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Julian Martin: Mountain Defender

By Cindy Ellis

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is mourning the loss of our longtime friend and board member Julian Martin, who recently passed away on March 24. In tribute, we present this collection of words of praises, a bit of biography and some of his own words.

Julian served on the boards of the Conservancy, the Kanawha State Forest Foundation, the West Virginia Labor History Association and the West Virginia Environmental Education Association. In retirement, Julian



Martin was active in the efforts to stop the destruction of mountain top removal mining in his beloved Appalachian Mountains.

He was recognized as the West Virginia Environmental Council's Grassroots Organizer of the Year, earned a plaque for Outstanding Achievement in Environmental Education, and was honored as a Red Bandana recipient by the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum.

His family lived in the Coal River Valley for eight generations; his father and grandfather were miners and his grandfather fought at Blair Mountain.

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Thoughts from our President

By Larry Thomas

April found Old Man Winter once again still wasn't quite ready to leave the highlands. We had heavy winds and freezing temperatures that continued to do significant damage. Even so, signs of spring are everywhere you look. What a wonderful time of the year Mother Nature is providing.

The Administration Announces New Steps for Climate Resilience and Forest Conservation

At President Biden's Direction, the United States Departments of Agriculture and Interior Released the Inventory of [Mature and Old-Growth Forests and Set Reforestation Targets for Federal Lands Mature and Old-Growth Forests: Definition, Identification, and Inventory](#) by announcing actions to foster forest conservation, enhance forest resilience to climate change, and inform policy making on ensuring healthy forests on federally managed lands administered by the USDA Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

USDA and DOI worked together to develop several reports, as directed by President Biden's Executive Order on [Strengthening the Nation's Forests, Communities, and Local Economies \(E.O. 14072\)](#), signed April 22, 2022. The Executive Order called for inventorying mature and old-growth forests, setting reforestation targets on federally managed lands, and analyzing reforestation opportunities on state, Tribal and private lands. In addition, the Forest Service is releasing a new tool that illustrates the risks and vulnerabilities of climate change across the landscape along with a call for public input on how national forests and grasslands should be managed for climate resilience.

USDA and DOI are also releasing a [joint reforestation report](#) which includes reforestation targets, assessments and recommendations for increased capacity for seeds and nurseries.

With climate change and related stressors causing rapid, variable change on national forests and grasslands, the Forest Service is asking for public input on how the agency should adapt current policies to protect, conserve, and manage national forests and grasslands for climate resilience. This Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for National Forest and Grassland Climate Resilience will be published in the Federal Register and publication will begin a 60-day public comment period. The Conservancy looks forward to reviewing the reports and working with partner groups in providing comments.

West Virginia Department of Tourism Announces Dark Sky Promotion

The West Virginia Department of Tourism announced that it has partnered with the International Dark-Sky Association to launch a new campaign highlighting the state's endless stargazing opportunities. This promotion of West Virginia's star-studded skies began in conjunction with International Dark Sky Week, which was April 15 – 22, 2023 and will run through the end of the summer.

West Virginia is home to one of the largest and darkest sky sheds within the Eastern United States, which is why Travel + Leisure dubbed West Virginia one of the "most under-the radar stargazing destinations." Additionally, the International Dark-Sky Association has designated Watoga, Calvin Price, and Droop Mountain Battlefield state parks as "Dark Sky Parks," which is the highest honor available for stargazing parks. Designations are based on the quality of the night skies, stringent outdoor lighting standards, and innovative community outreach, and the organization has designated less than 200 parks around the world.

The Department of Tourism is sharing resources on their [website](#) and social media platforms to help visitors plan the ideal starry sky get-aways this summer—including trip guides, a packing list, a constellation guide, exclusive discounts and deals, and photography tips.

West Virginia DNR Rejects RV Campground Proposals for Cacapon Resort State Park Amid Heavy Opposition

The Division of Natural Resources announced it wouldn't select any of the proposals it received for a campground at Cacapon Resort State Park and has also opened a survey for public input into what the public wants at Cacapon. The survey is about what the public wants in state parks and is open until May 21! You can provide your comments and suggestions at the link. Remember, our state parks are here for your enjoyment.

At the survey site it states, "Over the past five years, the West Virginia State Parks system has seen more than \$150 million in improvements. We're excited to see additional investments on the horizon and are looking for your input on the types of amenities you would like to see added or upgraded".

The Conservancy looks forward to working with partner groups to suggest additional investments at Cacapon, as well as at our other West Virginia state parks.

May promises to be another busy month for the Conservancy and other environmental organizations, and we will keep you informed as events occur through The Highlands Voice. It's time to get out and enjoy the highlands!

Why Is It So Important to Use a Bear Canister on the Trail?

By Chloe Lindal, Leave No Trace



(West Virginia Division of Natural Resources)

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy has a new policy in place requiring thru hikers bring a bear canister with them as one of their vital items. The Appalachian Trail has become increasingly popular in recent years with a massive influx of visitors exploring one of the longest most beloved trail systems in the U.S. However, a large majority of the trail is populated by black bears and the surplus of visitors has led to an increase in human and bear interactions.

These interactions are largely food related and pose a serious risk to both humans and bears. While black bears generally avoid humans, the presence of easily accessible food is a welcome enticement to them. When bears enter an area where people are camping, they can injure humans if startled or threatened. Once a bear has a negative interaction with a human or causes bodily harm of any degree, it will likely be relocated or more commonly euthanized.

Bears are also readily adaptable meaning they can easily become accustomed to finding food sources close to an area where peo-

ple are camping. If a bear knows it can eat out of your trash can, it may continue to come back and adapt to finding food in urban areas, increasing the risk of bears to human interactions.

While previously thru hikers could attempt to make bear hangs to keep food and other items away from bears on the trail, the hang is often improperly done and the bears are able to outsmart the mechanism.

The best way to combat this on the trail is to educate yourself on the Leave No Trace principles and make sure to bring a bear canister to safely tuck away all your food and smellable items that could attract bears. Leave No Trace recommends you take the canister 75 large steps away from your campsite and tuck it away somewhere safe. Make sure to practice packing all your smellable items in the canister before your trip to assure they fit before your head out on your hike and remember, "a fed bear is a dead bear." Happy hiking and make sure to get outside and enjoy our world.

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.

The Mountain Defender *continued from page 1*

Soon after completing a degree in chemical engineering at West Virginia University, he became West Virginia's first Peace Corps volunteer and served as a teacher in Nigeria.

He taught at Duval High School in Lincoln County from 1977-1998, where he was the union [WVEA] building representative. He practiced student centered, hands-on classroom activities.

