energy sources. The Senate may extend and improve the tax credits for installation solar arrays, energy storage, and purchasing an electric vehicle, and possible for installing electric heat pumps for heating and cooling.

It is the combination of a Clean Electricity Payment Program (the stick) and tax credits for clean energy installation (the carrots) that will assist the nation in achieving 80% clean electricity by 2030.

Frankly, 80% clean energy by 2030 -- nine years from now -- is an ambitious goal. But we need ambitious goals given the severity

of the climate crisis that we face.

There are a number of other important environmental proposals being considered for inclusion in the reconciliation package. For example, the creation of a Civilian Climate Corp is being actively pursued in order to hire young people to make communities more resilient to the effects of climate change.

If you have ever considered being involved in shaping climate policy, now is your time. Over the next month (maybe two), Congress will be shaping climate policy that could last decades. Consider writing to West Virginia's two Senators. Both are going to play significant roles in shaping climate policy such as requiring utilities to achieve a national goal of 80% clean electricity by 2030 and providing tax credits to encourage investment in solar arrays, energy storage, and electric vehicles. Senator Manchin can be reached at 202-224-3954 or 306 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Senator Capito can be reach at 202-224-6472 or 172 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510.M

### 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.

*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.

# Dark Skies over Watoga

By Louanne Fatora

*Editor's note: The Watoga State Park Foundation is in the middle of an effort to have Watoga State Park and the adjacent Calvin Price State Forest designated as a Dark Sky Park by the International Dark-Sky Association. Here one of its Board members talks about the process. The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has written a letter in support of the application.*

## What is Dark Sky designation?

The **International Dark-Sky Association** works to protect the night skies for present and future generations. An IDA, (International Dark-Sky Association) Park is a land possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment. Dark Sky Parks are publicly or privately-owned spaces protected for natural conservation that implement good outdoor lighting and provide dark sky programs for visitors.

The status of "International Dark Sky Park" is awarded to areas where the night-sky brightness is regularly equal to or darker than 20 magnitudes per square arcsecond. The land may be public or private, but there must be public access to the relevant areas. The International Dark Sky Park is granted after the park follows a rigorous application process, requiring applicants to demonstrate robust community support for dark-sky protection and document designation-specific program requirements.

The International Dark-Sky Association is a United States-based non-profit organization and there are currently about 66 certified Dark Sky Parks in the US, and 28 in other countries around the world.

## What would that mean to Watoga State Park?

Achieving an International Dark Sky Park designation brings recognition of the efforts a park has made towards protecting its dark skies. It raises the awareness of dark skies among Park leadership, staff, visitors, and the surrounding community. Watoga State Park is already a popular destination in West Virginia, and the largest of the state parks sharing about a 5 mile boundary with Monongahela National Forest.

The International Dark-Sky Association application also includes the undeveloped Calvin Price State Forest which lies to the south of Watoga as well as nearby Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park. Total acreage submitted for approval is 19,869. Dark Sky activities will be administered through the Watoga location with an occasional Star Party at Droop Mountain Battlefield.

Visitors to Pocahontas County seek out Watoga as a place of quiet as well as a place to view the stars and constellations. Tourism plays a vital role in the local economy and about 55% of visitors were from other states. Watoga will expect to see increased visitors specifically because of the Dark Sky designation.

## Why does Watoga deserve to earn that label?

Until recent history, our world was mostly dark at night, but has increasingly experienced artificial lighting. The result is light pollution, defined by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) as inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light. We are fortunate that light measurements have established that Pocahontas County

is in the darkest recorded zone in the Mid-Atlantic states in the US. Watoga and Droop Mountain Battlefield have recently converted about 92% of the light fixtures within the state park boundaries to be IDA compliant, a preliminary requirement before submitting the application.

A recent West Virginia Department of Natural Resources confirmed discovery of a population of "Synchronous Fireflies" in Watoga State Park also bolsters our efforts to maintain the dark sky habitat for these fireflies as well as educating the public about their life cycle.

Our educational programs convey the importance of recognizing the dark skies as a valuable resource

benefitting wildlife, insects, forest health, and quality of life for all.

## Was the application process difficult?

The International Dark Sky Places certification process is modeled on other conservation and environmental designation programs, such as the UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves. Certifications are made on the basis of a written application. The International Dark-Sky Association does not select International Dark Sky Places, but rather a site is nominated by a group or individual with a comprehensive application.

Designations almost always begin with a small group of individuals who organize to seek formal protection of their nightscape. The Watoga State Park Foundation Board, with the endorsement of park Superintendent Jody Spencer, voted to proceed with the process of Watoga becoming an IDA park. Board members Louanne Fatora and Mary Dawson began delving into the application process over 2 years ago by obtaining community support, planning education programs, grant writing and obtaining funds to convert the park's entire light fixture inventory. By the time the application was submitted, a lot of the groundwork had already been laid. This process typically takes at least 2 years.

## When do you hope to know the decision on designation?

The Watoga State Park, Droop Mountain Battlefield and Calvin Price State Forest application was submitted in the spring of 2021. Typically, the liaison person with the International Dark-sky Association goes over it, following a check list and makes suggestions for revision if needed. Once no more revisions are necessary, the liaison person passes the application to the actual IDA committee. Our application has been passed to the IDA committee, and we are expecting to hear from the committee in July.



Watoga at night

Photo by Jesse Ball

## What Are Synchronous Fireflies?

Fireflies (also called lightning bugs) are beetles. Most of their lifecycle is spent in the larval stage (1-2 years), where they feed on snails, worms, and smaller insects in the leaf litter on the forest floor. Once they mature into the adult form, they only live for about 3-4 weeks and many do not feed.

Firefly flash patterns are part of their mating display. Each species has a characteristic pattern that helps male and female individuals recognize and find each other. Most species produce a greenish-yellow light, but others have more of a blue or white light. Males typically flash while they are flying, and females, which are usually stationary, flash in response.

