

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
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The Highlands Voice

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Summer Splash 2025: Sun, water and good company on the Cheat

By Olivia Miller, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

There’s nothing quite like a summer day spent on the water, and this year’s Summer Splash on the Cheat River reminded us why these wild, winding waters are such a gift to our community.

On August 2, twenty-five paddlers came together for a four-mile float under sunny skies. From first-time paddlers to long-time river enthusiasts, everyone shared in the same joy — drifting downstream, swapping stories, and feeling the river’s steady current carry us closer together.

After the float, we gathered for a delicious picnic catered by Screech Owl Brewing. It was the perfect way



to refuel, relax, and connect — giving us the chance to talk with folks about the West Virginia Highlands

Conservancy’s mission and the work we’re doing to protect West Virginia’s highlands.

Thanks to the generosity of our participants, we raised over \$300 to support the Conservancy’s ongoing conservation work. This event was made possible by the sponsorship of the American Water Charitable Foundation, and with the expert guidance of our friends at Blackwater Outdoor Adventures, who ensured the day flowed as smoothly as the river itself.

The Cheat brought us together this time — next, we’ll head to the clear waters of the Shavers Fork River. Join us this Saturday for a guided snorkel in partnership with the Monongahela National Forest and see the river from a whole new perspective.

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Introducing Christa Clasgens, our new membership and outreach director

Please join us in welcoming Christa Clasgens to the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's team as our new membership and outreach director!

Born in Northern Virginia, Christa moved to West Virginia at 18 to reconnect with her family roots in Upshur County, where her family has lived since the 1840s. Immersed in the Appalachian landscape, she found a deep love for nature and a lasting passion for being on the water that would ultimately guide her career and advocacy work.

She earned her bachelor's degree in business from West Virginia University. While at WVU, she began volunteering with several nonprofits, sparking a lifelong commitment to conservation and community impact. Her work has included efforts with conservation-focused organizations such as Trout Unlimited and the Mountain Watershed Association, as well as therapeutic nonprofits like The Mayfly Project and Project Healing Waters, where she formerly served as a Field support specialist, helping veterans heal through fly fishing.

In 2022, she became the first woman to own and operate a fishing guide service in Ohiopyle State Park. A year later, she became one of the only woman-owned guide service operating in Ohio, and she is currently one of the only female fly fishing guides in the state of West Virginia.

Through her professional work,



nonprofit service, and community outreach, she's passionate about sharing the healing power of nature and advocating for the protection of rivers, lands, and the communities that depend on them. When she's not guiding or volunteering, you can find her fishing, snowboarding, or mountain biking through the waters and trails of Appalachia.

Whether she's guiding on the water, leading outreach, or hitting the trails, Christa brings an inspiring energy to conservation and community work. We're thrilled to have her on board—welcome, Christa!

Save the date for the Southeastern Public Interest Environmental Law Conference

The Southeastern Public Interest Environmental Law Conference (SPIEL) will be held the weekend of Oct 10 -12 on the beautiful campus of Sewanee (University of the South), atop the Cumberland Plateau near Chattanooga, Tennessee.

This conference – in its second year – is intended primarily for environmental attorneys, activists, scholars and leaders in the environmental movement, and was founded as a forum for learning, networking, and cross-pollinating ideas and strategies. Registration is now open and is very reasonable at \$25 per day for those not seeking CLE credits, and is free for high school and college students.

Keynote speakers for the SPIEL conference are:

Dr. John Bonine, attorney, author, academic and a pioneer in the field of environmental law. In the 1970s Dr. Bonine served as Associate General Counsel of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and subsequently joined the faculty of the University of Oregon where he created the world's first environmental law clinic: Western Environmental Law Clinic. He also established the long-running Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, the largest such conference in the discipline, which is operated entirely by students and known in some circles as the Woodstock of environmental



law. Dr. Bonine is also the cofounder of ELAW, the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide, which connects 300 environmental lawyers in 70 countries.

Jared Sullivan, author of "Valley So Law – One Lawyer's Fight for Justice in the Wake of America's Great Coal Catastrophe." Sullivan's 2024 book chronicles the aftermath of the massive coal waste spill at the TVA Kingston plant in Tennessee which inundated the Clinch and Emory Rivers with coal ash. The subsequent cleanup of the spill resulted in dozens of deaths as workers were exposed to toxic dust and refused protective gear.