On his first day of retirement, he and his wife, Mae Ellen Wilson traveled throughout the state taking 'Save Blackwater Canyon' petitions to fairs and festivals. With other volunteers, they collected 20,000 signatures. In 1999, he and Larry Gibson walked across West Virginia carrying signs against mountaintop removal. They met with media in towns along the way to get our issue publicized.

For more than 20 years he assisted the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, as a lobbyist, board member, Vice President of State Affairs, and chair of the Speakers Bureau. Perhaps his most significant contribution was as Outreach Chair, where his "I ♥ Mountains" bumper stickers, hats, and shirts generated a new interest in preservation of the natural treasures here.



TRIBUTES

Julian spent decades as a teacher and mentor. There were a tremendous number of comments online from his students and fellow teachers. While difficult to condense, here are

snippets of the sentiments:

- One of my greatest teachers and truest heroes in a place where both were hard to find
- Loved his class... he made learning fun.
- When I see goldenrod or Queen Anne's lace, I think of Julian and the walks behind the football field where he taught us all about nature.
- I saw him speak on a panel in high school... my views on the environment were never the same.
- The one teacher you couldn't wait till you were old enough to have his class!
- A teacher in the fullest sense of the word. An honor and a joy to have worked with him.
- I hope his love for the mountains of West Virginia is remembered as long as the mountains exist.
- That one teacher that made the biggest difference... He was mine.
- I will always remember the poster he had of the Earth in space "upside down" ... it's all a matter of perspective.

Other tributes poured in, too; here are more.

"I don't know how many times Julian and I travelled together to southern West Virginia to visit some of our favorite people and favorites spots. On our travels, we always had our stream testing kits handy, and we were far-too-often flabbergasted at the destruction of mountaintop removal operations on communities and the mountains, and the level of pollution our conductivity meters revealed downstream from valley fills.

Despite the brutal weight of what the coal industry was doing to the land and people, and despite the toll organizing against this insane method of coal mining reaped on individuals and groups, Julian always brought some good yarns and light and laughter to those hanging out with him. Sometimes, travelling together, we would get inordinately silly, and we could get outright giddy when we were in the environs of Julian, West Virginia. Then, we would threaten to visit Vivian, West Virginia, together, though we never made it there.

Julian helped me understand that you could be serious and fierce in combatting in-



justices, and also be loving and have fun in that work. I know he sparked fun, fierce and effective activism in so many others, and that is an amazing legacy." - Vivian Stockman

"I met Julian in 1966 when I was 14 years old because my mom got us involved as a host family for foreign students at West Virginia University. At that time Julian was the West Virginia University Foreign Student Adviser. That experience of meeting all those students from all over the world was only the first of many life-changing and mind-altering experiences which would happen after Julian came into our lives. I wish more people would have had a Julian in their life." - Mike Breiding

"Julian was an extraordinary human being. Celebrating his life on Earth Day is SO appropriate for a man who did stream surveys and gave surface mining tours of Kayford Mountain even when he needed a cane to walk! His brilliant mind, dry humor, and warm heart made him a treasured friend and courageous warrior for peace, justice, education and conservation in a state and world that needed him in every way." - Barbara Frierson

"Julian was one of the most beautiful people I ever knew. He was a fire that lit truth to the evil of mountain top removal." - Bo Webb

"... Julian was my husband James's

continued on next page

The Mountain Defender: A Collection of Tributes and Writings

mentor. James was one of the first interns for the Highlands Conservancy and Julian took him under his wing. James went on to fight mountaintop removal by monitoring streams and providing standing in over 15 court cases against coal companies.” - **Susan Tawney**

“[Julian]... was my neighbor and first client as an editor for his Peace Corps memoir. He was a brilliant, kind, empathetic man. I will never forget seeing him walk down Longridge Road out of the literal mist, huge walking sticks in either hand, being heard before he was seen. He was a beautiful person.” - **Elizabeth Dame-wood Gaucher**

“Julian was very loved and will be a huge loss. My husband and I often joined him in his activism and loved being in his company. We still laugh at some of the things he said to his unprepared ‘opponents!’ He was simply wonderful.” - **Tammy Medley Arthur-Sublette**

“I have known Julian for years, serving on the board of the West Virginia Labor History Association with him. I read both of his outstanding books about serving in the Peace Corp. he was a truly intelligent, kind person who greatly helped the people of Appalachia. We will miss him forever.” - **Steve Fesenmaier**

“Julian was a dear man and a frontline fighter for justice, doing the right thing and fearlessly confronting The Man. He personally inspired me with forthright willingness to speak the truth and damn the consequences. May he rest in peace and power.” - **Douglas John Imbrogno**

“... appreciated having... [him] in my life and as an influence on my work. Very sorry to hear that Julian Martin has passed. Learned a lot from him. He demanded a lot of journalists, especially when it came to covering mountaintop removal. But that made me better at it in the end. He was a master teacher and for sure was never boring...” - **Ken Ward Jr.**

“Julian was such a committed person. He was inspiring and worked hard. And was one of the most interesting conversationalists I ever had the pleasure of a long road trip with! We will miss you, dear man! Fight for us from the other side!” - **Carol Warren**

“Condolences to the family and many

friends of Julian Martin. He was a staunch defender of the Appalachian Mountains, never hesitating to speak out against the injustices imposed by coal companies and their enablers. Here’s a video where he gives the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection a good talking to, about 3:45 into the video at <https://bit.ly/41Hwnas>. He will be missed.” - **Vernon Haltom**

“I looked up to Julian a lot. He was an excellent, compelling public speaker and came to speak at several Mountain Justice events. He made us laugh and rage over the idiocy of blowing up West Virginia’s most precious asset, its mountains. I recall one time we were in Washington, D.C., lobbying Senator Rockefeller-



er’s staff about mountaintop removal, which his aide called ‘mountaintop mining’ the euphemism used at that time. Julian’s face got red and he demanded that the aide call it mountaintop removal. I also remember when Julian and I did some speaking gigs together on the mountaintop removal road show. This would have been around 2008 or so. He came to Lexington so I took him hiking in the Red River Gorge to Grays Arch, a popular spot. While we were admiring the arch, some other hikers walked up, and Julian greeted them and began telling them about mountaintop removal! Never missing a chance. Goodbye Julian, you were loved and admired by many, many people.” - **Dave Cooper**

“His [passing] is a tremendous loss to all those that knew him. His was a powerful voice for truth and dignity. I always felt inspired and reinvigorated after our talks.” - **Shirley Stewart Burns**

“From Julia Bonds I learned to be angry. Get things done. From Larry Gibson I learned just get out there and make people look. From Julian we learned to think about our surrounding environment and people. One of the great influences in our entire movement. And thank you Ken for the years you spent covering him.” - **Ágúst Guðlaugur Guðmundsson**

“Julian helped me get my first job after grad school. We folded letters at West Virginia Environmental Council and then I got a job at CAG. He was a great story teller and friend. He will be missed.” - **Ted Boettner**

“Very sad to hear of the passing of Julian Martin. He was always a fierce and strong advocate for the mountains.” - **Annie Jane Cotton**

“I met Julian Martin when I joined the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. He was the man behind the ‘I Love Mountains’ tee shirts, bumper stickers, and hats. That campaign was so successful the board saw fit to copy right the slogan and sales items. That alone helped raise funds for our battles on behalf of the West Virginia mountains.