The production of light by living organisms is called bioluminescence. Fireflies are a good example of an organism that produces light, but there are others as well, such as certain species of fungus, fish, shrimp, jellyfish, plankton, glowworm beetles, and gnats. Bioluminescence involves highly efficient chemical reactions that result in the release of light with little or no emission of heat. Fireflies combine the chemical luciferin and oxygen with the enzyme luciferase in their lanterns (part of their abdomens) to make light. The light produced is referred to as a "cold" light, with nearly 100% of the energy given off as light. In contrast, the energy produced by an incandescent light bulb is approximately 10% light and 90% heat.

Synchronous fireflies (*Photinus carolinus*) are one of at least 19 species of fireflies that live in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. They are one of only a couple species in North America whose individuals are known to synchronize their flashing light patterns.

### Why synchrony?

Scientists studying the synchronous firefly have determined that the males flash in unison as a way for the female to be certain she is responding to one of her kind. There are other firefly species flashing at night, and some of them are predatory, so she must be able to recognize males of her species.

The flash pattern of *Photinus carolinus* is a series of 5-8 flashes, followed by a pause of about 8 seconds, and then this pattern is repeated. Initially the flashing appears random, but the period of darkness is synchronized. As more males start joining in, the flashing will also begin to synchronize and entire sections of the forest will be pulsating with light.

### Timing of the Display

The mating season of *Photinus carolinus* lasts for approximately 2-3 weeks each year. The dates that they begin to display varies from year to year based on temperature and soil moisture. We use daily temperatures and predicted temperatures to set the dates of the public viewing event, but any natural phenomenon is highly variable and difficult to predict exactly.

As the season begins, a few insects start flashing, then more join the display as the days pass. They reach a peak and then the numbers gradually decline each day until the mating season is over. Since 1993, which is when dates were first recorded, this peak date has occurred at various times from the third week of May to the third week in June.

During the mating season, nightly displays can be affected by environmental factors. For example, fireflies typically won't flash in heavy rain, but on misty, drippy evenings they will likely still display under the forest canopy. Cool temperatures, below 50° Fahrenheit, will also shut down the display for the night.

**Note: The story on the facing page mentions a population of synchronous fireflies as one of the wonders of Watoga State Park. This story explains what they are and a little bit about them. It was written by the National Park Service about the population in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The species in that Park is the same as is found at Watoga State Park.**

## Mountain Valley Pipeline Hits a Big Snag

The United States Environmental Protection Agency has recommended a permit the Mountain Valley Pipeline needs to cross streams and wetlands in West Virginia be denied.

Under the Clean Water Act, the Mountain Valley Pipeline is required to have a permit to cross streams and wetlands. The United States Army Corps of Engineers has the authority to make the permit decision. While the Corps of Engineers makes the decision, the Environmental Protection Agency reviews the permit application and makes recommendations. It has recommended that the Corps not issue the permit.

The EPA communicated its concern with the project in a letter, setting forth its concerns in detail. It drew this conclusion:

In conclusion, it appears that the project, as proposed, may not comply with the Guidelines. It is not apparent that all impacts have been minimized nor is it evident that the direct, secondary, and cumulative impacts have been thoroughly evaluated and mitigated so that the proposed project will not cause or contribute to significant degradation of the waters of the United States.

EPA stopped short of saying that the permit could never be issued under any circumstances. It said only that the present application did not do enough to protect the waters of the United States. In the same conclusory paragraph it said:

EPA recommends modifications to the permit application and project be undertaken to address the detailed comments identified in the attached enclosures. EPA also requests the opportunity to meet with the Corps and others to work collaboratively to address EPA comments. At this time EPA recommends that the permit not be issued until modifications described in the attachment, including the recommended special conditions, have been addressed and incorporated into the project.

It remains to be seen how the developers of the Mountain Valley Pipeline and the Corps of Engineers respond. Time will tell whether they will correct the difficulties with the application and what measures they will suggest to adequately protect the waters of the United States.

## Big Fun at Camp Waldo!

“Hi Ho! Hi Ho! It’s off to camp we go!”

That’s what they sang at Camp Waldo in Summers County this year and they had a great time!

You may remember that we shared word of this new camp in the February 2020 issue of *The Highlands Voice*, and one of our two articles that explained our WVHC connection to the camp.

After a year off due to COVID, the summer fun was in full swing for 100 boys and girls for 3 weeks this July at the campsite on the Greenbrier River. There they enjoyed days packed with



pleasure and learning which included swimming, archery, yoga, chess, sports, rafting, daily ecology sessions, over-night hiking, art, drama, shucking corn, camp songs and more. They were treated to presentations featuring birds of prey and also pygmy goats and old-time musicians Jim Costa and Jim Lloyd. They suited up for adventures in beekeeping.

Camp Waldo is hosted by Appalachian Headwaters, which adds beekeeping

in our mountains to the other educational and revitalizing efforts they sponsor. Camp attendees learn how pollinators are both a “keystone” species [one upon which other species are dependent] and an “indicator” species [its numbers and health provide a snapshot of the ecosystem]. A camper in 2019 said, “At camp, we learn how we probably couldn’t live that well without bees pollinating crops—animals need fruits and vegetables.”

Solar power has been added to the camp and now

provides 96% of its electricity.

The kids who attend may be rising 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> graders and are recruited from West Virginia counties.

Fees take into account ability to pay. Counselors this year came from a number of home states and attend these colleges: Swarthmore, Oklahoma State, Rice, University of Michigan, College of Wooster, University of Pennsylvania, Dickinson, Oberlin, Kenyon, University of Vermont, Virginia Tech, University of Richmond,

University of Virginia and Fairmont and Wesleyan. A number of Peace Corps alumni sit on our own WVHC board; it should be noted that one serves on the staff of this camp.

Camp namesake Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn.” Perhaps a thousand forests and other restorative endeavors will be accomplished through the good times to be had at this one lovely spot along the Greenbrier.