The conference will offer 26

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What's the big deal about data centers? Here's what West Virginians need to know.

By Sarah Elbeshbishi, Mountain State Spotlight

Gov. Patrick Morrisey has made attracting data center developments a key component of his economic development strategy. Lawmakers passed a bill to encourage these developments. So, what does that mean for West Virginia?

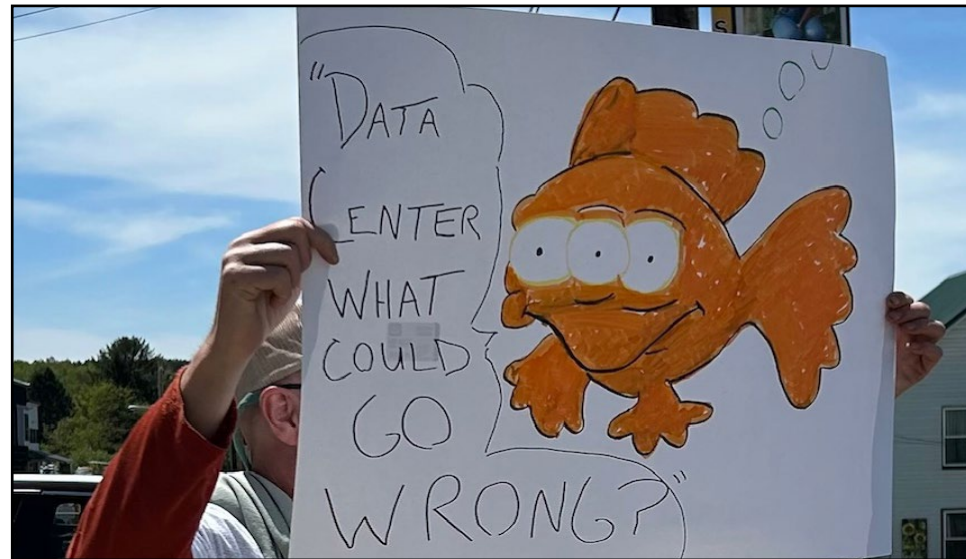
Data centers are coming to West Virginia.

At least that's what state officials are hoping for as they court tech companies to set up shop in the Mountain State.

Gov. Patrick Morrisey has made big tech a key component of his administration's economic development strategy. Earlier this year, state officials celebrated a measure Morrisey asked lawmakers to pass to lure companies to build these centers in West Virginia. There are at least four proposed projects that are publicly known.

But local residents have already organized to oppose the most high-profile of these, a proposed data center project between Thomas and Davis in Tucker County.

So, what even is a data center? Where are they being proposed? And how will they impact the state? Here's what West Virginians need to know.



What is a data center?

A data center is basically a building full of computers. It contains the equipment companies need to process and store their software and other digital data.

As the world becomes more dependent on digital services — whether it's online shopping, storing data in the cloud or using artificial intelligence — there's an increased need for more space to store the necessary equipment and information.

And as the demand for this data grows, so does the need for energy. Existing utilities are struggling to keep up with this demand. Data center companies are turning to generating their own power to run their facilities.

This is why West Virginia is starting to see proposals for power plants, unconnected to the electric grid, pop up around the state.

How is the state trying to attract data centers?

In March, more than halfway through the 2025 legislative session, Morrisey asked lawmakers to pass a measure, dubbed the Power Generation and Consumption Act, in order to promote data center development in West Virginia.

Morrisey's bill proposed to encourage small local energy grids that projects like data centers could operate independently or, in some cases, connect to the larger electrical system.

Data centers could be a major

source of tax revenue and can also attract other developments and investments to a community. While these facilities can bring jobs, they often aren't many once the construction is complete.

Lawmakers did pass the bill into law, but not before making dozens of changes to it, including to the specialized tax structure the bill establishes. Local and county officials criticized the measure because it significantly cut how much revenue localities would get from these projects.

Most of the taxes earned on data centers and microgrids will go to state level funds. The counties in which they are located will only get 30% of the revenue.