More than that, for years Julian was the tireless outreach person, manning tables to highlight our work. He was a constant foe of the destructive mountaintop removal mining technique involving bulldozing the overburden into adjacent valleys to expose coal seams that were then mined with-out having to tunnel into the coal.

Along with the late Larry Gibson, a close friend, Julian walked many miles carrying banners protesting mountaintop removal. One day the two of them took me to view a mountaintop removal mine. It made me sick to see the vast wasteland left behind. It was not an enjoyable afternoon, but it was certainly educational. Two better teachers could not have been found.

Throughout all of this over many years,

a little more on page 8

Lawsuit Launched to Protect Endangered West Virginia Species from Coal Hauling



(Todd Crail/University of Toledo)

On April 25, 2023, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, alongside a coalition of conservation groups, [notified](#) the U.S. Forest Service of the intent to sue over the agency's failure to protect endangered species from the harmful effects of coal hauling in the Monongahela National Forest.

[The notice](#) asserts that the Forest Service violated the Endangered Species Act by allowing hauling of coal above the South Fork Cherry River without ensuring that it won't harm endangered species like candy darters. Coal hauling can also potentially harm Virginia big-eared bats, northern long-eared bats, Indiana bats, and several freshwater mussels found downstream.

"It's shameful that the Forest Service cut corners at the expense of endangered species like the gorgeous little candy darter," said Meg Townsend, senior freshwater attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Candy darters are already on the precipice of extinction, and they can't take any more harm from coal mining. The Forest Service needs to immediately rescind the permit allowing this disastrous coal hauling."

The endangered candy darter is a small freshwater fish that lives in the South Fork Cherry River and Laurel Creek — two stronghold streams for the species. These streams are designated as critical habitat by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, meaning any harm to the streams is likely to harm the fish.

The Forest Service's 2021 permit authorizes the South Fork Coal Co. to conduct extensive road-reconstruction work — such as re-grading and widening the road and removing and replacing culverts — and daily coal hauling on a road named FS 249, which runs on steep slopes above the South Fork Cherry and Laurel Creek. These activities

are likely to harm candy darters in the South Fork Cherry by causing sedimentation and polluting the river.

The Forest Service road will be closed to the public for the duration of the mine's operations.

The company was already cited for violations leading to excess sedimentation in March and April 2022, a time of year when candy darters are spawning. Along with sedimentation, coal hauling could degrade the Upper Gauley watershed with coal dust from loaded coal trucks.

"The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has a 55-year history of working in partnership with Monongahela National Forest to preserve the natural environment in the Central Appalachian Highlands, but in this case, our Forest Service partners have erred in permitting a coal haul road on National Forest land without environmental review," said Larry Thomas, president of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. "The Forest Service failed to consider that converting a National Forest road to a heavy-use coal haul road would have direct environmental impacts and would also allow expansion of surface mining in a high-elevation remnant red spruce ecosystem that supports the endangered candy darter, native brook trout, and other at-risk species. We hope that the Forest Service will recognize this error and comply with the review requirements."

In addition to the candy darter, the three endangered bat species all have roosting and foraging habitat around the road that is likely to be harmed by the activities authorized by the permit, and five endangered freshwater mussels live downstream in the Gauley River. Several streams that feed into Gauley River — including the Cherry River — are designated by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources as high-quality mussel streams. Though not currently federally listed, eastern hellbender salamanders also live in the Cherry River and will likely be harmed by construction and coal hauling.

"In a region full of remarkable natural features, the headwaters of the South Fork Cherry River are particularly exceptional," said Willie Dodson, Central Appalachian field coordinator for Appalachian Voices. "It is deeply disappointing that the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service have enabled South Fork Coal Company's destructive practices and disregard for this special area. We are hopeful that these agencies will act quickly to address our concerns and protect the unique ecological balance of the South Fork Cherry River and the high Allegheny ridges that surround it."

"The laws and regulations meant to protect our water quality and critical wildlife habitat are pitifully inadequate to begin with, which is obvious to anyone who's flown over West Virginia's scarred and fractured landscape, and those regulations become entirely ineffective when the agencies tasked with enforcing them fail to do so," said Chad Cordell

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Mountain Valley Pipeline Hits Another Bump in the Road

By John McFerrin

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has invalidated a critical certification that would have allowed the Mountain Valley Pipeline to cross streams and wetlands in West Virginia.

Background (stop me if you've heard this one)

The Mountain Valley Pipeline is a proposed—and partially built—natural gas pipeline that would run south and west from Wetzel County, West Virginia, before ending in southwest Virginia. As proposed, it would be about 304 miles long; about 197 miles would be in West Virginia.

The proposed pipeline would have to cross 591 streams or wetlands within West Virginia. Before it would be allowed to cross streams or wetlands, it would need a permit from the United States Corps of Engineers.

The authority of the Corps of Engineers to approve stream and wetlands crossings is not unlimited. Under Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act, federal agencies cannot authorize projects in a state unless that state certifies (called a 401 Certification) that the project will not violate state water quality standards.

The Corps of Engineers previously approved the stream and wetlands crossings in West Virginia. West Virginia being West Virginia, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection certified that the crossings would not violate West Virginia water quality standards. Several groups, including the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, challenged this certification before the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

In theory, all these permitting decisions would be complete before construction. In this case, there have been multiple disputes over permitting for the pipeline. At various times, construction has been allowed, particularly for parts of the pipeline that do not cross streams and wetlands. As a result, the pipeline is at least partially complete on about 94 percent of the route and fully complete on about 55 percent of the route.

What Just Happened

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit vacated West Virginia's certification that the activities approved by the Corps of Engineers would not violate West Virginia's water quality standards.

In vacating the certification, the Court primarily relied, directly or indirectly, on the Mountain Valley Pipeline's environmental compliance record. Although it did not articulate it this way, the Court first relied upon the famous legal principle "a leopard cannot change its spots." In the parts of the pipeline that have been built, the Mountain Valley Pipeline's record has been terrible. There have been multiple violations, hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines, etc. In its certification, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection assumed that this particular leopard would, in fact, change its spots. The Court agreed that, while such a change was possible, West Virginia had offered no explanation of why it believed that, in this case, the future would be any different from the past.