You may wish to see the multitude of photos from this year’s camp; they can revive many a memory for anyone who spent time in the West Virginia mountains as a camper or counselor. Or perhaps you know a candidate for attending or working at Camp Waldo in 2022. Links are listed to find out more...so Hi Ho, Hi Ho...off you go!

[Appalachian Headwaters \(appheadwaters.org\)](http://Appalachian Headwaters (appheadwaters.org))

[www.campwaldo.org](http://www.campwaldo.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/campwaldo>

[2020 - West Virginia Highlands Conservancy \(wvhighlands.org\)](http://2020 - West Virginia Highlands Conservancy (wvhighlands.org)) see February



**Join Now !!!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Membership categories</b> (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

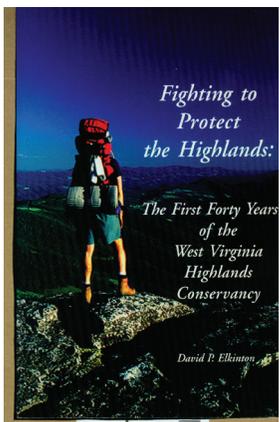
Mail to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321

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

You may also join on-line at [www.wvhighlands.org](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.

**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 Dave Saville at [WVHC50@gmail.com](mailto:WVHC50@gmail.com).

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.

**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.

# Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards are at the Trailheads

By Dave Johnston

During July the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards project hit the ground with a running start. In partnership with the Monongahela National Forest (MNF), WVHC is organizing volunteers to address issues challenging the wilderness values of Dolly Sods and surrounding areas. The first and most visible element, the Wilderness Trailhead Stewards, has kicked off with well-attended training and the regular presence of volunteers at popular trailheads. WVHC and the MNF are working toward initiating additional activities targeted toward the fall. (For a review of the background of the project and detail of the components of the program, see the July issue of the *Voice*).

As Dolly Sods has become more well known and increasingly visited, there has been a tendency to treat it as just another National Forest hiking area, disregarding its unique standing and characteristics as a designated wilderness area. New visitors (and many veteran ones) are unaware and not mindful that wilderness is where “earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man... protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions” [from the definition of Wilderness in the Wilderness Act of 1964]. This underlying principle of the concept of wilderness has implications for both visitor expectations and behavior, and affects both current visitor experience and the ability of the area to be experienced as wilderness in the future.

The need to reach out to visitors and increase understanding of the wilderness nature of Dolly Sods, and the practices compatible with wilderness visitation, was among the first issues identified by WVHC and MNF. The Wilderness Trailhead Stewards approach is designed to engage hikers as they enter the wilderness and convey “key messages” about wilderness ethics and Leave No Trace (LNT) practices during a short conversation. The approach is nonconfrontational and positive, and meant to take advantage of the existing desire of visitors to a natural area to protect it. As discussed below, the reaction has exceeded our expectations, with visitors not only receptive to the message, but eager for more information.

WVHC put out a call for volunteers in

May and June, with a very good response. The first class of volunteers went through training in early July, and volunteers began staffing the busiest trailheads in mid-July. As of the end of July, 75 volunteer-hours had been recorded at trailheads, and several hundred visitors, ranging from locals to Montana, had been engaged.



**Dolly Sods Wilderness Steward Ashley Burchfield helps a visitor plan a route.**

## The Trailhead Experience

The majority of hikers approaching the trailheads are day hikers, and most of them are casual, first-time or infrequent visitors. Many have heard, through social media or word of mouth, that Dolly Sods is a spectacular place, and they want to see for themselves. Many others have visited the front-county locations, such as Bear Rocks Preserve, and now want to get a taste of the backcountry they have heard about. Many have kids in tow, and a significant percentage had plans for blueberry and huckleberry picking during the July peak season.

Backpackers have tended to be more prepared, though not universally so. Most have done at least some homework on Dolly Sods and have an idea of where they want to go, and about general conditions.

They tend to be better equipped, with rain gear and proper equipment and clothing. Their experience level tends to be higher, either from backpacking in other locations or from prior visits to Dolly Sods. Most profess familiarity with Leave No Trace principles and backcountry campsite etiquette. However, we often sense a lack of complete appreciation for how camping in a wilderness area is a bit different from other backcountry locations. The evidence of firewood abuse, inappropriate camp furniture, and the proliferation of toilet paper and other trash around campsites testifies to a lack of understanding of the primitive and undisturbed values of wilderness, at least among some backpackers.

For both backpackers and day hikers, the Trailhead Stewards have turned out to be an important resource. People often arrive with incomplete information about Dolly Sods, how the trails and landscape work, and what it is like “inside”. We often help people select a route, destination, or turnaround point given the time or mileage they have in mind. Backpackers often arrive in the evening in need of advice on where to find a campsite not too far down the trail. We also warn people about trail and camping area trouble spots and how to avoid or deal with them. We check the weather each day and let people know when to anticipate storms, especially if they will be in an exposed area. And, surprisingly, we often help people find the route to get home!

A remarkable number of people arrive at the trailhead without any form of map. The MNF does not provide maps at the trailhead, although the new trailhead signs, which include a detailed and colorful trail map, are a valuable reference. Even day hikers should not go into the wilderness without a map, and even those with a navigation app on their phone should have a paper backup. So WVHC has printed a supply of maps, using the MNF Dolly Sods trail map on one side and key wilderness messages and LNT principles on the other, to hand out to visitors at the trailhead.

**(More on the next page)**

## More about Dolly Sods (Continued from previous page)

We have a supply on regular paper, and a supply printed on waterproof paper for backpackers and rainy days. These have been a popular handout and folks are grateful for the chance to have a map with them.