Lawmakers also stripped most, if not all, local authority over these types of projects, which local officials have expressed concern and frustration over.

Under this law, projects like these aren't subject to county or municipal zoning. They are also exempt from any noise, lighting or land use ordinances. Local and county governments aren't allowed to establish or enforce any regulations that would limit the development of a

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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.

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
Online Store Catalog

Apparel

- WVHC Cotton Hat (Black or Army Green): \$22.50
- WVHC Hemp Hat (Black or Green): \$25.00
- WVHC 100% Cotton T-Shirts (Coyote Brown, Kelly Green, Navy Blue, Black) Available in XS-XXL: \$22.00
- Black 50th Anniversary T-Shirt with “Celebrating 50 years” logo. Available in Small-XXL: \$20.00
- I Love Mountains T-Shirt Short Sleeve. Available in M-XXL: \$18.00
- I Love Mountains T-Shirt Long Sleeve. Available in S, M, L, XL: \$22.00
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Please include \$6.25 shipping for Apparel items

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Books

- Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide, 9th Edition: \$21.95 + \$5.38 shipping
- Fighting to Protect the Highlands: \$15.95 + \$5.38 shipping
- The Nature and Scenery of the West Virginia Highlands, 2nd Edition: \$29.95 + \$5.38 shipping

To order by mail make checks payable to West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and send to P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321. Please indicate the item and relevant color and size if applicable. To view and purchase store items online, visit wvhighlands.org

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.



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Save the date for the Southeastern Public Interest Environmental Law Conference

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sessions and workshops on a wide variety of topics, from FEMA to CAFOs to the Trump administration's assault on the legal framework of NEPA.

The SPIEL conference is an annual convergence dedicated to serving the members and supporters of the public interest environmental movement of the American Southeast. This event brings together public interest environmental attorneys, scientists, grassroots environmental advocates, academics, and students to network and share ideas, skills, and research and through presentations, hands-on workshops, and discussions in a community-building weekend of fellowship at the idyllic University of the South at Seawanee – recently named one of the ten “Most Beautiful College Campuses” by Travel and Leisure. Seawanee's location and 14,000 acres of forest also helps SPIEL go beyond the traditional lecture hall format, with some outdoor sessions on topics like forest ecology and public lands management issues.

Whether you wish to share your wisdom as a presenter or gain wisdom as a participant, please join us this October. Register now and don't miss this vital event for our region. For more information and to view the conference schedule, please visit www.spielconference.net

What's the big deal about data centers? Here's what West Virginians need to know.

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data center project.

Where are the proposed data centers in West Virginia?

The project in Tucker County is being proposed by Fundamental Data LLC, a Virginia-based company. The company is proposing to build an off-the-grid natural gas power plant between Thomas and Davis to power data centers and is currently seeking an air permit from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection.

New York-based TransGas Development Systems, LLC, is also looking to build two off-grid power plants in Mingo County. The company applied for air permits from the DEP in March for their projects, which they called the “Adams Fork Data Center Energy Campus” in their applications.

Another data center complex is proposed for Jefferson and Berkeley counties. The Berkeley County Planning Commission approved the concept plan for the county's portion in March. Texas-based company, Fidelis New Energy, has proposed plans to build and operate a data center complex in Mason County.

What's the big deal?

Along with data centers come a variety of environmental and public health impacts, which have caused tensions with surrounding communities across the country.

Data centers can use sever-

al million gallons of water a day, which is as much as a town with 10,000 to 50,000 people. In many places where data centers already exist, local communities have had issues with them over their water consumption.

The amount of energy they consume is another concern. A recent report from the Harvard Electricity Law Initiative found that residents have been footing the bill for the increased power costs driven by data centers.

They also are a source of noise pollution and can reach concerning decibel levels. Data centers are typically associated with a constant low humming sound, which comes from their cooling systems that run around the clock to keep the temperature down. The noise can also come from the facilities' backup generators, which are usually diesel.

And because companies are looking to power their data centers themselves — in some cases through natural gas powered plants — air pollution is emerging as another risk associated with data centers. Such power plants typically emit a combination of air pollutants that can have serious environmental and health impacts.

What don't we know?