The Court was not impressed with West Virginia's or the company's general assurances that things would be different this time. While making general claims that there would be more frequent inspections, West Virginia did not commit resources to these inspections. So far as company inspections are concerned, the company committed itself to fewer self-inspections than it had conducted when it was incurring all these violations.

Neither did the company commit to any additional measures to control pollution from construction. In this round of approvals, the company had set forth measures that it was confident would control sediment. These included such things as filtration to keep sediment out of streams and prompt reseedling of disturbed areas. The Court pointed out that these were the exact same measures it had committed to before. The result was numerous violations and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines.

There is another old saying about doing the same thing and expecting different results. The Court would not allow West Virginia to certify that there would be no violation of water quality standards without explaining why doing the same thing would, this time, produce a different result.

The Court also criticized West Virginia's application of another principle: no harm, no foul or, as West Virginia sees it, not much harm, no foul. West Virginia had concluded that the stream and wetlands crossings would not have "significant adverse impacts to the aquatic ecosystem." This conclusion is not what regulations require. The regulations require that there be no degradation of state waters. Expecting no "significant adverse impacts" is not enough.

Is it over?

Of course not. It never is.

The Court was careful to point out that the Mountain Valley Pipeline's record of environmental degradation was not an indelible black mark, making it unable to ever get certification. It is something West Virginia must address, which requires West Virginia to explain why it believes that something has changed and that such degradation will not happen again. It is an indication that past sediment control measures were not adequate and that West Virginia has to either impose more effective ones or explain why it did not.

West Virginia could review this matter again and thoroughly explain why things will be different this time. It could impose more effective environmental controls instead of repackaging the controls that did not work in the past.

This dispute will not be over until the Mountain Valley Pipeline and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection fully comply with the law. It could also be over if the developers decide that, if it is this difficult to comply with the law, the Mountain Valley Pipeline was not such a good idea to begin with.

In Julian's Own Words *continued from page 5*



Julian kept a well-honed sense of humor. During his service on the board, it was Julian who made the motion to adjourn. He hated long meetings. It was a matter of parliamentary procedure that board members would wait for Julian to make his motion and then second it.

Julian stepped down from the board years before me. It seemed to me there was a hole at the board table. I sometimes wondered as matters were debated around the table, what would Julian think? What would he say? His wisdom and sometimes cantankerous remarks were prized elements of board meetings. I missed him.

The day came when I followed Julian in stepping down from the board. From time to time some-one would post something about him on our message board. Those notes grew fewer with the passage of time.

Julian's body of work, meanwhile, has been picked up by newer board members. Some never knew him. Yet, it is the nature of environmental activism that someone must carry on the work. Julian's legacy lies mostly in his efforts, but also in paving the way for others to carry on. He taught us well. Those of us still working to pro-

tect the mountains of West Virginia can look to his example for inspiration." - **George Beetham**

HIS WRITING

Julian loved words and was a prolific writer. We in the Conservancy benefitted immensely from his contributions to The Highlands Voice. He published several books, including *Imagonna: Peace Corps Memories*, *Sarvice Mountain*, and *The Soviet Union and Lincoln County USA*. He blogged with The News from Sam's Branch which you can visit at julianweldonmartin.us

From a piece in The Highlands Voice, **Blood Money**, he wrote:

"A couple of years ago at the Putnam County Fair, a mountaintop removal miner gladly signed the Save Blackwater Canyon petition I offered and then told me about his job. "At the end of the day I look at the destruction and feel like I am taking blood money," he told me.

In another article, **1884 Tax Commission Report...**

"Every mountain that is destroyed will give us some temporary electrical pleasure and the mountain will then be gone forever. They can't put it back anywhere near what it was and they definitely can't make it better than it was." Finally, and fittingly, here is a quote from our own book, *Fighting to Protect the Highlands; the First Forty Years of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy*, by David P. Elkinton.

"More than one friend has asked me if I think we can win these environmental battles. They point out the incredible odds, the mountains of cash put into destroying our mountains, buying our politicians and the false twists and spins the industry executives and public relations companies put on the facts.

My answer to the question can we win in the struggle to save our environment is that I don't know if we can win or not. I know that I am going to die but I don't quit living. I also know that we could lose out on some of our efforts to preserve nature [ourselves included] but that doesn't mean we should stop trying. We have to speak the truth whether it prevails or not. It would be bad enough to lose, but still worse to lose without speaking the truth."

Lawsuit Launched to Protect Endangered West Virginia Species

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with Kanawha Forest Coalition. "In this case, the Forest Service rubber-stamped a permit allowing a coal company to convert a public forest-service road into a strip mine haul road, prioritizing short-term coal company profits over the continued existence of an endangered species. The only appropriate course of action is for the Forest Service to protect the critical habitat of the endangered candy darter by immediately rescinding South Fork Coal Company's haul road permit."

"Witnessing the highest elevation strip mine in the state, in the middle of rare red spruce forest, and so close to Cranberry Glades Botanical Area is the ultimate proof to me that nothing is sacred in this state as long as there is coal under it," said Sierra Club's Senior Organizing Representative Alex Cole. "Candy darters are one of many endangered species threatened by fossil fuel extraction and transportation, and the Forest Service's failure to protect endangered species from the harmful effects of coal hauling is unacceptable. The harm caused by coal hauling in the Monongahela National Forest is a stark reminder that we cannot continue to advance fossil fuels at the expense of our environment, especially not on land we as citizens collectively own. We must prioritize the protection of our planet and its biodiversity, and we hope the Forest Service will take immediate action to remedy this mistake."

The groups who signed the notice with the center are the Sierra Club, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, [Appalachian Voices](#), [Appalachian Mountain Advocates](#), Greenbrier River Watershed Association and Kanawha Forest Coalition.

If the Forest Service doesn't remediate the violation, the groups will follow the notice, which is required by the Endangered Species Act, with a lawsuit once 60 days have passed.

Coal Not the Only Thing Hurting the Environment

By Robert Beanblossom

Before I retired, West Virginia state code made the director of the Division of Natural Resources or his designated representative an ex officio member of the board of directors of the Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority. I served as that designated representative for several years.

It was frustrating to participate in board meetings and not be able to express my personal views since I was officially representing DNR.

I was forced to quietly listen while local board members, staff and both state and local politicians lauded the “success” of the development of an extensive ATV trail system on what is primarily coal company land in southern West Virginia.

From the beginning, I viewed the development of the system just like the coal industry — as another environmental abuse heaped upon southern West Virginia.

ATVs destroy and disrupt wildlife habitat, cause noise and air pollution and increase runoff, soil erosion and degradation of water quality. I have hiked many of the trails in Logan, Boone and Mingo counties and have observed this first hand despite being assured the trails were being developed in a sustainable manner. I found some trails that were so eroded they no longer were suitable to ride. During dry periods, dust stirred up by these noisy machines permeates the air and finds its way to nearby streams.

