



The Highlands Voice

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Infrastructure: What’s in It for Us?

By John McFerrin

The recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act has broad benefits for Americans in general, as well as higher taxes for some Americans. If all works as planned, we will all be dodging fewer potholes, breathing normally as we cross bridges, etc.

The bill does, however, contain some provisions that are specifically applicable to issues that the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has focused on in the past.

In its national roundup, the *New York Times* had this to say about West Virginia:

West Virginia’s senators, Joe Manchin III, a Democrat, and Shelley Moore Capito, a Republican, also helped draft pieces of the legislation, which includes a \$2 billion rural grant program expected to direct funding toward the Appalachian highway system. A stretch of that system, Corridor H — intended to connect Interstate 79 in north-central West Virginia to Interstate 81 in Virginia — has gone unfinished for more than a half-century, but will now get a jump start. The bill also pumps more than \$11 billion into a program to clean up toxic

leaks from abandoned coal mines, an undertaking estimated to cost at least \$2 billion in West Virginia alone.

Highways

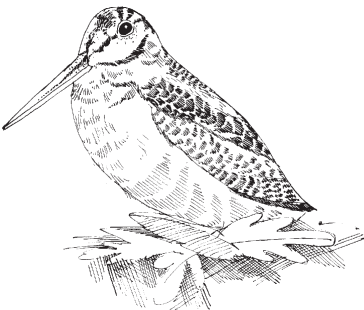
Things might look different on the local level than they do from New York. West Virginia’s Department of Transportation Secretary has since told the West Virginia Legislature that his Department’s priorities are Corridor H, the King Coal Highway, and the Coalfields Expressway. It is not at all clear exactly how much money will be available or how the Department would allocate money among these three possibilities.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy’s relationship with Corridor H has been ambivalent, to say the least. In *Fighting to Protect the Highlands: The First Forty Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy*, David Elkinton describes it this way: “In essence, the Conservancy questioned the basic need for a controlled-access four-lane highway, preferring instead an upgrade of existing U.S. Route 33, U.S. Route 50, and other feeder routes.” He was describing our position in 1974; it hasn’t changed. Indeed,

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Thoughts from our President

By Larry Thomas

November was another very active month for the Conservancy, and we are very proud of our efforts and accomplishments in spite of the many restrictions that the Covid19 pandemic placed upon our everyday activities. During another extremely unusual year, the Board and committees have continued the hard work of “Fighting to Protect the Highlands”, as we’ve done for over 54 years. The great articles that have been published each month in the Highlands Voice are evidence of all their efforts.

Thousands of individuals flocked to our highlands again this year to escape that which the global pandemic brought to their everyday lives. The increased use of our public lands is further proof of how essential it is to increase our efforts in the struggle to win the war against those who would destroy the environment and the natural, scenic, and historic areas within the West Virginia highlands.

Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards Program

Visitations to the Bear Rocks Preserve and Dolly Sods Wilderness Area continued to keep the Wilderness Stewards at the trailheads very busy; the fantastic colors provided every week as the leaves changed brought in hordes of people.

Other stewards were involved with the solitude monitoring survey. Their purpose was to talk with visitors about their experiences while visiting the wilderness. The survey results will be used to gauge the opportunity for solitude in the Dolly Sods Wilderness, which is one of the elements in the Wilderness Stewardship Performance program.

Members of the Dolly Sods Wilderness Committee also met with the Ranger and other representatives of the Potomac Ranger District to assess the first season, reviewing general observations, suggestions, and recommendations. In addition, plans were discussed for next season. It was agreed that the program has been very well received.

Scoping Comments for the Proposed Gauley Healthy Forest Restoration Project

The Conservancy submitted scoping comments on the proposed Gauley Healthy Forest Restoration Project (GHFR). The Conservancy had previously submitted unsolicited scoping comments on the project on February 3, 2021. The comments in the previous letter and in this current letter were based on information made available on the project website, as well as on information contained in the Forest Service’s partial response to a July 31, 2020 Freedom of Information Act Request filed by The Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance in which the Conservancy is a coalition member.

Based on our review of the information, we have identified several concerns with the proposed project. Our concerns are summarized as follows:

- The Project Does Not Fit the Healthy Forest Restoration Act Section 603 Categorical Exclusion.
- The Project is an Improper Segmentation of the Vegetation Management Program in the Project Area.
- The Effects Analysis Indicates the Potential for Significant Effects to Several Resource Areas.
- An Analysis of Cumulative Impacts on the Candy Darter is needed.

Our conclusion is that because the GHFR project does not qualify for the HFRA Section 603 CE, and it has the potential for significant effects, particularly on the endangered candy darter, the project should not proceed under a Categorical Exclusion. We requested that the project be combined with the Cranberry-Spring Creek project and be re-scoped as one Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement, and that full and open public involvement be conducted.

New EPA Rules: Natural-Gas Facilities to Show Air-Pollution Data

A Public News Service report, in part, states:

“Natural-gas processing plants in West Virginia and around the country will soon have to start publicly reporting the chemicals they release, according to new regulations announced by the EPA.

Natural-gas processing plants release a cocktail of chemicals, including the carcinogen benzene, hydrogen sulfide, methanol, N-hexane and other compounds with known harmful effects on human health.

Tom Pelton, Director of Communications for the Environmental Integrity Project, said agencies need accurate records of air pollution to set standards for protecting public health, but so far have been in the dark.

“The way a state government for example, or the EPA, justifies stronger air-pollution control requirements is through data, is through information,” Pelton asserted.

The rules will take effect next year, with the first air pollution reports due to regulators in 2023. The government argued their deadline gives facilities ample time to estimate releases and waste-management quantities for chemicals they manufacture, process, or otherwise use.

The EPA estimates the oil and gas extraction industry emits at least 127,000 tons of hazardous air pollutants every year.

“So it’s a significant source of hazardous air pollution, and now we’re going to start learning about how much of it is coming from these natural-gas processing plants,” Pelton concluded.

The EPA’s new regulations do not apply to drilling well sites, compressor stations, pipelines, and facilities employing fewer than ten people.”

One WVHC director’s great comment and question: “What I don’t understand is having industry first tell how much of what is released and then expecting agencies to then determine standards and/or limits. Doesn’t this seem a little backwards? Doesn’t EPA and WVDEP set limits and then expect industry to report releases and stay within limits?”

For decades, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has worked with partners and supporters to protect the incredibly important highlands of West Virginia. It is increasingly difficult to keep up, as lots of good and potentially concerning information surfaces every day.

I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a wonderful and safe holiday season.

More about Infrastructure (Continued from p. 1)

our affiliated group Corridor H Alternatives has the same idea in its name and shares this view.