The Stewards employ a relaxed, conversational tone that puts visitors at ease and invites them to ask questions. We emphasize that we are there as a resource for visitors, not “guardians” of the wilderness. We don’t need to impose messages about wilderness ethics and Leave No Trace, but find ways to introduce them naturally into the conversation, without lecturing. For instance, if a backpacker is heading toward an area with a heavy concentration of campsites, we warn them that having a campfire might be difficult since dead and down wood will be scarce and not to cut or break standing wood of any kind. Similarly, we reinforce that human waste needs to be deposited well away from camping areas



**Dolly Sods Wilderness Steward Jenn Adach uses the WVHC-printed map to point out a possible route for hikers.**

to avoid concentration of obvious latrines and associated toilet paper fields that make campsites unpleasant for everyone.

Although our current small group of dedicated volunteers is able to cover most of the busiest trailheads during a part of each weekend, we can always use more volunteers, and in the long run, to achieve the impact we want, we will need many more.

Please consider joining the fun by becoming a Wilderness Steward. Even if you live far away or can only do an occasional stint at a trailhead, your involvement will contribute to making a difference in one of our special places. For more information send an email to [dollysodsstewards@gmail.com](mailto:dollysodsstewards@gmail.com).

We aren’t under any illusions that the Trailhead Stewards effort will result in sudden or dramatic change in the issues facing the Dolly Sods Wilderness or related areas. But increasing awareness and enhancing the sense of responsibility among visitors about their role in preserving wilderness character, even just a little bit in each person, is a beginning piece of the puzzle. And we have more planned, as described below.

### Looking Forward

The Trailhead Stewards effort is just the beginning of the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards program. Our original plan of action, worked out jointly with the Forest Service, includes maintaining voluntary trailhead registration boxes to gather concrete and actionable visitor data; conducting surveys in the backcountry to assess and report conditions to the Forest Service that will help guide remedial and restorative actions; and volunteer crews actually working under Forest Service direction to create and restore wilderness-friendly trail and campsite conditions. These elements will be rolled out as Forest Service resources become available, but we want to start marshalling volunteer interest in anticipation of them.

The trailhead registration boxes are likely to be installed later this summer. We have identified several local volunteers who can check them and replenish supplies, collect filled sheets, and forward the information to the MNF on a regular basis.

Next up will be monitoring of

backcountry conditions. WVHC will make available teams of volunteers who will hike into the backcountry and make observations and record data in accordance with methods and information needs identified by the Forest Service. This data can then serve as a basis for the Forest Service to assess the degree to which conditions are consistent with the concept and intent of the Wilderness Act and allow planning and implementation of management actions.

The monitoring may have as many as three aspects:

- **Campsite Inventory:** Volunteers would hike trails, looking for existing campsites or side paths that often lead to a campsite. They will record the latitude and longitude, take pictures, and record observations using a Forest Service-specified form.
- **Trail Conditions:** While hiking, volunteers will note problematic trail conditions using Forest Service-specified criteria, record the location, and take photographs.
- **Solitude monitoring:** While hiking, volunteers will record information about “encounters” with other visitors, using standardized procedures. This effort would be in conjunction with the Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards (SAWS).

Training for each different type of monitoring would be provided. At this point it isn’t known whether these would be conducted as a “sweep” over the course of a few days, or over a longer period, or whether it would be done on weekends or weekdays. Hiking would definitely be involved, in some cases long enough to get deep into the backcountry, with the potential for an overnight stay.

We are working to begin implementation of these efforts by the fall of 2021. In anticipation of the time needed to organize crews and provide training, we are putting out a “first call” for interested volunteers. We can’t ask for a commitment right now, but we want to assemble a list of folks who are interested and may be available, depending on how things fall into place. If you might want to participate, send an email to [dollysodsstewards@gmail.com](mailto:dollysodsstewards@gmail.com) with “Monitor” in the subject line. We will update you as this effort develops.

## The History of the World

Keeping watch  
on the summer skies,

the lolling clouds,

the rising curls of  
sidewalk heat,

I might hold in mind  
that a scant three years ago,  
up in the ascending ground  
of those western wooded purple distances,  
I sloshed around in the Red Creek,  
its dark rusty stain of dissolved tannins  
encircling my ankles,  
its ah so abating rush of cold waters

And, too, lowering my hips into the  
seeping bathtub warmth of scoured bowls,  
sunk deep into the heavy scatter of a pebbly  
old stones

- And wrapped that day

in the arc of azure and

its drifting pearly scud –

*Then seemed I knew  
all there ever was  
to be written of  
the history of the world*

Jack Slocomb

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

PRESIDENT: Larry Thomas, P.O. Box 194, Circleville, WV 26804, (304) 567-2602, larryvthomas@aol.com  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT: 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: Cynthia D. Ellis, 3114 Steel Ridge Road, Red House, WV 25168, (304) 586-4135, cindy.ellis.bbc@gmail.com

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE (Terms expire October 2021)  
Jackie Burns jackie.burns@frontier.com. 304 866 4093  
Randy Kesling, 116 Farm Meadow Drive, Bridgeport, WV 26330; (304) 622-5982; rkesling@MA.RR.com  
Kent Karriker, 344 Harpertown Road, Elkins, WV 26241 (304) 636-8651, bykarriker@suddenlink.net  
Patrica Gundrum, Charleston, WV gundrum2@gmail.com  
Jim Van Gundy, 210 Buffalo Street, Elkins, WV 26241, (304) 636-4736, jjvg01@gmail.com

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE (Terms expire October 2021)  
George Hack; 510 HANNA RD; Bel Air, MD 21014; 443 742-0463 Ghack102562@comcast.net  
Ellie Bell, P.O. Box 48 Snowshoe, WV 26209; 304-651-4553 elbell304@gmail.com  
Rick Webb, 481 Ravens Run Road, Monterey, VA 24465, (540) 468-2881, rwebb.481@gmail.com  
Hugh Rogers, 531 Moon Run, Kerens, WV 26276, (304)636-2662, hugh.rogers@gmail.com

DIRECTOR EMERITUS: George E. Beetham Jr., 2819 Mt. Carmel Avenue, Glenside, PA 19038, (267) 252-3748, geobeet@hotmail.com