Like coal, it does not really pay its own way and is subsidized by tax dollars or indirect, hidden social costs. The 730 or so miles of the system sprawls across several counties in southern West Virginia. Its economic impact has been minimal—about \$20 million annually, as I recall.

At first that sounds like a lot but compare it to hunting. According to the Wildlife Resources Section of DNR, deer hunting contributes about \$250 million to the state’s economy each year. In addition, the state park system contributes between \$160.5 million to \$189.5 million annually in economic activity. Put another way,

for every \$1 of general tax revenue provided to state parks, an average of \$13.15 dollars was generated in economic activity. Both well worth the investment.

I grew up in the small town of Gilbert in Mingo County. In the late 1990s there was one small, depilated motel that was in such poor condition that I refused to stay there whenever I was working in the area. I will concede that changed with the development of the Hatfield-McCoy trail system. Today, a few residents of the town offer decent lodging making a few dollars catering to ATV riders. The number of restaurants, however, has not changed much and both locals and ATV riders alike pretty much rely on a McDonalds, a Hardees and one or two other small “mom and pop” type restaurants in the area. Nor has there been any significant growth in other businesses that cater to ATV riders such as repair shops, dealers, etc. All in all, the system has not made a profound change to the economy of the town. The same can be said of other communities that border on the Hatfield-McCoy Trail system.

Given the environmental destruction it causes and the fact it is not sustainable, I think it should be abolished. But now efforts are underway to expand it to encompass our valuable public lands. The Legislature enacted a law a couple of years ago to develop ATV trails in Cabwaylingo State Forest in Wayne County on a two-year “experimental basis.” Cabin revenues and overall forest use has not increased significantly, but the damage to existing roads and trails has been great.

This legislative session saw the enactment of Senate Bill 468, which made the use of ATVs on Cabwaylingo permanent and, at first glance, seemingly prohibits the expansion to other parks and forests in the state. However, a closer reading to the bill, which has been signed by the governor, indicates otherwise. The bill permits the director of DNR “the authority to authorize the development and use of certain connector trails, roads and parking areas from private systems including, without limitation, the Hatfield-McCoy systems, solely

for the purpose of providing access to state park and state forest recreational facilities and lodging by ATV, ORV, and UTV trail system users.” Such broad authority has the potential to open many state parks and forests to abuse and needs monitoring.

I fully realize the development of the Hatfield-McCoy Trail system was one of desperation after the demise of the coal industry. But if this is the best that West Virginia’s political leaders—both Democratic and Republican—can offer in the way of economic development, change is desperately needed. It is sad that West Virginia consistently lacks the leadership to move the state forward instead of always backward. Little wonder it is always dead last in the nation.

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.

A Little Update on Leaky Gas Wells

The February 2023 issue of The Highlands Voice reported on a new proposal by the United States Environmental Protection Agency to limit methane leaks from oil and gas operations. The industry opposes the proposal.

In 2022 the oil and gas industry spent just over \$124 million lobbying on this and other issues.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy sent the Environmental Protection Agency a comment in favor of the rule.

Sounds about even.

Conservancy Challenges Forest Service Project in the Upper Greenbrier River Watershed

By Rick Webb



Wetlands along Buffalo Fork in the Greenbrier Southeast Project area.

With the assistance of [Appalachian Mountain Advocates](#), the West Highlands Conservancy has asked a United States District Court to require U.S. Forest Service compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review requirements before proceeding with the Greenbrier Southeast Project, a Monongahela National Forest management proposal involving extensive steep-slope earth disturbance and commercial clearcutting in watersheds that support native brook trout and the endangered candy darter.

The Conservancy's complaint, a catalog of project-related documents, and a web map with project details and environmental context can be accessed at the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance's [Conservation Hub site](#).

The complaint raises issues that were raised early in the review process, including in our January 2022 objection to the project. In particular:

- The Forest Service failed to describe and evaluate the existing baseline condition of the aquatic habitat.
- The Forest Service is relying on erosion and sediment control mea-

asures that are not practicable during active construction and use of the logging road/skid-trail system.

- The Forest Service failed to consider the cumulative effects of multiple projects affecting designated critical habitat of the candy darter.

It is significant that the Forest Service failed to consider the baseline information provided by its own aquatic habitat monitoring program. The data show that most of the streams in the forest are degraded and trending negatively with respect to chronic sedimentation. The Conservancy called for a meaningful analysis of the existing problem before proceeding with a new project that may add to the problem.

The forest supervisor responded to the Conservancy by claiming that elevated sedimentation in National Forest streams results from natural processes and that Forest Service management is not among the causes of the problem. However, the data and analysis provided by the supervisor do not support this contention. See [July 2022 Highlands Voice article](#) for more on the sedimentation issue.

Chronic stream sedimentation—meaning infilling of the stream bed with fine sediment—is an issue that requires the attention of those who are working to preserve and restore the Highlands. Cool mountain streams with clean gravel and cobble streambeds only occur in association with healthy forests and functioning watershed systems. Something is wrong with the forest when something is wrong with the streams.

Other issues can be raised concerning the way the Forest Service has conducted its review and planning process for the Greenbrier Southeast Project.

A lack of transparency is one issue. The Draft Environmental Assessment for the project relied on conclusions based on a Biological Assessment prepared by the Forest Service that was not made available to the public until after the comment period. Additionally, the analysis relied on to demonstrate that National Forest management is not responsible for stream sedimentation was not entered in the project record until the administrative review process concluded.

Another issue is the Forest Service failure to examine a range of project alternatives as required by NEPA. For the Greenbrier Southeast Project, the Forest Service only addressed two alternatives: implement the project as planned (including more than 1,600 acres of clearcutting and 50 miles of skid road construction); or do not implement the project. The Forest Service must also look at project alternatives that prioritize ecological and watershed integrity, climate change mitigation, resilience to climate change, and protection and preservation of endangered species and other at-risk species and biological communities.

The complaint focuses on the very real issue of sedimentation and its potential impacts on an endangered species, the candy darter, which has already lost half of its original distribution due to sedimentation. A proper NEPA review would address that problem, as well as a broad range of National Forest management issues.

Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards Update

By Dave Johnston

The gates on the roads to Dolly Sods are open now, and we can expect the number of visitors to begin building up to Memorial Day weekend, which unofficially kicks off the busy season. The Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards have been planning for this and will be continuing our tried-and-true previous programs as well as initiating several new project areas, all aimed at helping preserve the wilderness character of Dolly Sods.

Review of last year's projects

A review of the activities we've engaged in since the program began two years ago is in order. The first, and still the most prominent part of the program is the Trailhead Stewards, who greet visitors and offer help and insight into preparing for the wilderness and observing Leave No Trace principles. Last year we added a number of new Stewards and are close to being able to cover the busiest trailheads on most weekends. We also added green vests embroidered with the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and Wilderness Stewards logo for recognizability at the trailheads.