This is particularly true if the West Virginia Department of Transportation continues to pursue its planned route. That route includes a bridge across Blackwater Canyon and a four lane road that splits Davis and Thomas. With or without a financial boost from the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill, if the Department of Transportation pursues that route there will be opposition.

The *New York Times* story had an undertone of relief: we've been planning this thing for fifty years; now we can finally build it. There's many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip; there's many a slip between the bill signing and the dirt flying.

Abandoned mines

When the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act passed in 1977, Congress acknowledged that there were existing abandoned mines that had been done before the Act, when mining was lightly regulated, if at all. To address these, Congress imposed a fee on all coal production. Money from that fee would be used to clean up these abandoned mines.

Congress assumed that all abandoned mines would be cleaned up in a matter of years; the tax was imposed for a limited time. As things turned out, fixing those mines took longer and cost more than Congress had anticipated. Nationwide there remain abandoned mines that would take about \$10 million to clean up. The fee was extended several times; the last extension ended earlier in 2021.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act renews the fee and extends it to 2034. The fee is lower than it was in previous years. The Act also authorizes expenditures from the fund until 2034.

Abandoned gas wells

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act allocates almost five billion dollars to plugging, remediation, and restoration of abandoned oil and gas wells. West Virginia has several thousand abandoned oil and gas wells. In 2019 there were estimated to be 4,500. In addition to the ones already abandoned, there were several thousand more that were probably going to be abandoned soon.

The American Geoscientists Institute did a study of abandoned wells. From the study it concluded that many of the abandoned wells are leaking methane (a greenhouse gas) as well as other toxic materials. There are additional dangers when the abandoned wells are close to a well where hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is going on. The fracking can push oil or salty water up unplugged wells.

West Virginia has made sporadic attempts to plug these wells but there are not the resources to address more than a small fraction of them. Although some sort of proposal to address this problem is a perennial topic at the West Virginia Legislature, no comprehensive solution has ever made it across the finish line. West Virginia's share of almost five billion dollars would go a long way toward addressing this problem.

What the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act Didn't Fix

There are two problems with coal mines that are no longer operating. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Act fixed one; the other is the big mess it always was. Most of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's efforts over the past few decades has been toward correcting the problem that the Act did not correct.

The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 created the Abandoned Mine Lands fund to clean up mines abandoned before 1977. For mining after the Act passed in 1977, the Act required performance bonds to assure the land would be reclaimed.

West Virginia adopted a policy of requiring bonds that were smaller than the cost of reclamation. It supplemented these inadequate bonds by requiring all mining companies to pay into a Special Reclamation Fund. When the inadequate bonds were insufficient to pay for reclamation, the Special Reclamation Fund would pay the rest. For example, if a mine operator left an unreclaimed mine that would cost \$5,000 per acre to reclaim but the bond was only \$2,000 per acre, West Virginia would forfeit the bond. It would take the remaining \$3,000 per acre from the Special Reclamation Fund.

This system only ever worked in theory. In practice, the Special Reclamation Fund is insolvent. It has never had enough money to pay for reclamation of all the mines where the bonds were inadequate.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Act extended the life of the Abandoned Mine Lands fund (see story, p. 1). For now that problem is solved. The abandoned mines still exist but we are on a path to cleanup. The insolvency of the Special Reclamation Fund remains. It is West Virginia's problem to solve, decide who is left holding the bag, etc. As it has for decades, WVHC's advocacy on that issue will continue.

What's in It for the Bees?

A summary of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act contains this item:

Establishes a program to provide grants to carry out activities that benefit pollinators on roadsides and highway rights-of-way, the section authorizes for appropriations \$2 million for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for the program.



WV In a Changing Climate

By Cory Chase

As someone who was born and raised in the Highlands of West Virginia, I consider myself lucky to be connected to this region and its people. I spent much of my childhood running around the forested mountains and streams of our little corner of Canaan Valley, WV.

Admittedly, I also had a thirst (and a knack) for video games. But living amongst the mountains made it easy to get kicked off of the TV. As kids are prone to do, my brothers and friends would tromp about envisioning ourselves as medieval voyagers, elves, or whatever else our imaginations could conjure up. Some of us were protectors of the land, while others were the invaders. Plenty of dialogue and confrontation ensued as we hid in fallen leaves, leapt from rocks, and climbed trees. Battle cries were sung, sticks clashed, but we would all come home with just a few nicks (usually).

While it can be comforting to reminisce on a more innocent and imaginative time, the reality is that we do have to confront invaders and defend our land. We just do it in ways that don't use magic spells or handmade spears.

The less romantic side of environmentalism is the fact that much of the work has to do with being a watchdog on extraction industries and special interest groups, keeping tabs on the WV Legislature, reading technical reports, informing and organizing people and many other seemingly trite yet necessary actions. In short, protecting our natural resources is not a fantasy game where good just happens to triumph because that's how most fictional stories end. It takes work and persistence, of course...and the work is never really finished. The appetites of the extraction giants will never be satiated. The fight to protect land will always be at the forefront of what WVHC does, as well as some other organizations around the state. And boy, do we have our work cut out for us. The siege will continue and our people and lands will have to be defended.

Our state has always been a battleground, a sacrifice zone. WV has been used and abused even before its inception; that impact deeply affects the people who live here. With a historic level of "brain drain" (educated young people leaving the state for better states/living

conditions/jobs), I think it is fair to say that West Virginia is teetering on a precipice, if it has not cascaded over a waterfall already.

As a state that has historically and will continue to supply the nation with natural resources like timber, coal, and natural gas, we must confront the very real effects that the extraction giants have had on our people and on the land and water we are all dependent upon. If you ask me, the brain drain here in WV is directly linked to nearly unimpeded resource extraction, shoddy tax codes written by industry lobbyists, and a stagnating workforce fostered by an unwillingness to embrace renewable energy and the expanding job market that comes with it. It is more complex than that, but these happenings are linked.

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our time and it affects the links I just mentioned. Our Climate Change Committee has been working diligently to address the many aspects of this issue, including state and federal energy policy, green technology, and carbon sequestration.

To me, environmentalism addresses more than just our natural surroundings. It is part and parcel of movements for justice that intersect with social, political, and racial movements, too. For the environmental movement to make needed progress, we must address the human impacts, as well, and inform people of just what is at stake. Without a mass understanding of how these issues are intertwined and how they affect individuals and society as a whole, we may not be able to address the climate crisis that is actually past our doorstep.