The developers have not released much information on their projects and neither Fundamental Data and Fidelis New Energy responded to questions about their proposals.

Adam Victor, president and CEO of TransGas, said that during a previous project where the company built a major facility in an urban location, they took “noise, light and pollution issues very seriously and maintained the strong support of

the local community” for the almost two decades the facility operated.

In Tucker County, residents have complained about the lack of information and transparency around the proposed project in addition to their concerns about the potential environmental and public health impacts.

It's also not exactly clear when and how the Power Generation and Consumption Act will impact the project proposed for their community.

And during a public hearing last month DEP staff told residents that they could only speak to what was in the company's permit application. Fundamental Data's air permit application has become another sticking point for the community because it was heavily redacted.

Country Roads News, which is a newsletter and website covering the Canaan Valley, Davis and Thomas communities, has extensively covered the Tucker County project, including updates as it continues to unfold.

There are also questions about where the company will get the water needed to cool down the facility. The source of water is also something that is not clear about the various other proposed data center projects.

And while most of the projects have indicated the size of their projects in acreage, it's not clear how many data centers the sites intend to house.

Help protect
our community,
land, and future
— donate to our
Data Center
fund.



Coal for steel production is not a “critical material”

By Public Citizen

In letter to Department of Energy, groups call process to change designation of the fossil fuel “flawed and insufficient” in department’s 2026 Critical Materials Assessment.

The U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) effort to designate metallurgical coal a “critical material” in the department’s 2026 Critical Materials Assessment relies on a flawed and insufficient process, as detailed in a letter signed by a dozen groups.

The Department of Energy’s May 2025 analysis fails to meet the threshold for designating metallurgical coal, which is used to make steel, as a critical material under the Energy Act of 2020.

The letter, signed by, Earthjustice, Public Citizen, Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance, Appalachian Voices, Center for Biological Diversity, Citizens Coal Council, Earthworks, Friends of the Earth, Kentucky Resources Council, Inc. Montana Environmental Information Center, Sierra Club, and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, states that metallurgical coal is a fuel, which the DOE itself acknowledges can be used in thermal applications. Simply put, metallurgical coal fails to meet the legal definition of a ‘non-fuel’ material, and DOE’s own data show no evidence of supply chain risk or reliance on imports that would justify this designation, according to the groups.

The Energy Department designation is one of several steps the Trump administration is taking to boost an uneconomic sector of the U.S. coal industry, including a new



The Rocky Run Surface Mine in Greenbrier County, West Virginia, produces metallurgical coal used primarily in steelmaking. (Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance)

2.5% tax credit included in the reconciliation bill signed by President Trump earlier this month, which would be available to coal exporters.

“At a time when the steel industry must rapidly transition to cleaner production methods, like electric arc furnaces and hydrogen-based direct reduced iron, it’s misleading and dangerous to give met coal this unqualified status, especially without any credible justification based on market realities or the statute itself,” said Carly Oboth, senior supply chain campaigner with Public Citizen’s Climate Program. “This move risks extending the life of highly polluting coal operations in communities that are already overburdened by environmental harms. Critical materials policy must be based on clear criteria in line with the statute, not the whims of fossil fuel-entrenched interests.”

“DOE’s effort to designate metallurgical coal as a critical material ignores the law and the coal industry’s harms,” said Caroline Weinberg, senior research and policy analyst with Earthjustice’s Clean Energy Program. “Coal is not only excluded from the critical materials list because it is a fuel material, but also because it is not supply constrained. DOE must not bend statutory definitions to serve the White House’s political agenda. Doing so will only waste taxpayer dollars and further exacerbate harms of the coal industry.”

“The U.S. has stable access to metallurgical coal, including significant domestic production and secure trade partners,” said Aimee Erickson, executive director of Citizens Coal Council. “Therefore, there is no material supply chain risk warranting a ‘critical’ designation, and

the move could appear politically motivated rather than technically justified.”