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTORS  
WEST VIRGINIA CAVE CONSERVANCY: Randy Rumer; 295 Caraway Lane Renick, WV 24966; (304) 497-2657; rrumer@frontiernet.net  
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,  
WEST VIRGINIA RIVERS COALITION Turner Sharp, Box 4751, Parkersburg, WV 26104 Tsharp@suddenlink.net  
MOUNTAINEER CHAPTER TROUT UNLIMITED Randy Kesling, 116 Farm Meadow Drive, Bridgeport, WV 26330; (304) 622-5982; rkesling@MA.RR.com  
FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE KANAWHA: Cindy Rank, 4401 Eden Road, Rock Cave, WV 26234, (304) 924-5802, crank2@gmail.com  
ALLEGHENY HIGHLANDS ALLIANCE: Vacant  
SHAVERS FORK COALITION: Jeff Witten, President, 578 Falkner Rd, Elkins, 26241, (304) 362-5330, shaversforkcoalition@gmail.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS  
EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE: Cindy Rank, 4401 Eden Road, Rock Cave, WV 26234, (304) 924-5802, crank2@gmail.com  
PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: Kent Karriker, 344 Harpertown Road, Elkins, WV 26241 (304) 636-8651, bykarriker@suddenlink.net  
RENEWABLE ENERGY COMMITTEE: Larry Thomas, P.O. Box 194, Circleville, WV 26804, (304) 567-2602, larryvthomas@aol.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  
CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE: Perry Bryant; 1544 Lee Street, East, Charleston, WV 25311, 304-344-1673, perrybryantwv@outlook.com.

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

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES  
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Dave Saville; PO Box 569, Morgantown, WV 26507; WVHC50@gmail.com; 304-692-8118

HIGHLANDS VOICE EDITOR: John McFerrin, 202 Van Tassel Court, Morgantown, WV 26508, (304) 291-8305, johnmcferrin@aol.com

## Mon National Forest Hiking Guide

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the new edition of the treasured guide to every trail in the Monongahela National Forest features brand-new topographic maps and Kent Mason's gorgeous photos, all in color.

The Guide has been updated with the cooperation of National Forest District Rangers and Recreation Specialists to reflect changes in the past ten years:

- \* newly designated wilderness areas
- \* new trails near campgrounds and sites of special significance
- \* a new complex of interconnected trails on Cheat Mountain
- \* rerouted and discontinued trails
- \* ratings for difficulty, scenery, access to water, and much else

The definitive guide to the Mon adds a wealth of information about history, wildlife, and botany; safety, preparation, and weather; horseback and mountain bike riding and cross-country skiing; as well as sources of further information on the Forest and its environs.

The Monongahela National Forest has long been known as a 'Special Place'. The hiking, backpacking, and cross-country skiing opportunities it provides are among the best in the eastern U.S. New wilderness and backcountry trails have been added to the outstanding areas we have appreciated for decades – Otter Creek Wilderness, Dolly Sods Wilderness, Flatrock Plains, Roaring Plains, Blackwater Canyon, Spruce Knob, North Fork Mountain, Shaver's Mountain, Laurel Fork Wilderness, Cranberry Wilderness -- and there are lesser-known gems to be found in between.

Profits from the sale of these guides support a wide variety of worthy environmental projects for the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

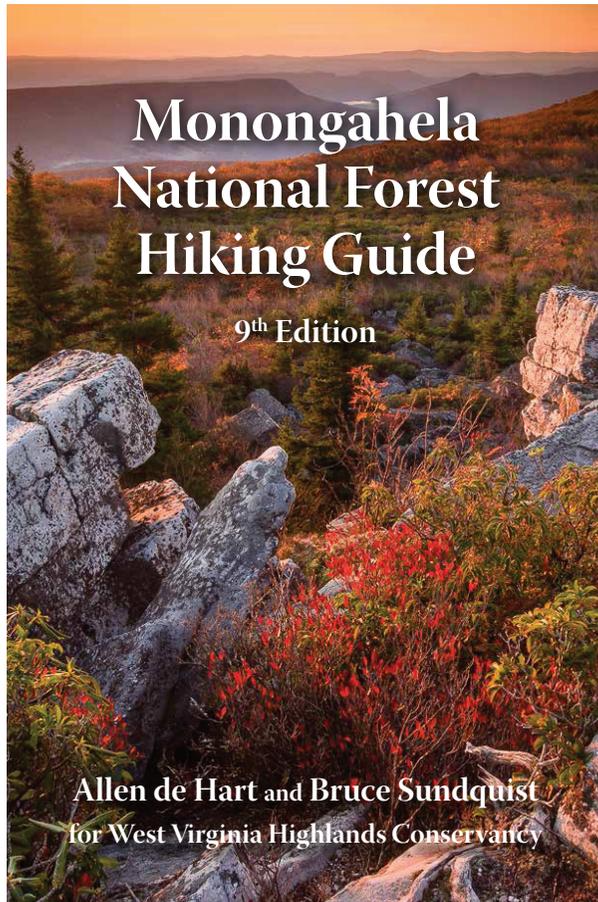
**Send \$18.95 plus \$3.00 shipping to:  
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy**

**P.O. Box 306**

**Charleston, WV 25321**

**OR**

**Order from our website at  
[www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org)**



### The Highlands Voice: It's Not Just for Reading Any More

*The Highlands Voice* is the main way that the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy communicates with its members. But we would like to communicate with more than our members. We have a valuable perspective and information; we would like to communicate with everybody. We still offer electronic delivery. If you would prefer to receive it electronically instead of the paper copy please contact Dave Saville at [WVHC50@gmail.com](mailto:WVHC50@gmail.com). With electronic delivery, you will receive a link to a pdf of the Voice several days before the paper copy would have arrived.

No matter how you receive it, please pass it along. If electronically, share the link. If paper, hand it off to a friend, leave it around the house, leave it around the workplace. It's not just for reading. It's for reading and passing along.

### BUMPER STICKERS

To get free *I ♥ Mountains* bumper sticker(s), send a SASE to P. O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. 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.)