You, our readers and supporters, can help us do this, and many of you already do help us by your financial support, networking, and volunteering. We are proud to do the work to protect WV's natural resources and preserve our public lands. We expect the 2022 WV Legislative Session to be a tough battle. It will likely include many attacks to strip protections from our public lands, including an organized effort to allow off-road vehicles onto Federal and State public lands, which could domino into other public lands getting damaged. Your support will help us organize resistance to this effort to damage our public lands.

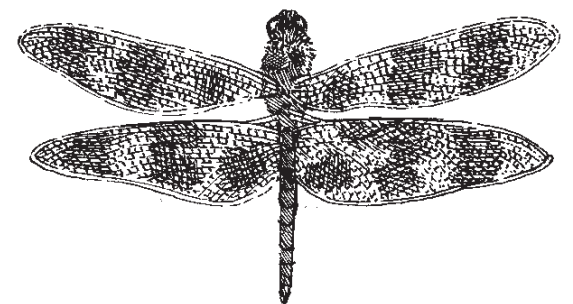
Our Public Lands Committee has been very active lately. Our new Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards program, in

partnership with the US Forest Service (USFS), has had volunteer trail stewards at three major trailheads in Dolly Sods for the summer and fall of this year. The stewards have helped thousands of backpackers, hikers and tourists to safely enjoy this special wilderness area. We expect this program to grow with time and we hope that our partnership with USFS will also grow.

For decades the Conservancy has fought for the communities most harmed by mountaintop removal mining. Our support of Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance was instrumental in stopping the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Without organizations and people unifying to fight these projects, the giants will gladly pass on the negative effects to our communities and to people like you and me.

Your voice and your support matters. As we enter a time of hibernation and thoughtfulness, may we consider our place in this world and how we can contribute to its revitalization. We welcome your support and your input. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to support our work. You can also help us tremendously by recommending *The Highlands Voice* to friends and family through our free 6 month trial (no strings attached!) that anybody can sign up for on our website here: <https://wvhighlands.org/highlands-voice-mag/> (There you will find the link to the free trial in the first sentence.) And don't hesitate to reach out with questions, feedback, and/or ideas. info@wvhighlands.org

May our lands be protected!



Carbon Capture and Storage Is No Silver Bullet

By Randi Pokladnik

The bipartisan infrastructure package earmarks more than \$8.58 billion for carbon capture and removal. Unfortunately, carbon capture utilization and storage (CCUS) is not the silver bullet needed to accomplish that task.

CCS is the capture and utilization or storage of carbon dioxide emissions from coal and natural gas power plants and other industrial sources. The captured CO₂ is then stored or used in another application; usually enhanced oil recovery (EOR). EOR is the injection of carbon dioxide into low producing oil fields in order to stimulate more oil production.

Section 45Q of the tax code allows energy companies to get a tax credit of \$50 per ton of captured CO₂ but “HR 2633, introduced by Republican Rep. David Schweikert (AZ), would amend the tax code to bump the credit to \$85 per ton for carbon captured and stored, \$50 for carbon captured and used.”

In addition to tax credits, CCS research projects received \$110 million in 2019, \$72 million in 2020 and \$75 million in 2021 from the Department of Energy. The taxpayers’ money could be used for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

It’s not surprising that some of the biggest proponents of this technology, like Chevron, BP and ExxonMobil, see CCS as a “win-win” situation. It allows them to paint themselves “green” while continuing to extract more fossil fuels. These companies are major players in the Carbon Capture Coalition and the Global Carbon Capture Institute both of which are pitching the technology to local, state and federal political entities.

CCS only addresses the carbon dioxide emissions from stack gases; not additional emissions from transportation of equipment, construction of a CCS facility and the emissions from the CCS facility itself. The commercial methods being incentivized by governments are net CO₂ additive: CO₂ emissions exceed removals.

Captured CO₂ needs to be transported to areas of utilization, requiring the construction of a massive pipeline system. Biden’s Council on Environmental Quality said a CCS system that could meet a goal of net zero emissions by 2050 would require a pipeline system of close to 68,000 miles at a cost of \$230 billion.

Because the carbon dioxide is under high pressures and temperatures, these pipelines must have thicker walls and be more corrosion resistant than conventional oil and gas pipelines. Last year an explosion in Satartia, Mississippi caused “a pipeline carrying compressed carbon dioxide to rupture, engulfing the small town in a green haze, and leaving many residents convulsing, confused, or unconscious.” In high concentrations like those in pipelines, carbon dioxide is an asphyxiant.

Carbon dioxide injected into rock strata can also contaminate ground and surface water. The CO₂ forms carbonic acid which can leach out dangerous components in the rock such as uranium and barium metals. In many cases CCS facilities greatly increase the amount of water needed for power plants. In addition to using more water, power plants fitted with CCS need more energy to power the CCS portion of the facility, thus requiring, for example, 30% more coal to produce the same amount of power.

A major factor when considering CCS is how many plants would be needed meaningfully reduce in emissions. There are only 26 plants in operation globally with a capacity of 39 million tons of CO₂ per year. This is about 0.1 percent of annual global emissions

from fossil fuels. “Current models suggest we’re going to need to remove 10 gigatons of CO₂ per year by 2050, and by the end of the century that number needs to double to 20 gigatons per year,” says Jane Zelikova, a climate scientist at the University of Wyoming.

We cannot incorporate CCS at a large enough scale to remove enough CO₂ to make a dent in our emissions. While this would be true even were the plants operating as advertised, they aren’t performing as promised. Many of the current CCS projects are failing to remove the promised amounts of CO₂. A recent article in the *Guardian* reported that the largest CCS project, the three-billion-dollar Chevron Australia’s Gorgon, was a dismal failure. Projected to capture and bury 80 percent of emissions from a liquefied natural gas project, it only reached 40 percent. The Texas Petra Nova coal plant received \$190 million to harness CO₂ emissions from a Texas coal plant. The plant “suffered chronic mechanical problems and routinely missed its targets before it was shut down.”

The most effective way to deal with emissions of CO₂ is to prevent them from ever being created rather than trying to pluck them haphazardly from the air or smokestacks. There is no silver bullet to solve the crisis we are in; we simply must move away from fossil fuels.

Unlike coal and gas, which require the mining or extraction of fuels, sunshine and wind are free. A 2020 Lazard analysis of energy reported that the lifetime costs of a megawatt per hour of power (including subsidies) is: \$31 solar, \$26 for wind, \$41 for coal and \$28 for gas. CCS is just a fossil-fuel-backed distraction that is wasting time and taxpayer money.

Randi Pokladnik is a retired research chemist and educator, who was born and raised in the Ohio River Valley. She has an undergraduate degree in chemistry, and a masters and PhD in Environmental Studies.

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The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy web page is www.wvhighlands.org.