During the summer our solitude monitoring teams recorded encounters while hiking three representative trails using an enhanced protocol, which will provide better statistical validity for tracking trends and determining thresholds for action. In addition, our campsite inventory team discovered and surveyed about 350 separate sites along the trails in Dolly Sods. The survey revealed widespread severe impacts, including many felled trees, camp furniture made of unearthed rocks, major vegetation disturbance, and proximity to water and other trails. The Forest Service is currently digesting the data and working on prescriptions to address the issues.

We continued to maintain the trailhead registration boxes, pick up the registration sheets and record the data. A summary of the data showed the proportion of hikers and backpackers entering at each trailhead and led to an estimate that about 35,000 people visit Dolly Sods each year.

Winter Planning

The Wilderness Stewards used the winter to huddle regularly with the Forest Service and develop plans for the upcoming season. This led to the launching of both a new trail maintenance team and a specialized crosscut sawyer team. This will significantly expand the fieldwork capabilities of the Stewards and have a tangible positive effect



Members of the crosscut sawyer team after a successful day in the field.

on the trails of Dolly Sods.

In addition, we laid plans to update and add content to the Conservancy website about Dolly Sods, wilderness concepts, and Leave No Trace principles. A press release announcing the new trail maintenance and crosscut teams, as well as later training for Trailhead Stewards, was sent out in March, which resulted in a number of new sign-ups.

Crosscut Sawyer Team

The new crosscut sawyer team met for two days of training in early April. Members received a day of classroom study and a second day learning and applying skills in

the field. The National Forest trainers stressed safety, situational awareness, and how to plan the cut by understanding the objective and assessing the tensions and "binds" in a log. The training resulted in the certification of 11 new sawyers at the A or B level, with a similar number waiting in the wings for the next training.

The ice storm that hit Dolly Sods in December left many trees and branches across the trails. Because motorized or mechanical equipment cannot be used in wilderness, it is necessary to use traditional muscle-powered tools to clear the blockages, which will make the trails both safer and minimize environmental damage. The crosscut sawyer team has already been out with the Forest Service clearing trails twice in April, and it is expected they will be working through the spring to address all the storm damage.

Trail Maintenance Team

While the crosscut team is trained specifically to work on downed timber, the trail maintenance team will address broader issues affecting trail safety and environmental impact. Trails in wilderness are purposely primitive, without manicured walkways or unnecessary structures, and will always present an opportunity for challenge to the wilderness visitor. But trails are provided to allow visitors access to wilderness, so it only makes sense to ensure that they are both safe and don't result in unnecessary degradation of the surrounding natural environment.

Among other things the trail maintenance team will be working to grade and harden the trail tread and divert water that leads to erosion, mitigate wet and muddy areas that tempt people to widen or bypass the trail, and repair damaged sections. We will be starting with low hanging fruit near trailheads, but as the team gains experience and skills we

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The Cost of Renewables Versus the True Cost of Coal

By Perry Bryant

Last year, Charlette Lane, Chairwoman of the state’s Public Service Commission, wrote an op ed in the Charleston Gazette-Mail claiming that burning coal is cheaper than installing renewables such as wind and solar. That really depends on what costs are included, and Chairwoman Lane failed to include the harm that burning coal causes; costs that renewables don’t incur. Plus, a lot has happened since she wrote her op ed.

Chairwoman Lane’s basic argument is that both solar and wind are intermittent sources of energy while coal is available all the time. The myth of coal’s super reliability was pierced recently when Standard & Poor’s reported that one of three coal-fired units at Harrison Power plant and two of three coal-fired units at John Amos were shut down during part or all of the frigid polar vortex in West Virginia last December – just when we needed their energy the most.

Chairwoman Lane also dismissed battery storage as too expensive for storing solar and wind energy when the sun isn’t shining, and the wind isn’t blowing. However, battery storage technology is rapidly evolving. Form Energy, for example, recently announced it is opening a battery manufacturing facility in Weirton to make batteries that can store and then discharge power for 100 hours at a cost of one-tenth of the cost of lithium-ion batteries, the type of batteries utilities currently use. If Form Energy can deliver on their claims, it will make renewables very reliable at a very reasonable price.

I do agree with Chairwoman Lane that we should consider the cost of battery storage when comparing the cost of renewables versus the cost of coal. **But we should also consider the cost of the harm that occurs from burning coal.**

These costs are substantial. The WVU College of Law Center on Energy and Sus-

tainable Development found, for example, that almost 100 deaths can be avoided in West Virginia in 2025 by adopting renewable sources of energy instead of relying on burning coal for our electricity.

What’s the cost of these avoidable deaths? And what are the additional costs associated with global warming caused primarily by burning coal and other fossil fuels including increased severity of flooding, longer lasting and more extreme heat waves, more intense hurricanes, etc.?

The Environmental Protection Agency

plants emitted 55.4 million tons of CO2 causing \$10.5 billion in annual damage. The breakdown by power plant is depicted in the table.

There are \$7.2 billion in yearly damages from the five coal-fired power plants that are directly regulated by the Public Service Commission. When considering all the coal-fired power plants in West Virginia the annual damage rises to \$10.5 billion. The social cost of carbon and resulting damage from emissions from solar and wind? Zero.

It’s a lot easier to claim that coal is cheaper than wind, solar and battery storage when you don’t include \$10 billion in annual damage that coal-fired power plants cause with their emissions.

To be fair to Chairwoman Lane, neither the emergence of Form Energy’s breakthrough on new battery development nor EPA’s proposed social cost of carbon was available when she wrote her op ed last year. Based on this new information, one can only hope that Chairwoman Lane reconsiders her unyielding support for coal.

West Virginia is at a crossroads. We can double down on burning coal with all its adverse impacts or we can transition to clean energy. For the next ten years, the federal government will provide tax incentives to partially offset the cost of utility companies installing solar, wind, geothermal and other carbon free sources of energy. This window of opportunity shuts in 2032. After that, West Virginia utility customers will be stuck with the entire bill for developing new sources of electricity.

In order to avoid huge cost increases to consumers, we need leadership from Chairwoman Lane and West Virginia’s utilities. The choice is theirs. But the cost savings from adopting clean energy or the true cost of burning coal will be ours.