“Appalachian communities are on the frontlines of metallurgical coal production, serving as the primary source of met coal in the United States,” said Kevin Zedack, government affairs specialist with Appalachian Voices. “While DOE’s designation of met coal as a critical mineral is supposedly intended to create new coal mining jobs, this administration has made it clear that they’re unconcerned with the wellbeing of coal miners by delaying silica dust protections, gutting federal black lung monitoring and preventative research programs and eliminating economic development opportunities for communities to set their own priorities and vision for a healthy future. We are already mining more met coal than we can use in the United States; the industry doesn’t need another federal hand-out while our communities pay the price.”

“West Virginia has already carried the burden of coal extraction for generations. Our communities deserve an economy built on fairness and clean energy, not continued exploitation by an industry that profits off environmental harm and public health crises,” said Andrew Young, staff attorney for the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance. “The Department of Energy’s attempt to label metallurgical coal as ‘critical’ only doubles down on coal’s destructive legacy. Instead, we should prioritize a real transition that invests in sustainable jobs and revitalizes our communities for the long term.”

Splash into Fun: The Six Best Waterparks in West Virginia (2025 Guide)

By Clyde Craig, *The West Virginia Explorer Webzine*

West Virginia's natural beauty is world-famous, but when summer heat hits, the state's waterparks become top destinations for families and thrill-seekers looking to cool off with some splashing fun.

Whether you want a giant inflatable obstacle course or a classic wave pool, the Mountain State offers some truly memorable aquatic escapes.

Here's our guide to the six best waterparks in West Virginia, complete with direct links so you can plan your perfect day of waterpark adventures.

1. ACE Adventure Water Park

Location: Oak Hill / **Why it's Top-Ranked:** ACE Adventure Water Park is a unique, five-acre spring-fed lake featuring over 50 giant inflatable obstacles, twin 40-foot "Wet Willie" water slides, tower zip-lines into the lake, volleyball courts, trampolines, and a sandy beach with pizza and refreshments. It offers a perfect mix of challenge and fun for kids, teens, and adults alike.

Ticket Information: Full-day passes are approximately \$33 for adults, and half-day passes start at \$23. Season passes are available. **Hours:** Open daily from Memorial Day through early September, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. / **Official Website:** ACE Adventure Water Park.

2. Water Ways Waterpark

Location: Julian / **Top Features:** Water Ways offers a relaxed atmosphere with five water slides, a lazy



Harpers Ferry Waterpark is a floating inflatable park situated in a private quarry.

river, and "Kiddy Island," a play area with small slides, swings, and a water umbrella designed for younger kids.

Water Ways is ideal for families with small children seeking a gentler waterpark experience. Additional amenities include picnic areas, walking trails, and a gift shop. **More Info:** Water Ways Waterpark.

3. Wildwater Express Waterslide

Location: Hinton / **What Makes It Stand Out:** Featuring a thrilling 267-foot waterslide, pool, kiddie pool, and basketball and volleyball courts, Wildwater Express is a great spot for active families and friends looking for excitement beyond just the pool.

Seasonal operation—check local schedules before planning your trip. **More Info:** Wildwater Express.

4. Harpers Ferry Waterpark

Location: Near Harpers Ferry / **Why Visit:** Harpers Ferry Waterpark is a floating inflatable park set in a beautiful private quarry, featuring slides, trampolines, monkey bars, and climbing walls on the water.

Best suited for children ages five and older, this water park provides a unique and energetic experience

for families and groups. Sessions require booking, and life jackets are mandatory. **Official Website:** Harpers Ferry Waterpark.

5. Camden Park & Splash Zone

Location: Huntington / **Why It's Unique:** Camden Park is West Virginia's only amusement park with an integrated water section called Splash Zone, which includes pools and splash pads for kids.

Combined with classic amusement rides, mini-golf, and seasonal events, it's an all-around family entertainment destination. Splash Zone is highly rated on TripAdvisor and offers aquatic fun for all ages. **More Info:** Camden Park

6. Waves of Fun Waterpark

Location: Hurricane / **Why it Belongs in the Mix:** Waves of Fun is the only outdoor waterpark in West Virginia, featuring a 500,000-gallon wave pool capable of producing up to 3-foot waves. The park also boasts two water slides and a tube ride, providing excitement for all ages.

Managed by Putnam County Parks & Recreation, it offers affordable admission (approximately \$6–\$8) and free entry for children under

five years old. Open from early June through Labor Day, generally Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday, 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. **Official Website:** Waves of Fun.