Solutions for West Virginia Outside of Infrastructure Deals

By Robert Beanblossom

Thanks to President Biden, West Virginia will receive billions of dollars in infrastructure funds.

However, if the state's track record holds true, much of the money will be squandered on projects of little lasting benefit to those in most need of help.

I have always been a strong supporter of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs and the Appalachian Regional Commission, which his administration created, has poured millions of dollars into West Virginia. But can anyone really say that the average West Virginian is better off today than when the ARC was created in 1965?

If southern West Virginia ever expects to move from dead last in virtually every negative category, radical changes in thinking must be made to improve the poor quality of life found there. We cannot maintain the status quo, which most state and federal programs have done, and expect conditions to magically change.

There is an old adage that says: "If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging."

Here are a few of my suggestions to improve the environmental health of the region, a requisite first step to economic growth.

Immediately ban strip mining. Now. Today. Strip mining is an evil that has destroyed hundreds of thousands of acres of our valuable forests which will not return to full productivity for decades and has destroyed water quality and the lives of many people living near them. It's time to put an end to this scourge.

Deep mining should be curtailed and coal should be eliminated from our energy portfolio as quickly as possible. Burning coal is one of the major drivers of climate change; and it is a pipe dream to suggest carbon can be captured and stored economically. Not one dollar of federal funds should be spent on research to that end. Even if CO2 could be successfully captured, coal would still be an expensive, dirty, environmentally-destructive energy source.

In the meantime, the state should drastically increase the taxes on coal, oil, natural gas and timber. I can hear the outcry now — "Oh! We can't afford that! It will cost jobs! It will destroy our way of life!" I have often wondered what that last phrase meant when uttered so often by our

politicians. I guess our "way of life" means tied to an oxygen tank like my dad until he died of black lung.

I predict that all of these industries could afford an increase in severance taxes. If not, and coal companies go bankrupt, West Virginia wins. None of these industries have ever paid their own way, but the coal industry in particular has always capitalized profits and socialized costs. Talk about a welfare state. If the coal industry in West Virginia was eliminated entirely, the huge subsidies it is now receiving would also be eliminated. That, alone, would be a dramatic, positive financial gain for the state.

The state should also enact stringent laws to protect water quality. Outside of people, water is our most precious natural resource. We can't survive without it. After living almost all of my life in West Virginia, I now live in an area of North Carolina which is growing at an incredible rate. Brevard, where I live, is a thriving tourist town, and nearby Sliding Rock attracts 250,000 visitors or more a year at a time when swimming pools are closing across the nation from lack of use. Nearby Asheville has more breweries than the entire state of West Virginia.

Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, a large producer from California, made a huge investment at nearby Mills River to supply the East Coast. Why? Access to clean water from the Pisgah National Forest. If the nations of the world do not address climate change, the West will collapse one day forcing a mass migration to the East Coast of the U.S.

West Virginia should be prepared for this influx of people and clean water is the chief way to attract them.

West Virginia needs to quit chasing smokestacks. The United States has moved beyond manufacturing and now relies on a service economy. The future for manufacturing jobs is not bright. I predict this: no company will ever locate to the Hobet mine site in Boone County if it is developed as now planned, and millions of dollars of our hard-earned tax dollars will be wasted. Further, I believe the entire proposal should be closely scrutinized. I suspect the move to establish an industrial site there was more of a corporate bailout with West Virginians' tax dollars than anything else.

Next, do away with the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System. The concept of providing recreational opportunities for ATVs was a laudable goal and has generated some economic activity, I'll concede.

But it is not sustainable and is another environmental abuse heaped upon southern West Virginia. I have been on the trail system on several occasions and have seen first-hand the tremendous amounts of soil erosion it creates. ATVs spew carbon into the atmosphere and disrupt wildlife habitat. Furthermore, it was a mistake to allow them on one of our valuable public lands — Cabwaylingo State Forest.

Border states need to work together to federalize southern West Virginia's, eastern Kentucky's and southwest Virginia's coal fields. The best use of federal funding would be to create a new national forest and employ residents living in these areas to reclaim the land. It will take tremendous time, resources and effort to accomplish this task but the area's timber, water (with requisite impoundments) and recreational potential can be developed and a sustainable economy established.

I had a wise forester once tell me, "The only thing wrong with southern West Virginia is what has been done to it." Truer words were never spoken. With proper forest management under federal ownership, we can heal the wounds inflicted by the extractive industries that have decimated southern West Virginia for far too long.

Robert Beanblossom grew up in Mingo County and retired after a 42-year career with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. He now resides in western North Carolina and can be reached at r.beanblossom1862@outlook.com. This previously appeared in *The Charleston Gazette*.

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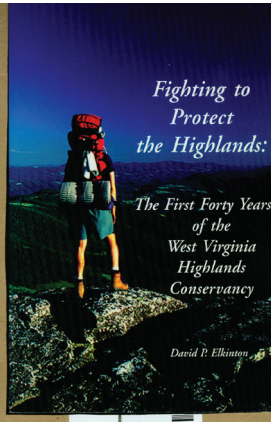
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GET A GREAT HISTORY BOOK

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.

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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.

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Filling out the form, etc. is, of course, the old school way of doing things. If you prefer, just email the information to Dave Saville at 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.

Send Us a Post Card, Drop Us a Line,
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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.

Supporting the Wilderness Climate

By Dave Johnston

The theme of the 2021 WVHC Fall Review was climate change. Global climate change is certainly affecting Dolly Sods, but in my presentation about Dolly Sods for the Fall Review I wanted to address a different type of climate: that of wilderness, or more specifically, “wilderness character” as it relates to Dolly Sods Wilderness.

It is no secret that Dolly Sods is a beautiful and unique natural area, and it is no secret that this has been “discovered” by an increasing number of visitors. But with a large influx of visitors inevitably comes impact, both on the natural area itself, and on the experience of other visitors.

This would be of concern in any forest or natural area. But Dolly Sods isn’t just any old part of the National Forest – it is a congressionally designated wilderness. Wilderness areas have a special need for protection and preservation and special consideration in how they are used and how they are managed.

In the first part of this article, which is based on my Fall Review presentation, I want to review the key concepts of the Wilderness Act and how they define wilderness character, and relate these to the particular characteristics and conditions of the Dolly Sods Wilderness. In a second installment I will cover how the wilderness character of Dolly Sods has been impacted by the increase in visitation, and how the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards program was developed to respond. I’ll also cover the results and observation from the first season of activity by the Wilderness Stewards.

What is Wilderness Character?

The concept and definition of wilderness is enshrined in the Wilderness Act of 1964, which also sets forth the methods for creating, using, and administering designated Wilderness Areas. The “Statement of Policy” and “Definition of Wilderness” sections are shown as illustrations accompanying this article. Let’s walk through some of the key passages of each.