# Changes Coming to Endangered Species Act Implementation

Congress enacted the Endangered Species Act in 1973 to provide for the conservation of endangered and threatened fish, wildlife, plants and their natural habitats. Under the Act, agencies are required to insure that any action “is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat of such species which is determined ... to be critical.”

The “actions” which the agencies have to make sure do not harm threatened or endangered species include permitting. When the agencies make decisions they must meet its obligations under the Endangered Species Act.

Like many environmental statutes, the controversies arise around the margins. While there are probably a few holdouts somewhere, almost everybody agrees that we should protect endangered species. The controversies arise over things such things as which species are considered “endangered,” procedures for deciding which species are endangered, how much habitat protection is considered, etc.

As often happens, the previous Presidential administration enacted regulations designed to restrict the Endangered Species Act. While not directly attacking the core idea of the Act, it enacted regulations that undercut that idea.

Now that there is a new President, the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service are proposing changes to regulations that were changed during the previous administration. More specifically, the agencies have announced the following:

- **Rescind regulations that revised Fish and Wildlife Service’s process for considering exclusions from critical habitat designations:** On December 17, 2020, the Fish and Wildlife Service revised the process they would follow when considering whether to exclude areas from critical habitat designation under section 4(b)(2) of the ESA. FWS will propose to rescind this regulation ([85 FR 82376](#)) in its entirety and revert to implementation of the joint FWS/

NMFS regulations at 50 CFR 424.19 and the joint 2016 policy on 4(b)(2) exclusions.

- **Rescind regulatory definition of habitat:** The Services will propose to rescind the final rule that defined the term “habitat” for the purposes of critical habitat designation ([85 FR 81411](#); December 16, 2020). A regulatory definition is not required for the Services to designate critical habitat in compliance with a 2018 Supreme Court decision.

- **Revise regulations for listing species and designating critical habitat :** The Services will propose revising the final rule ([84 FR 45020](#); August 27, 2019) to reinstate prior language affirming that listing determinations are made “without reference to possible economic or other impacts of such determination,” along with other potential revisions also under discussion.

- **Revise regulations for interagency cooperation:** The Services will propose revisions to the final rule ([84 FR 44976](#); August 27, 2019) which revised the regulations governing section 7 consultation. The Services will propose to revise the definition of “effects of the action” and associated provisions to that portion of the rule, with other potential revisions also under discussion.

- **Reinstate protections for species listed as threatened under ESA:** FWS will propose to reinstate its “blanket 4(d) rule,” which was withdrawn by the previous administration ([84 Fed. Reg. 44753](#); August 27, 2019). The blanket 4(d) rule establishes the default of automatically extending protections provided to endangered species to those listed as threatened, unless the Service adopts a species-specific 4(d) rule.

As with all regulations, these cannot be changed in an instant. There will be a procedure that the agencies will have to follow, probably including an opportunity for public comment. It is to be anticipated that, once the process is followed, the rules will be changed and the Endangered Species Act will go back to being administered as it was before.

## The Atlantic Coast Pipeline: Now What Happens?

By John McFerrin

In July, 2021, the developers of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline announced that they were cancelling the project. Depending on one’s point of view, there was joy, jubilation, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, or some combination.

While there was shouting, it’s not all over. There remain the questions of what happens to the parts that had been built and what happens to the rights of way that the Dominion had acquired but now will not use. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has now provided a tentative answer to one of those questions while leaving the other alone.

Although it is only a small fraction of the proposed line, Dominion had already installed about 31 miles of pipe at the time it abandoned the project. In addition, it

had cleared and graded about 108 miles of right of way. Now it proposes removing a portion of the previously felled trees that were not cleared (approximately 83.2 miles of the 108.4 miles felled in total), and restoring lands that were cleared and graded (approximately 82.7 miles). For the remaining approximately 25.2 miles of previously felled trees, Atlantic proposes to leave these in place. Restoration activities at Atlantic Coast Pipeline aboveground facilities (3 compressor stations, 9 meter and regulating stations, 30 monopoles and 11 towers) would range from backfilling of all open excavations to general site cleanup, stabilization, and reclamation/seeding.

Dominion has proposed to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

(FERC) that it leave the pipe in the ground. It also proposed that it leave in place the trees it had cut but not removed.

Its justification for both of these is largely the same. With the pipe, it would be more environmentally destructive to dig the pipe up than it would be to leave it in the ground. With the downed trees, Dominion says that they were downed several years ago. Other vegetation has started to grow up around the downed trees and wildlife has begun to recolonize the area. Dominion says that the least destructive thing to do would be to leave things alone.

Now the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has issued a Draft

**(More on the next page)**

## Meet the New Guy!

A self-introduction by Cory Chase

Hello Highlands Voice readers! My name is Cory Chase and I was recently hired as the new Program Director for the WV Highlands Conservancy (WVHC). I'm very excited to join this group and its network of organizations that do the hard work to preserve and protect WV's natural resources for generations to come.

A little about myself: I was born and raised in Canaan Valley, WV, and I currently live in Dryfork with my daughter and our pets. We have a good view of the north end of Dolly Sods from our house. We love to go camping, garden, swim in the river, hike, mushroom hunt and ski. Many of you probably know my parents Chip Chase and Laurie Little, who own and operate White Grass Touring Center in Canaan Valley.

I must attribute most of my concern for the environment and people to my parents. Growing up in an outdoor Mecca, I am reminded daily how special the highlands of WV really are. My upbringing at White Grass created an early and strong network of good people all over WV and beyond.

I attended massage therapy school after high school and worked in WV (and a couple other states) as a massage therapist for 17 years until the pandemic started. I graduated with honors from WVU in 2009 with a Liberal Arts & Sciences degree and a Philosophy minor. A broad knowledge base has served me well in a world of growing hyper-specialization.