POWER PLANT	EMISSIONS IN MILLION OF TONS OF CO2	TOTAL DAMAGES IN BILLIONS OF DOLLARS
Affiliates of American Electric Power Facilities		
John Amos	11.0	\$2.1
Mountaineer	6.4	\$1.2
Mitchell	4.6	\$0.9
Affiliates of First Energy Facilities		
Fort Martin	5.2	\$1.0
Harrison	10.8	\$2.0
Other Coal-Fired Facilities		
Mountain Storm	5.3	\$1.0
Grant Town Power	0.8	\$0.1
Longview	4.6	\$0.9
Pleasants Power Station	6.6	\$1.3
STATE TOTALS	55.4	\$10.5

(EPA) has estimated that the social cost of carbon—that is what is the total amount of damage from emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere—is \$190 per ton of carbon dioxide. To be clear, this is a draft proposal, and I’ll be happy to update the projected costs listed below (either up or down) when EPA finalizes the proposed social cost of carbon.

Using 2021 emission data from the Energy Information Administration (the latest data available), and using EPA’s social cost of carbon, West Virginia’s coal-fired power

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 Crys Bauer at membership@wvhighlands.org. 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 two 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.)



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Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards *continued from page 11*



Tackling a fallen log with a traditional crosscut saw.

expect to take on more challenging jobs deeper in the wilderness. The first two-day training for the trail maintenance team was held in late April. Dolly Sods trails have a lot of issues, so we expect the crew to be working on a frequent and ongoing basis throughout the season.

Trailhead Stewards

The Trailhead Stewards will again be stationed at the most popular trailheads, beginning in May and extending through the summer and fall. This is our most visible program, and we have had the opportunity to help several thousand visitors prepare for their visit to Dolly Sods over the past two years.

The first training of the year will be held on May 20, and will be followed by an all-Stewards picnic at Seneca Rocks. The Forest Service has trained several experienced Stewards to present the training, so we should be able to hold more trainings as new Stewards join throughout the season.

Given the results of last year's campsite inventory and the recommendations of the Leave No Trace organization, we will begin plac-

ing special emphasis on campsite and campfire issues. We'll make backpackers in particular aware that some sites may have been closed for restoration, and to only camp in existing sites. When they do camp, they need to minimize their impact by refraining from building camp furniture of elaborate fire rings, using only dead and down wood (if having a fire at all), protecting food from curious animals, following proper backcountry hygiene practices, and packing out any trash. We are preparing a new handout outlining these principles.

Other plans for this year

Based on campsite inventory, the Forest Service will be identifying the most impacted sites for closing and restoration. Analysis of the data gathered by the Stewards last year is currently being analyzed and a plan is being developed. We expect that once it is ready for implementation the Stewards will be assisting with the decommissioning of these campsites.

We expect to hold another enhanced solitude monitoring survey in the fall. This will establish a cycle of doing each of the seasons (spring, summer, fall) every three years so that the level of solitude available in this wilderness can be assessed and monitored over time.

How to get involved

As these projects evolve, we will send out more information and specific arrangements to all who have signed up to be a Dolly Sods Wilderness Steward. To ensure that you get information on the team or training you are interested in, first become a Wilderness Steward and indicate your projects of interest on the signup form.

Simply go to the Conservancy [website](#) and look for the link on the home page to the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards. From there you can go to the online signup form. If you have any other questions, write to dollysodsstewards@gmail.com. We will be in touch if more information is needed and with information about training, scheduling, etc.

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

Board Highlights

By John McFerrin

The Board of Directors of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy met on Earth Day, 2023 (aka April 22). It was some of the same old, same old with a strong dash of the new.

We had some new board members: Ashton Burdine. Many may know Ashton from his work with the West Virginia Land Trust. He will be representing the Brooks Bird Club, occupying the seat previously occupied by Cindy Ellis and, in the old days, Mary Moore Riefienberger (two big pairs of shoes to fill). Fortunately, Cindy Ellis will not be leaving us. President Larry Thomas has appointed her to an at-large Board position. Read Ashton's introduction on page 12.

The second new board member is Andrew Young. (Not THE Andrew Young; if you don't get the reference, go ask an old person). He is a law student at George Washington University Law School specializing in environmental, natural resource, and land use law. He has been active in the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance for several years. He was not present at the meeting, but President Larry Thomas announced his intention to appoint him.

The other dash of the new was our new merch. We got our first look at a new line of Hydro Flasks (like water bottles only made of metal, insulated and indestructible), tumblers, and t-shirts, all with our name and logo. They will be available by ordering through the Voice and our online store. Look for announcements on our social media to see the new items and sign-up to receive our emails!

Membership and Fulfillment Secretary Cristyn (Crys) Bauer presented a report on our membership and the inventory in the store. It appears that the membership is trending upward.

We had a brief and inconclusive discussion of the possibility of making The Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide, Making a



April 2023 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy board meeting held at Saranam Retreat Center.

Difference (the brochure on what people can do to reduce their impact on the climate), or both available as PDFs on the website. We weren't sure if that is something people would want, whether it would cut into guide sales, etc. We did what we do when we can't figure something out: round up some smart people to figure this out for us. In this case, we rounded up Buff, Hugh, Marilyn and Cory.

Since Communications Director Olivia Miller is working remotely from Idaho (it's the 21st century, after all), she sent a written report. She reported that the engagements on our social media pages continue to grow. The Voice still comes out every month; we are printing pictures in color, which have been well received. She is going to work on spiffing up the website.

In another piece of news, Jackie Burns and Sarah Hinnant will start doing a kids' page for the Voice. Although a 42-inch pipe that has not yet gone into the ground has some potential as an adventure, it is a documented fact that children do not like to read about pipelines and the Clean Water Act, the route for Corridor H, etc. A kids' page would give us something in the Voice for children.

Program Director Cory Chase reported on what he has been doing. It is a lot. He went

to Environmental Day at the Legislature, planned outings, discussed upcoming events with the Central Appalachian Red Spruce Initiative, worked on the effort to route Corridor H to the north—the route that avoids splitting Davis and Thomas—and much more.

Luanne McGovern reported on legislative matters. She talked about how many bills were introduced, how many passed, our legislative priorities, etc. She couldn't say enough good things about the lobbyists from the Environmental Council that we worked with and our partner, the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. To learn the details, see her story in the April issue of the Voice.

Rick Webb reported on public lands. Much of his work has been with Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance and its conservation hub. It continues to be the go-to place for data on Corridor H, Off-Road Vehicles on public lands, and many other issues. Most of the issues are of interest to the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

He also reported on three Forest Service projects: Greenbrier Southeast Project, Upper Cheat River Project, and the South Fork of the Cherry River.

Susan Rosenblum reported on the activities of the Rivers Committee. The only issue it has the time to work on is Corridor H and they are going at it gangbusters. The committee is cooperating with the West Virginia Rivers Coalition and the Friends of Cheat to train and organize citizen scientists to sample streams that would be along the route of Corridor H.

Hugh Rogers reported on Corridor H. Much of what he could say has been in the Voice. The National Environmental Policy Review Act (NEPA) process that was done years ago is stale. We want the Department of Highways to go through the NEPA process

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Welcoming a New Member to our Board!