Purpose of wilderness...

While we tend to focus on the value of wilderness in preserving natural processes, note that the Statement of Policy is largely people-oriented. The goal of wilderness is to intervene in the encroachment of civilization on natural areas and instead create a system where natural conditions are preserved “for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.” There is inherent value in preserving natural areas in their own right, but it is not the purpose of the Act to sequester such areas and make them off-limits to people. Rather, such areas are intended to be visited and appreciated by people, and used, managed, and administered in a way that preserves them for future generations.

This complicates the task of land managers, who are charged with administering wilderness areas toward “preservation of their wilderness character” while also providing for their “use and enjoyment” by people. They can’t just lock up the wilderness and let nature take it from there. They need to provide access to people, while at the same time ensure that the provisions for and presence of people do not degrade wilderness character. That provides an obvious challenge for exceptional areas, such as Dolly Sods, that attract a lot of people.

But what are the essential elements of wilderness character that must be preserved?

DEFINITION OF WILDERNESS

(c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

The Act does not define “wilderness character,” but the section defining “wilderness” provides some clues.

“...untrammelled by man...”

The word “trammelled” is not a common one and is often misunderstood,

assumed to mean “traveled,” “spoiled,” or “trampled.” In fact, the word has more significance than all of those, and was carefully chosen and defended by the primary author of the Wilderness Act, Howard Zahnizer. “Untrammelled” means unconfined, uncontrolled, unrestrained, or unmanipulated. This is the key principle of wilderness: it is an area where natural processes are free to play out without influence or direction by humans. Even attempts by humans to make it “better,” “more wild” or to “restore” previous conditions are outside of this concept. As Zahnizer himself pointed out, managers should be “guardians, not gardeners” of wilderness.

Note that this concept does not exclude areas that previously saw great human impact. It is written in the present tense, to describe current conditions where man does not interfere in natural processes, whatever may have happened before. Humans and their works may have previously dominated the landscape, but no longer do so. The Act anticipates that humans will continue to visit, but neither they nor their vestiges remain.

Dolly Sods, or course, has experienced some of the most dramatic insults to its natural character imaginable. It was sliced up to make roads and railroad beds to allow nearly every tree to be cut and hauled out. The resulting slash fueled intense fires that burned even the soil down to bedrock. Given up as a wasteland it was used as an artillery range.

And yet, absent those deliberate depredations, Dolly Sods has evolved into an area of great natural beauty. It serves as testimony for the resilience of nature and a laboratory to observe the processes of natural restoration. Vestiges of previous human domination remain, but they inform, rather than detract from, the story of the reestablishment of the dominance of nature. The wilderness status

(More on the next page)

More about Wilderness and Dolly Sods (Continued from previous page)

of Dolly Sods humbles us, but also reminds us of the importance of avoiding further “trammeling.”

Wilderness character isn’t defined as a “pristine” condition, never having been affected by humans, but rather by its present condition, where natural processes, including those of renewal and restoration, are allowed to carry forward without interference.

...area of undeveloped Federal land, retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation...

The inclusion of the word “primeval” might at first glance appear to require that wilderness possess the character of some undefined but ancient, earlier age, before any human influence or at least that of European

settlers. But this

passage has a

different purpose:

to emphasize

that wilderness

remains free of

development

or evidence of

ongoing human

presence. This

is part of the

“further definition”

of wilderness that

is intended to

provide guidance

on how the key

concepts of wildness (“untrammelled”) and “enjoyment as wilderness” by people can be understood and balanced.

This passage clearly excludes buildings and other structures and installations such as roads, pipelines, and power lines. But it more subtly addresses other “improvements” that might be inconsistent with wilderness character.

For instance, trails are generally considered to be an allowable improvement, consistent with the intended wilderness experience of people. But other amenities often associated with trails are, while not absolutely prohibited, discouraged or subjected to greater scrutiny. Blazes, signs, and other trail markings are not generally used in wilderness. Bridges and boardwalks are not permitted if only for the convenience of hikers are not permitted; they must be justified as necessary to preserve other wilderness values, such as preservation of habitat or water quality, or to address a safety issue.

By the same token, modest campfire rings are permitted (though it is also within the purview of managers to prohibit campfires altogether where the risk of fire would threaten wilderness character). But elaborate “fireplaces,” Flintstone-inspired camp furniture, and superfluous rocks stacks would be inappropriate and incompatible with wilderness principles.

This passage thus establishes the concept of “undeveloped character” as an element of wilderness character. While it would be impractical to avoid any evidence of past or current human presence, limiting it to that which is compatible with an experience of an undeveloped area is envisioned by this passage.

...protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions...

Together with the charge in the Statement of Policy that wilderness areas be “administered” to achieve the goals of wilderness, this passage makes it clear that management of wilderness is not passive. Land managers have an affirmative responsibility to actively work to ensure that wilderness is protected so as to preserve natural conditions.

This isn’t just a matter of noticing that conditions are no longer consistent with wilderness character and taking remedial steps. Wilderness management involves actively monitoring a number of parameters to identify trends that would threaten wilderness character, should they continue. Monitoring data is compared with standards established through analysis of impacts and determination

of threshold levels

after which natural

conditions are

degraded. There

is a whole science

built up around

the need for visitor

use management

and the special

considerations

involved in

the wilderness

application.

It is worth

pointing out that

while visitors don’t

“manage” the

wilderness, the responsibility for “protecting and preserving natural conditions” applies to them as well. Wilderness, by its nature, is not a place where you do your thing and rely on others to clean up after. Wilderness is a place of self-sufficiency and acceptance of the consequences of one’s actions. That includes mindfulness of one’s own impacts, and “managing” one’s behavior to minimize them.

...generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable...

Though evidence of previous human activity (see “logging, burning, bombing”), does not preclude wilderness designation, other evidence of human impact may be removed or minimized. Structures and installations remaining in a newly-designated wilderness will be assessed for the degree to which they are compatible with a primarily natural environment. The impact of removing or mitigating them will need to be balanced against the impact of leaving them be. They may be removed, or allowed to deteriorate from natural processes, unless of notable historic value.

Note the qualifiers in this passage: “generally,” “primarily,” “substantially.” While minimizing evidence of human presence if a high priority, it is not absolute, and the Wilderness Act does not require that such evidence be actively and completely erased. It does, however, direct that it be minimized, and only tolerated to the extent that it cannot be avoided without greater cost to wilderness character.