For me, activism is my lens to view politics, and politics is important because the decisions that our representatives make can and often do literally affect all of us. I made two attempts to become a WV Delegate in 2018 and 2020. While it was an exhausting effort and I was unsuccessful, I gained valuable knowledge about organizing, networking, canvassing, events and small town and statewide issues. I am sure those skills will be used and honed even more with this work and I am grateful for that.

This job and environmental work as a whole also present challenges. Since WV has been an extraction state for decades and decades without investing much in its people, it's hard to expect more people to have the time and resources to devote to this sort of work.

Kudos to those who do, of course, but I sense that the critical mass that we really need is still not present in many of today's movements.

Although WV is not a bastion of environmentally sound policies, I decided long ago that I could not choose to plug my ears and check out. Despite how bad things can get (and how awful they are in the WV Legislature), I have always felt that WV is worth defending and that I should work to make it better here. I honestly hope that I can fulfill that goal here with WVHC. I also know that many people doing this work share that conviction. And achieving that goal literally requires your help and support. Without critical mass, we will likely never slow or stop the threats to our state.

As much as I am excited to be joining WVHC, I also can't escape the sense of urgency that we face as a species on this rapidly changing planet. Climate change is here--now--and again I feel that we have no choice but to knuckle down and do what we can to address the challenges it poses, regardless of the perceived or expected outcomes. I hope everyone that reads this knows that they have a say in our future, that they can take actions and support causes that stand for their principles, and that they can and should be part of the movements that we need to make systemic changes that benefit all of us, not just a select few.

If you can, please consider asking some family or friends who share your love for the WV Highlands to join WVHC as members and stay involved in the issues that we face. We have already seen some of our members take the lead on the new Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards Program, which is being spearheaded by Dave Johnston and a host of other members. That is just one of many ways you can help WVHC! Civil Rights leader Bob Moses said it well: "Leadership is there in the people. You don't have to worry about where your leaders are, how are we going to get some leaders...If you go out and work with your people, then the leadership will emerge."

Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. My cell is 304-599-4906 and my email is [director@wvhighlands.org](mailto:director@wvhighlands.org). Please check our website for more information: [www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org)

## More about FERC (Continued from previous page)

Environmental Impact Statement in which it largely agrees with Dominion. It considered the alternatives and concluded that the least destructive thing to do would be to leave the pipe in the ground and the trees where they fell.

FERC did recognize that in some locations the downed trees would be an inconvenience to the landowner. It said that if any landowner wanted the trees cleared then Dominion should clear them.

This is nominally a preliminary decision. FERC will now offer interested persons the opportunity to comment before issuing a final Environmental Impact Statement. After that, it will make a formal decision based upon the Environmental Impact Statement.

In reality, the handwriting is on the wall in big letters. Dominion wants to leave the pipe in the ground and the trees where they fell. FERC thinks that is the best alternative. When it comes time to make a final decision, that will be the final decision.

The more controversial decision was a non-decision: FERC ignored the question of what is to happen to the 2600 easements covering 4290 acres that were acquired for the pipeline but now will not be used. Many had hoped that FERC would require that the rights of way be released.

Dominion has said that it has released 95% of the easements voluntarily. It plans to retain the remaining easements at least as

long as it still has restoration or monitoring obligations. After that, it will negotiate with affected landowners on a case by case basis.

# Board Highlights

By John McFerrin

For the last time in what we hope will be a long time, we popped into our Zoom boxes for the regular summer meeting of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Board of Directors.

The highlight was that we got to meet our new Program Director, Cory Chase. He has a long job description, centered around organizational development, committee coordination, and working with the Public Lands Committee on the advocacy program for the Dolly Sods Wilderness in the Monongahela National Forest. He had just started; among his first tasks was calling each officer and Board member. He told a little bit about himself. For a short biography, see the story on p. 13.

Rick Webb reported on the most recent projects of the Appalachian Blue Ridge Alliance Conservation Hub: (1) the Cranberry Spring Creek project and the Upper Cheat River Project. Rick showed the web site for the Conservation Hub's review of these projects. It has maps and lists areas of concern. Kent Karriker is doing comments on the Upper Cheat River Project.

Larry Thomas noted the continuing threat posed by All Terrain Vehicles on public lands. The plethora of bills in the most recent Legislative session designed to promote the All Terrain Vehicle industry, particularly on public lands, demonstrates the threat. He wants to make All Terrain Vehicles, particularly on public lands, a project for the ABRA Conservation Hub. He also wants to develop a power point so that we will have something to show at the Legislature if it takes up this issue.

Larry noted that the Renewable Energy committee has been inactive of late but he wants it to be more active, including getting new members. Anyone who wishes to join should contact Larry where they would be welcomed with open arms.

Dave Johnston, who has been coordinating our Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards, was not at the meeting because he was out at Dolly Sods, doing outreach. There have been some trainings for Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards and they have begun their work. We have several volunteers with a goal of 100 volunteers.

Ellie Bell reported on the proposed NIOSH facility that may be built near Mace, WV. NIOSH wants to build a pretend mine on the site that it can use for testing on

there is a constituency for these kinds of measures. After substantial discussion about some of the proposed suggested polices, we voted to send the letter.

Treasurer Bob Marshall presented the financial report. There was not anything remarkable or out of the ordinary, just the usual getting and spending.

Hugh Rogers reported on Corridor H. There is not anything that could rightfully be called a new development. Instead, things are simmering along as we remain ready to

respond when there actually is any new development.

We had been up in the air about whether to have a Fall Review. We cancelled the one for last year because of the pandemic. This year we decided to plunge ahead and try to have one. The most recent Fall Review we had planned, and Covid cancelled, was at Twin Falls State Park. We decided to pick up where we

left off so far as planning was concerned. We hope to arrange things so that people can participate either in person or virtually.

Dave Saville presented a report. He reported that the number of new members was larger during the first half of 2021 than it had been in several years.