Why visit West Virginia's Waterparks?

West Virginia's waterparks are more than just places to swim and slide—they are full-day entertainment hubs that often include dining, outdoor games, and group-friendly amenities. Whether you're from the Mountain State or visiting for the first time, these waterparks offer safe, supervised environments where families can bond and kids can burn off energy during the hot summer months.

Riding the Wave: The economic impact and potential of waterparks in West Virginia

As West Virginia's tourism sector enters a new era of growth, small attractions, such as local outdoor water parks, are poised to ride the wave of economic opportunity. Here's how waterparks contribute today and hold untapped promise as the Mountain State becomes a trending summer destination.

Tourism on the Rise: Booming Visitor Spending

First, a macro snapshot: tourism in West Virginia generated an estimated \$6.3 billion in visitor spending in 2023, up from \$5.3 billion in 2022, marking continued growth following the post-pandemic recovery. Among that total, recreation, including water parks, accounted for \$1.5 billion, a full 24% of visitor ex-

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Splash into Fun: The Six Best Waterparks in West Virginia (2025 Guide)

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penditures. These figures illustrate the scale of West Virginia's appeal and show the broader economic base that waterpark operators plug into.

The tourism industry now supports nearly 60,000 jobs statewide, one out of every 15 positions, and contributes more than \$2.1 billion in personal income. As smaller attractions—such as regional waterparks—draw visitors, they stimulate local spending on food, lodging, rentals, and retail.

Local contributions of water parks

Although detailed state level figures on waterpark visitor numbers are scarce, many of West Virginia's largest aquatic attractions—such as ACE Adventure Water Park in the New River Gorge, Camden Park's Splash Zone in Huntington, Harpers Ferry Waterpark, Water Ways near Julian, Wildwater Express in Hinton, and Waves of Fun in Putnam County—serve as regional magnets for day-trippers and multi-day visitors. These players have a direct economic impact in multiple ways:

Ticket and concession revenues fund local payrolls and operations.

Ancillary spending at adjacent mom-and-pop businesses such as restaurants, gas stations, and convenience stores increases the per-visitor local economic impact.



Swimmers climb on an inflatable watertoy at the ACE Adventure Resort waterpark in West Virginia. (Photo courtesy ACE)

Seasonal employment surge, from lifeguards to food staff, provides critical jobs, especially for high school and college students.

Tax revenues generated (sales, lodging, recreation taxes) flow into county and state budgets, helping fund public services.

For every dollar spent at a water park, local vendors and employees receive wages, which are then reinvested in the community, amplifying its local economic impact. The combined effect of waterparks and other recreational destinations, such as state parks (which together generated over \$520 million in statewide economic activity in FY 23 and supported more than 5,250 jobs), is substantial.

Growth Potential: Summer Tourism Destinations

West Virginia is increasingly recognized as an outdoor tourism hub, thanks in large part to the elevation of the New River Gorge to national park status in 2020. That change has sparked interest in rafting, climbing, and hiking, all of which converge to support growth in complementary attractions, such as water parks.

If waterparks position themselves as regional anchors through expanded attractions, improved lodging partnerships, or combined adventure-stay packages, they could leverage rising visitor traffic all summer long. Seasonal lodging, campsites, local restaurants, and guided tours all benefit when guests plan multi-day itineraries.

Moreover, national waterpark studies show well-run outdoor waterparks can yield operating profit margins of 50% or more—outperforming conventional amusement parks in profitability metrics—even though absolute revenues may be smaller.

Key Opportunities & Challenges

Opportunities:

Expand marketing partnerships with tourism boards in regions like New River Gorge, Eastern Panhandle, and Appalachian outdoor hubs.

Package tickets with lodging providers or campsites. Offer multi-park visitors' passes or regional water recreation festivals to draw larger crowds.

Develop off-peak adult or group programs (e.g., corporate picnics, youth groups, early evening specials).

Challenges:

Weather sensitivity: Outdoor parks must operate with limited seasonal windows, typically Memorial Day to Labor Day. Inclement weather during peak weeks can sharply reduce revenue.