This section, together with other sections, also establishes

(More on the next page)

More about Wilderness and Dolly Sods (Continued from previous page)

the principles that guide management of human activities within the wilderness. Wilderness should be free of the “trappings” of civilization, including mechanical or motorized equipment, wheeled vehicles and aircraft. This includes bicycles, wheeled carts, and any equipment that provides a mechanical advantage. This section generally seeks to minimize the evidence of humans as “masters of the environment” by eliminating the advanced means by which humans manipulate and control nature.

...outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation...

While we tend to justifiably focus on the values of natural features and processes (and impacts on them), wilderness is not just about rocks and trees. One of the key values of wilderness is the experience it offers to human visitors. Humans are not meant to be excluded, but have the opportunity for a special experience not readily available in the “outside world.” Note that solitude is not guaranteed, but there must be a realistic opportunity for it.

Similarly, wilderness is meant to provide a chance for more primitive experience, one in which civilized assistance is not present or is minimized. In wilderness one must be prepared to rely on one’s own abilities and skills to travel, navigate, and survive. Wilderness provides an opportunity for adventure, self-discovery and exploration that is not present in civilized life and may not be available even in other outdoor recreation locations.

This is another example of the emphasis that the Wilderness Act places on the human values of wilderness. Wilderness is created and maintained not just to preserve islands of nature, to be viewed through glass like a diorama. Rather, wilderness is meant to be participated in and provide an enriching experience for people.

...contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value...

The unique natural features or scenic value of an area is usually what gets it noticed and proposed for wilderness. And indeed, wilderness is intended to preserve and protect those features.

But also note the inclusion of “educational, scientific and historical” values. Wilderness can also be maintained as a laboratory for the study and understanding of the processes that have influenced it in the past, as well those that are ongoing. This provision is used to preserve historical sites such as Native American cultural features as an integral part of the wilderness.

Dolly Sods has unique value here, given its history of destructive human intervention and subsequent, and ongoing, recovery. This provides an opportunity for study of the processes of natural succession, and for the appreciation of the ability of nature to reassert itself even in the face of grievous damage.

This is not just a matter of academic study. Knowledge of the history of Dolly Sods provides an additional nuance to the Dolly Sods experience, one that can both humble us and remind us of the need to protect it from present or future depredation. Rather than deny or paper over this history, it needs to be acknowledged and understood as a key factor in what we now enjoy as the Dolly Sods Wilderness.

Tying it all Together

The Wilderness Act uses the term “wilderness character” several times, and specifically charges the management agency with preserving it, but does not offer a single unifying definition of what constitutes wilderness character. Instead, all of the above characteristics of wilderness, taken together, embody the sense of what makes wilderness special and distinctive, and are used to guide decisions about whether wilderness character is being preserved or compromised.

These characteristics are diverse, and there is an inherent tension among some of them. While the Act calls for wilderness to be substantially free of evidence of human presence, it promotes wilderness for its recreational value and ability to be a refuge for people. These values are not contradictory or mutually exclusive, but they do, apparently intentionally, set up a situation where multiple values must be addressed simultaneously, and each satisfied to the extent possible.

In an attempt to pull all of this together, the US Forest Service has offered a restatement of the principles in the Act which intends to provide a more cohesive description of the overall intent of “wilderness character”:

Wilderness character is ideally described as the unique combination of a) natural environments that are relatively free from modern human manipulation and impacts, b) opportunities for personal experiences in environments that are relatively free from the encumbrances and signs of modern society, and c) symbolic meanings of humility, restraint, and interdependence in how individuals and society view their relationship to nature. [Applying the Concept of Wilderness Character to National Forest Planning, Monitoring, and Management, 2008]

(The rest on the next page)



More about Wilderness and Dolly Sods (Continued from previous page)

Dolly Sods and Wilderness Character

In the next installment I will go into more detail about how the Dolly Sods Wilderness was created and how challenges to its wilderness character have developed. But for now, here are a few observations about how the wilderness character provisions of the Wilderness have particular salience for Dolly Sods.

- **A wilderness area is not necessarily “pristine” in the sense of never having been disturbed.** Their key value for wilderness is that it allows natural processes to move forward without further trammeling and allows nature to again assert dominance. Dolly Sods is a prime example how wilderness character can be restored through unfettered natural processes.
- **Previous depredation does not excuse current depredation.** The history of human disturbance is sometimes cited to dismiss or minimize the importance of new impacts, to suggest that Dolly Sods isn't a wilderness anyway. But Dolly Sods was designated as a wilderness precisely to prevent a repeat of that history. The history of Dolly Sods should remind us to redouble efforts to avoid or minimize human impacts, even those that are seemingly minor, as they accumulate and combine into increasing significance.
- **Human visitation is not necessarily incompatible with wilderness, even at Dolly Sods.** Given that enjoyment of the natural character and challenges of wilderness by people is a key value in the creation of wilderness, visitors must be accommodated. But all visitors have impact. The volume of visitation, the amenities provided, and what people do in the backcountry must be managed in a way that preserves the very conditions that people seek.
- **Management itself must be compatible with wilderness.** Management must not be passive, but it also must not be intrusive, either to the environment or to the wilderness experience. Actions taken to influence visitor behavior may impact natural conditions or divert user impact elsewhere, or may compromise the opportunity for a “primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” All wilderness values need to be balanced.
- **Visitors must be responsible.** Especially in an era of limited management resources, we can't rely entirely on structured regulation and enforcement to protect wilderness. The future of all wilderness, including Dolly Sods, will depend on voluntary adop-

tion by wilderness users of practices and limitations needed to preserve the wilderness character which they presumably value. This starts with an understanding of what makes wilderness unique, and how each person has a role to play in its preservation.

Interim Conclusion

I hope that the above sets the stage for an understanding of what it is about Dolly Sods that makes it so special and so worthy of proactive efforts to support its wilderness character. In a future installment I'll discuss the challenges facing Dolly Sods and how the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards are responding. But consider whether this discussion alone gives you reason to look into what we are doing and perhaps join our efforts – we will have a great need for volunteers for our ambitious plans for next year. To learn more or to join up, see this page on the WVHC website: <https://wvhighlands.org/about-the-dolly-sods-wilderness-stewards-program/>

Become a Wilderness Steward

Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards do not need to have any special experience or expertise. There is no specific time commitment required; some people may live close and be available more often, but even those who only visit occasionally are welcome to participate as their schedule allows. We recommend and encourage all volunteers, especially the Trailhead Stewards, to take two online courses on the basics of the Wilderness Act and Leave No Trace awareness. Volunteers will be provided with inperson training by the Forest Service and resources to use at the trailheads. WVHC will provide each volunteer with a WVHC T-shirt and cap to help identify them to visitors.

To receive a volunteer application or for more information, contact Dave Johnston at dollysodsstewards@gmail.com.