Voice editor John McFerrin noted that the July issue of *The Highlands Voice* was the first issue in at least ten years when he had not written any big stories and had only written one tiny box story. He expressed appreciation for those who contributed.



blasting and other mine safety issues. Ellie and the like minded are writing letters; it is their position that mine safety research is a worthwhile endeavor but that this is not a good place to do it. They are working with our United States Senators in efforts to find another, better place. They are also writing letters to Senators and encouraging others to do so. Snowshoe Resort has taken a position in opposition to the project. The final Environmental Impact Statement is out and they are reviewing that. There is another short video about it. See the link in the box on p.

The Climate Change Committee had prepared a letter to send to our Congressional delegation with some suggestions of policies that the United States should adopt to combat climate change. While there is no specific legislative proposal that would enact these suggestions, sending the letter does remind the delegation that we are concerned about this issue and that

A chart telling us what we can see with our own eyes

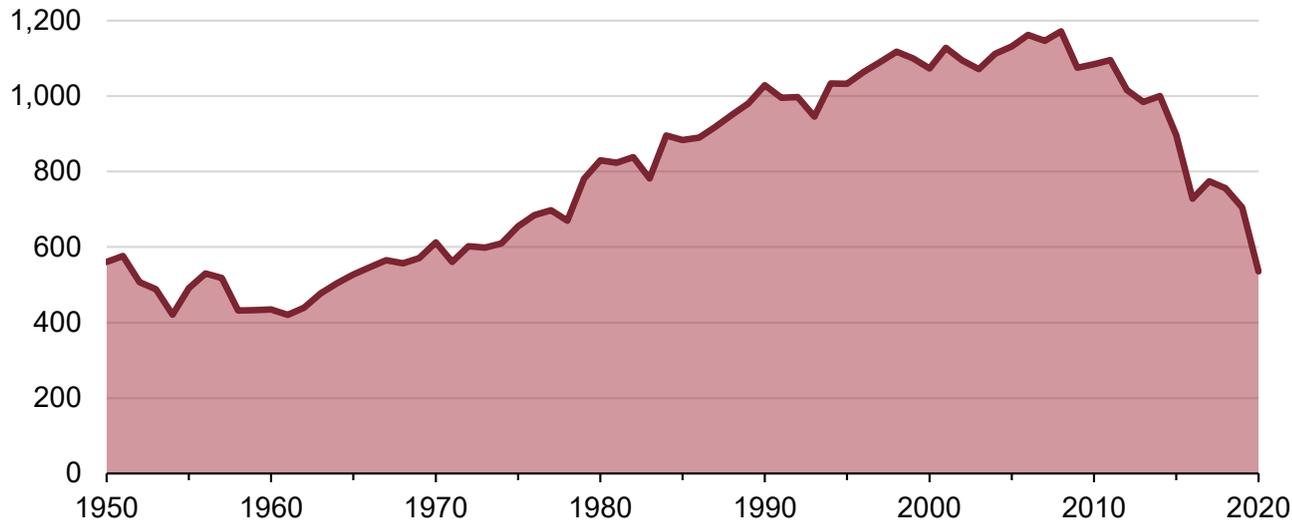
## Mining Declining

This chart from the United States Energy Information Administration graphically shows the decline in coal production in the United States. It shows a 24% decrease from 2019 to 2020. The change is even more dramatic in West Virginia. Other data from the same agency (not shown on this graph) shows that West Virginia had a 28% decrease in the same period.

### In 2020, U.S. coal production fell to its lowest level since 1965

#### Annual U.S. coal production (1950–2020)

million short tons (MMst)



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Annual Coal Report](#)

The agency attributed the most recent decline to “less demand for coal internationally and less U.S. electric power sector demand for coal.” It further attributed the decline in production to price competition from natural gas for electricity generation and a pandemic induced lower demand for coal. There were also some mines that were idled for long periods as a pandemic related safety measure.

All is not bleak for the coal industry. Production during 2021 has increased as demand for electricity increases. The agency offered no opinion on whether this was a reversal of a long term decline or a short term increase as things return to normal after the pandemic.

## Mountaineer XPress Pipeline fined for water pollution violations

By Mike Tony

West Virginia environmental regulators have again fined the operator of the Mountaineer XPress Pipeline for water pollution violations.

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection has assessed Columbia Gas Transmission a \$51,560 [penalty](#) for violations dating back to July 2020, adding to the TC Energy subsidiary’s history of environmental violations that predates the pipeline’s March 2019 in-service launch.

The violations include failing to report the release of chemical drying agents into an unnamed tributary of Rush Run in Wetzel County used to repair a slip and not installing sediment control devices in the area of the slip as indicated in a stormwater pollution prevention plan, leading to offsite sediment deposits.

Regulators found that Columbia Gas Transmission created “distinctly visible” settleable solids in the tributary, failed to address the slip in a timely manner and discharged materials toxic to man, animal or aquatic life, using

Envirolime and Quicklime products that impacted the tributary’s pH levels.

“We have since conducted a root cause analysis of the incident and modified our protocols on future use of the chemical drying agent involved in the spill to ensure this doesn’t happen again,” Calgary, Alberta-based TC Energy said in a statement Thursday.

The administrative consent order that the Department of Environmental Protection made public Wednesday requires Columbia Gas Transmission to submit a corrective action plan within 30 days.

Department of Environmental Protection acting spokesman Terry Fletcher declined comment on the consent order, noting that a 30-day comment period on the order is open.

The DEP fined Columbia Gas Transmission \$620,841 in October 2020 and \$122,350 in October 2018 for similar sediment control and water pollution violations along the 170-mile, 36-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline located

in Marshall, Wetzel, Tyler, Doddridge, Ritchie, Calhoun, Wirt, Roane, Jackson, Putnam, Mason, and Cabell counties.

Autumn Crowe, interim program director and staff scientist for the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, said the amount of the DEP’s fines haven’t been enough to deter repeat offenses.

The \$3.2 billion pipeline was designed to deliver 2.7 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas to Midwest, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic markets.

**Note: This is a slightly shortened version of a story that previously appeared in The Charleston Gazette.**

# 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 M-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 I ♥ 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