Labor constraints: Recruiting seasonal employees remains a statewide issue across parks, restaurants, and lodging sectors alike.

Infrastructure strain: Growth around key draw areas (e.g. New River Gorge/Fayetteville) has pushed up housing costs and im-

pacted roads, parking, and utilities.

Economic Outlook & Forecast

If West Virginia tourism continues its upward momentum, reaching \$6.3 billion in visitor spending by 2023, even modest growth in waterpark attendance could translate into millions of dollars in incremental economic activity annually. Every additional 50,000 visitors through park gates might generate \$2–3 million in local business spending and hundreds of seasonal jobs.

With tourism employment projected to reach 21,000 openings per year through 2030—many in recreation and hospitality—well-integrated seasonal attractions, such as waterparks, have strong potential to absorb and train the future workforce.

Although West Virginia's waterparks remain modest in scale compared to major resort counterparts, their economic and strategic potential is clear. They contribute directly to tourism, provide seasonal job opportunities, and support surrounding businesses. As West Virginia builds on its reputation as a top-tier destination for outdoor recreation in summer, waterparks—especially when strategically aligned with lodging, outdoor adventure, and regional tourism boards—could become significant catalysts for local revitalization and economic diversification.

Together, the growth of the tourism industry (projected to reach \$9 billion in impact by 2023) and broader community investments in parks and visitor infrastructure establish a strong foundation for West Virginia's aquatic attractions to thrive and contribute even more in the coming years.

The state of coal community protections 48 years after landmark mining law

By Kevin Zedack, *Appalachian Voices*

On Aug. 3, 1977, President Jimmy Carter — flanked by 200 coal community advocates from across the country — signed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act into law in the White House Rose Garden.

SMCRA's passage came after a six-year campaign driven by those same concerned citizens from Appalachia, the Midwest and Mountain West, and energized by the 1972 Buffalo Creek disaster in Logan County, West Virginia, where 125 people were killed by 130 million gallons of coal slurry that burst through an earthen retention dam. People were tired of coal companies leaving their messes behind, dumping deadly pollution into their communities and putting them at risk for catastrophic disasters.

Much has been written about President Carter since his passing at the end of 2024 — from his advocacy for clean energy solutions during the energy crisis of the 1970s to his support of Habitat for Humanity after leaving the White House — but one of his greatest accomplishments for the people of Appalachia, and coal communities across the country, was signing SMCRA into law.

Given the bill's anniversary this week, this is a good opportunity to discuss SMCRA's intent, where it's fallen short over the years and how the Trump administration is undermining SMCRA's protections by expanding coal mining and sacrificing the health and economic success of Appalachian communities for coal profits.



Aily Branch Mine pictured here in Buchanan County, Va. (Photo by Willie Dodson)

What's in SMCRA?

SMCRA established the legal framework through which all coal mining companies must operate in the United States, as well as the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement for administration of the new law. There are essentially five regulatory components to the law:

Environmental standards in SMCRA include requirements for coal mining operations to protect communities from issues like mine runoff polluting local water, dumping sediment into rivers, leaving unreclaimed mine lands with dangerous highwalls and otherwise abandoning unsafe facilities. Before the passage of SMCRA, there were no federal standards for steps a mine needs to take during operations to reduce its environmental impacts or standards for reclaiming mine lands after the mine closed. SMCRA instituted requirements to reduce environmental impacts of coal mining

during mine operations and after mining operations ceased.

Permitting requirements in SMCRA established federal oversight of mining operations from exploration through reclamation. Permit applications provide the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement with information about the proposed area's pre-mining environmental conditions and land use, how the mine will meet SMCRA environmental standards and how the land will be used after reclamation. OSMRE uses this information to assess whether or not the proposed mine will adequately protect the environment and local communities from hazardous mining activities. The proposed mine should only be issued a permit if coal companies can prove how they will minimize environmental harm from their operations.