The Highlands Voice **Scoops** *The New York Times*

Date *The Highlands Voice* reported that Watoga State Park had achieved Dark Sky status:
November 1, 2021

Date *The New York Times* reported that Watoga State Park had achieved Dark Sky status:
November 8, 2021

So take that.

MOUNTAINS, NORTHERN KANAWHA COUNTY

Upon the bank a haze of bluets
pool, and I wade there refreshed,
lost in spring, myself, all I can get

being on a bank in a haze of bluets...
which may seem little enough, and yet,
life is short, and hard—we're only flesh—

and so on this bank in a haze of bluets
all I know is to linger, refreshed.

--Marc Harshman

Marc Harshman’s latest collection of poems, *WOMAN IN RED ANORAK*, was published in 2018 by Lynx House Press and his fourteenth children’s book, *FALLINGWATER*, co-written with Anna Smucker, was published by Roaring Brook/Macmillan in 2017. He has the co-winner of the 2019 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award and his Thanksgiving poem, “Dispatch from the Mountain State,” was recently printed in the *New York Times*. Appointed in 2012, he is the seventh poet laureate of West Virginia.



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.

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MISCELLANEOUS OFFICES WEB PAGE – DIGITAL PUBLISHING: Dan Radmacher, (540) 798-6683

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Dave Saville, PO Box 569, Morgantown, WV 26507, david.saville12@gmail.com)304-692-8118
HIGHLANDS VOICE EDITOR: John McFerrin, 202 Van Tassel Court, Morgantown, WV 26508, (304) 291-8305
PROGRAM DIRECTOR: Cory Chase, director@WVhighlands.org, (304) 599-4906

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.

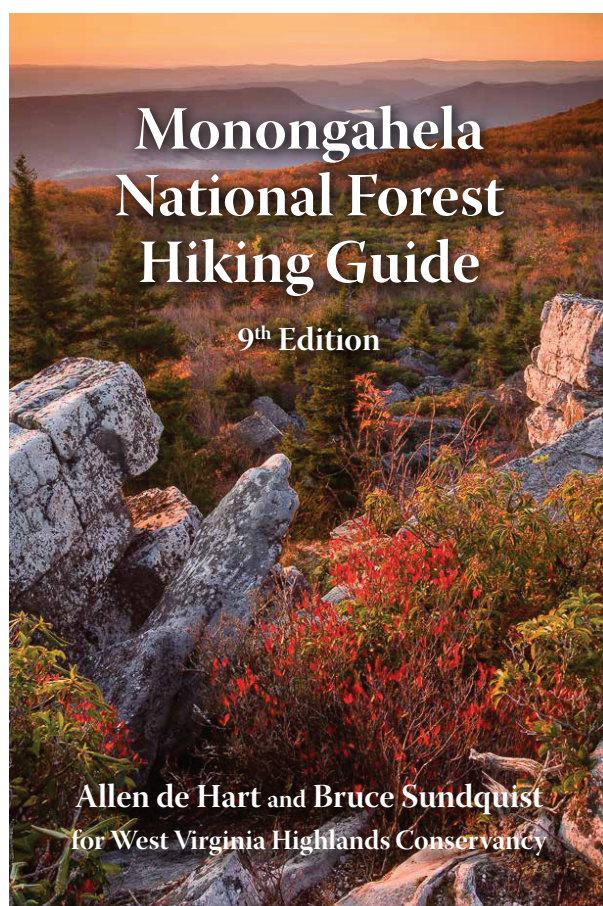
**Send \$18.95 plus \$3.00 shipping to:
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www.wvhighlands.org**



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. 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.)



Furious

Wildland; The Making of America's Fury by Evan Osnos, (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 2021).

Reviewed by Cynthia D. Ellis

Some of us, in the New Year, may be reflecting upon years in the recent past---especially 2016-2020---and also upon the day of January 6, 2021.

The writer Evan Osnos remembered Clarksburg, West Virginia when he thought about how the U.S. has changed. He thought about Chicago, Illinois and Greenwich, Connecticut too, in part because he has lived in those three locations.

He recalled that, when he lived and worked in China, he had struggled to describe and define American processes and institutions. The four-year term of the immediate past president made him struggle again for certainties and answers.

In his new book, *Wildland; The Making of America's Fury*, Osnos chose to look again at his recollections and at the history of those three quite disparate cities. Also, he interviewed individuals and recounted, engagingly, their personal stories---their experiences and emotions--- as real people in each place. Everyone is portrayed straightforwardly but with much empathy.

The author deftly explains the complicated nature of our own state and our own history. West Virginia does not get short shrift here. Many of his sources will be recognized, some especially by WVHC members. A few individuals are not included in the text, but are listed in the very detailed "Notes on Sources" section. Osnos interviewed, quoted, read, spoke with or otherwise contacted Ken Ward Jr., Chris Hamilton, Katey Lauer, Margaret Palmer, Vivian Stockman, John Unger, Evan Hansen, Judy Bonds, A.B. Brooks, John W. Davis, Eric Eyre, and many more. Some titles for chapters about the Mountain State include "Jewel of the Hills" and "I Smell Freedom".

Now...as to the "Fury" part of the book title. Many of us are keen to know the origin and progressions of our divisions and failings within our states and our nation.

Osnos himself is an ardent student of seeing how bits and pieces form a whole. He weaves quantities of the pertinent history and research of politics, economics, sociology, and those aforementioned personal experiences, into a compelling account of why we are mad and sad...and confused.

There are a great many gripping quotes along the way, both by the author and his sources. Such as:

- "If the soul of West Virginia really was in the mountains, that soul has been carted away, one mine at a time, for the benefit of those far away."
- [on statistics by economist William Lazonick] "In other words, for every dollar in profits, eighty-eight cents went to benefitting shareholders and senior executives instead of toward research, retraining, equipment, or wages and benefits."
- [about coal industry lobbyist, Chris Hamilton] "Hamilton exuded patient, prosperous calm, the satisfaction of a man who did not worry about unflattering questions from an out-of-towner."
- [John Unger, speaking on the effect of lobbyists in the WV legislature] "First they try to wine and dine you. Then they try to set you up. And then they try to threaten you."

And, because Osnos found our national gun culture to be a persistent factor in his examinations, he devoted time to that.