At the quarterly Board of Directors meeting held in April, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy welcomed Ashton Berdine, lands program manager at the West Virginia Land Trust, to the board as an organizational director representing the Brooks Bird Club.

Family and neighbors sparked Ashton's interest in the outdoors at an early age by offering him opportunities to explore the natural world.

An early obsession with birds and insects and a later desire to learn the names of plants led him to a library of field guides and a collection of friends that he says purposefully encouraged these interests. Hunting, fishing, and camping also factored into his fascination with the outdoors.

"The biggest influences in my life path came from those elders that shared their love and knowledge of nature," Berdine said. "Beloved members of the Brooks Bird Club, teachers at the Oglebay Mountain Nature Camp, and my early job supervisors were all passionate about the natural world. These teachers eventually led to a career path that sought to protect and conserve that part of nature most critically in need."

After graduating from North Carolina State University with a bachelor's degree in

botany, Berdine began his career with the Maryland Natural Heritage Program, inventorying for rare species and mapping the wetlands of Maryland's Appalachian Plateau. This allowed him to extend his learning beyond birds and plants to insects, herps, mollusks, and mammals.

"It was this opportunity, along with the passion, guidance, and encouragement from my supervisor at this job, that taught me the true importance of conserving special places for the rare plants and animals... and the intrinsic value of all living things and places," he said.

Following five years as an inventory botanist for the Maryland Natural Heritage Program, Berdine transitioned to The Nature Conservancy as the Maryland Plant Community Ecologist, tasked with creating a plant community classification for the state, a national effort to use plant communities as a tool for identifying and filtering conservation priorities.

In 2000 he returned to West Virginia to inventory corporate timberlands for rare species and rare plant communities as another Nature Conservancy conservation effort. This endeavor eventually transitioned into a land protection role, focusing on acquiring lands and conservation easements to conserve places of high biological value.

In 2014 Berdine became the lands program manager for the West Virginia Land Trust, overseeing the organization's land protection in West Virginia. This effort was profoundly impacted and supported by legal settlements directed to the West Virginia Land Trust by passionate conservation organizations such as the Highlands Conservancy, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Coal River Mountain Watch, and the Sierra Club represented by Appalachian Mountain Advocates and Public Justice. Currently, the West Virginia Land Trust has protected over 20,000 acres and much of that is a direct result of this vision by these organizations.

"I find great inspiration in the passion West Virginians show for their own special places and our connection to these wild places,"

Berdine said. "This has become my inspiration for the conservation work the West Virginia Land Trust seeks to fulfill, and I find most fulfilling. I am always available to discuss conservation options with landowners in West Virginia."

If he is not busy being a steward for conservation, Berdine enjoys hiking in West Virginia, kayaking, surf fishing, and pursuing wild turkeys. the study of botany.

Board Highlights

continued from page 15

again and seriously consider routes other than the one they are stubbornly enthusiastic about. Hugh is confident that nobody would pick this one if other routes were fairly considered.

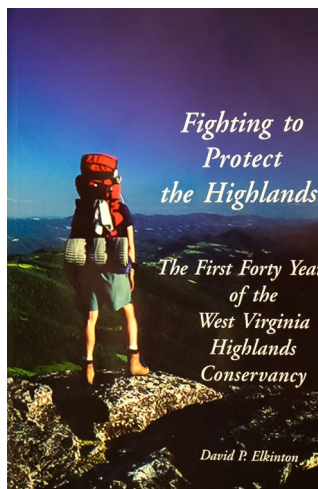
Now comes the same old same old. Cindy Rank reported on the long, slow slog that we continue to be involved in, trying to ensure compliance with mining laws. There is nothing new or exciting to report, just that we are keeping on keeping on. Inch by inch the longest march can be won.

Dave Johnston reported on the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards. They are doing great things. This year they will once again be doing the education and the monitoring just like last year. They are adding trail maintenance. The Forest Service plans to address some problems with improperly located or heavily impacted camp sites that last year's inventory identified.

Jackie Burns reported on the Fall Review, now scheduled for October 13-15 at Canaan Valley. The theme is water. We already have speakers lined up to talk about water regulations in our state, acid mine drainage, the candy darter and sedimentation, and possibly one on forest hydrology. They are still looking for speakers to talk about PFAS chemicals and small-town water issues. We will invite other groups to table at the event.

Finally, there was the food. Susan Rosenblum had organized potluck meals. There was plenty of food, so we all went away fat and happy.

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 20-year board member, not only traces the major issues that have occupied the Conservancy's energy, but profiles more than 20 of its volunteer leaders.

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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. Proceeds support the Conservancy's ongoing environmental projects.

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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 online at www.wvhighlands.org

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.



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 ❤️ MOUNTAINS on the back. It is soft twill, unstructured, low profile, sewn eyelets, cloth strap with tri-glide buckle closure.

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

www.wvhighlands.org

THE WAY THE VOICE WORKS

The Highlands Voice is the official publication of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. While it is the official publication, every story in it does not represent an official position of the Conservancy. While all of our members share the general goal “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,” our members often have differing views upon the best way to do that.

As a result, stories in *The Voice* often reflect different points of view. The Conservancy itself, however, only speaks through its Board. The only stories that reflect the official policies of the Conservancy are those reporting Board actions, including litigation positions we have taken, comments on proposed regulations, etc.

NEW WVHC APPAREL!



We have been working super hard to bring a new range of items to the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy online store! A collection of updated short sleeve t-shirts will be available to purchase at wvhighlands.org in May.

And we have more new things coming soon, too, like reusable water bottles! Hydro Flasks with the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy logo will also be available for purchase.

Just in time for sunny summer days, we will be adding two new embroidered baseball hats to the lineup! One made of a hemp/cotton blend and the other made of 100 percent certified organic

cotton. For now, the estimated time of arrival for the baseball hats is uncertain, but we will let you know when you can purchase them.

For the official announcement on when new merchandise will be available, be sure to follow us on one of our social media accounts [@wvhighlandsconservancy](https://www.instagram.com/wvhighlandsconservancy) on Instagram or Facebook. You can also choose to be notified about product launches, sales and more by joining our email list at bit.ly/WVHCemailsignup

We can't wait to see you sporting the new gear! Be sure to take photos and tag us on social media.

Get Emails from Us!

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has communicated with its membership through *The Highlands Voice* for decades, but there's a new kid on the block. Sign-up to receive email updates by visiting <https://bit.ly/WVHCemail> or by scanning the QR code.

You can expect to receive updates on things like events and outings, action alerts, opportunities for volunteer events, discounts on new swag and more.



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



Get your I ❤️ MOUNTAINS gear at our online store!

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

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 ATTN: Online Store, WVHC, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321-0306.

www.wvhighlands.org

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