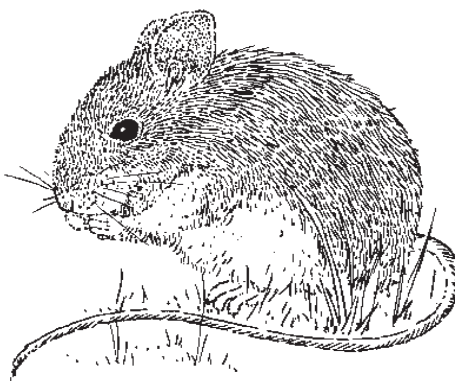
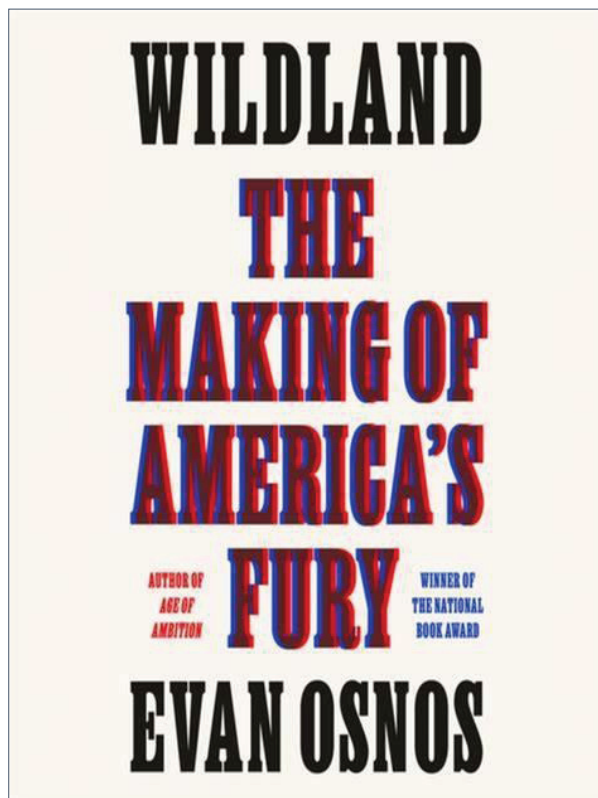
A friend who is listening to the audio version of the book on my recommendation is finding it packed with woeful material. "Does he leave us with any hope?" she asked. Yes. Perhaps. But a reader may have to pick up the optimistic crumbs along the way...as we read and learn.

I find solace in the portrayal of our own mountains by Osnos, as someone new to our home. He wrote:

"For ecologists, the southern Appalachians was a singular domain---one of the most productive, diverse temperate hardwood forests on the planet. For eons, the hills had contained more species of salamanders than anywhere else, and a lush canopy that attracted neotropical migratory birds across thousands of miles to hatch their next generation."

Some writers may grasp the importance of hills and home and salamanders...and also perceive the forces that threaten our hills... and all of us.

In "Wildlands," Evan Osnos shows he is one of those.



West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Sets Legislative Priorities

What legislative advocacy the Highlands Conservancy does is done through the West Virginia Environmental Council. Because the Highlands Conservancy itself doesn't have the resources or any special expertise to hire a lobbyist ourselves, we join together with other groups to advocate at the Legislature through the West Virginia Environmental Council (WVEC).

While the groups are committed to working together and generally agree, they don't always see eye to eye on what issues the Environmental Council should emphasize. The Environmental Council has a process to resolve this.

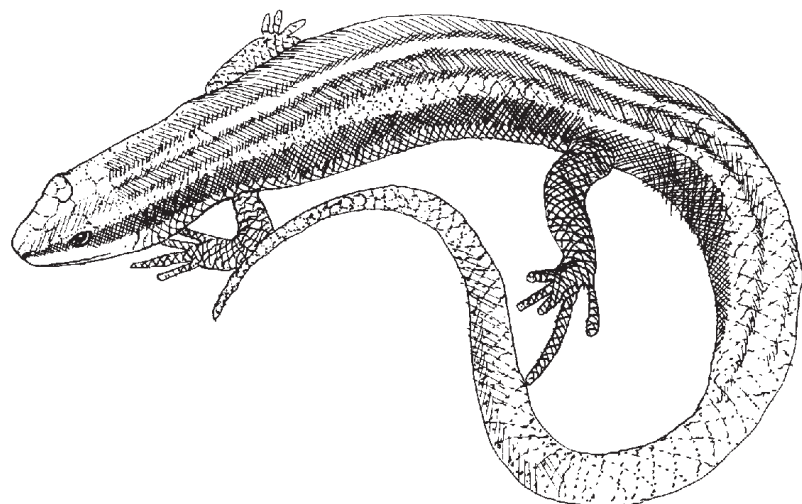
The process begins with the WVEC soliciting the groups, including WVHC, for their ideas. Internally, President Larry Thomas solicits ideas from members of the Board, synthesizes those ideas, and then sends a list of our priorities to WVEC.

This year, we listed our priorities as:

- Opposing use of off-road vehicles on any public lands in West Virginia
- Opposing timbering in West Virginia's parks
- Protecting water quality, including maintaining or strengthening water quality standards
- Clean elections
- Actions to address climate change and the emissions that cause it

This is only WVHC's list. The other groups who make up the WVEC will have their own lists as well. The West Virginia Environmental Council's Board (including a WVHC representative) will take the suggestions from its member groups and come up with a set of legislative priorities for our lobbyist to pursue. They may or may not be the ones that WVHC identified.

Of course, as pugilist and philosopher Mike Tyson put it, "“Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face.” The West Virginia Legislature is an unpredictable place. Making up a list of legislative priorities gives the WVEC a plan going into the session. Once the session starts there are proposals to respond to, unexpected bills introduced, etc. Perhaps the lobbyist will spend the session responding to some proposal which, if it becomes law, would be contrary to the interests and values of WVEC's member groups. The carefully laid plan may disappear.



Learning Where the Birds Go

The September, 2021, issue of *The Highlands Voice* had a story of the installation of tracking equipment at the Hanging Rock Raptor Observatory in Monroe County. While birders have been going there for years to see and count migrating birds, the new equipment made it possible to track any of the birds which have been tagged.

The Monroe County site is part of the MOTUS Wildlife Tracking System. The information that a tagged bird was detected in Monroe County becomes part of its data base. Anyone who wishes to see where that bird's travels have taken it can go to a web site and find out.

To use this tool, go to the site listed below. There you will find a list of birds whose signals were recently captured. Clicking on a particular bird takes you to another page where you can choose "map." Clicking on "map" will generate a map of the bird's migration path.

Here's the link where the fun begins:

https://motus.org/data/receiverDeploymentDetections?o=0d&id=7878&fbclid=IwAR1PNQqAOktwLnBO8s3leE9M29_NoDXUNs7o7T1nqLmgK4A35nyJQ0FtH6U

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.

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.

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

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 with a pre-curved visor.. 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 and red.. The front of the cap has **I ♥ MOUNTAINS**. The heart is red. The red 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