Bonding requirements in SMCRA were intended to ensure that reclamation responsibilities

would be paid by coal companies, regardless of whether or not the company themselves were financially able to reclaim the mine site after stopping operations. Before the passage of SMCRA, many mines were fully abandoned by coal companies, leading to millions of acres of abandoned mine land across the country that are still being reclaimed today with a mix of industry and taxpayer funding. Notably, bonds secured by coal companies for reclamation are meant to be "funds of last resort." SMCRA directs coal companies to reclaim the land as mining activities proceed; when they complete stages of reclamation, they receive payment back from the bond. If a coal company is unable to complete reclamation activities as required by SMCRA, the bond funding is dispersed to the regulatory agency so that reclamation activities are paid for by the coal company and not by taxpayers.

Inspection and enforcement mechanisms were established in SMCRA to ensure coal companies are following the law. OSMRE was established as the federal office responsible for inspecting mining operations for environmental compliance (the Mine Safety and Health Administration is responsible for worker safety compliance), financial oversight of mine companies and issuing "notices of violation" that can levy fines or order mining to cease depending on the permit violation.

Land restrictions included in SMCRA list federal lands that are unsuitable for coal mining. SMCRA

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The state of coal community protections 48 years after landmark mining law

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preserves and protects some of our country's most cherished natural heritage sites by prohibiting coal mining on any lands in the National Park System, National Wilderness Preservation System, the Wild and Scenic Rivers System and in national forests, with few exceptions.

SMCRA also created a federal program to pay for the reclamation of previously abandoned mine lands by assessing a fee on coal mined after 1977. The intent of the Abandoned Mine Land Trust Fund was to ensure the costs of the coal industry on our land and water were paid by the industry, not taxpayers.

How has SMCRA fallen short of its promises?

As we reflect on the last 48 years since SMCRA's passage, we recognize a number of shortcomings in the law that groups like Appalachian Voices are fighting to resolve on behalf of our communities. For example, we know that:

As the coal industry continues to decline in profitability, more coal companies are unable to fulfill their reclamation obligations. The business case to hobble along and maintain operations — at least on paper — results in a number of actions that put our communities at risk, including indefinite idling of mines with minimal, if any, reclamation com-



A permanent chemical treatment line is attached to the deep mine's wet seal discharge pipe that drains to the headwaters of the South Fork Cherry River. (West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection)

pleted and bankruptcy proceedings that shed reclamation liabilities. The emergence of these “zombie mines” poses a significant threat to the economic future and environmental health of Appalachia, keeping more than 600,000 acres of land out of productive use for community-driven projects and potentially poisoning our land and water.

Current bond requirements are woefully inadequate to ensure financial responsibility of coal companies for reclamation. The state of Tennessee publishes an annual report on its reclamation liabilities as the state works to regain state oversight for mining from the federal government, even though the state has not produced any coal since 2022. The state's 2025 primacy report says

Tennessee's bonds are \$27 million short of addressing the reclamation needs of the state. That's a \$27 million bill for taxpayers because of administrative undervaluing of bonds or changes in the reclamation needs due to mining operations that were not reflected in the bond value over the lifetime of the mine. Across Appalachia, this is a \$3.7 to \$6 billion problem created by coal companies that leave taxpayers on the hook.

Declining coal revenues limit the funding being raised for the Abandoned Mine Land Trust Fund, limiting resources to address legacy pollution sites. Appalachian communities know all too well the sights of open mine portals, mine waste piles (gob, boney, slag, etc.), sheer cliffs from strip mining and orange streams from acid mine drainage. And while less coal mining already means less funding available for old mine cleanup, Congress also regularly reduces the fee amount in an attempt to support coal companies and shift responsibility for mine cleanup onto taxpayers. In 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provided \$11 billion of taxpayer funds for abandoned mine cleanup. According to OSMRE, this is the outstanding reclamation cost for sites across the country. However, advocates suggested the figure is likely closer to \$20 billion in 2020 due to inflation raising the cost of materials and labor, while the mine estimates are not updated — and these costs only continue to increase.

Though the rate of mining has slowed down, mining companies continue to seek new permits — including permits for the incredibly destructive practices of mountaintop removal and valley fill operations — and regulators continue to

grant these permits. After decades of very serious water contamination across countless communities and watersheds, continuing to grant such permits is indefensible. But in general, regulators do not account for the cumulative impacts or the past compliance of the permit applicant, and instead make their decisions based only on the claims made in the particular permit application being considered.

These issues with SMCRA are rooted in shortcomings in the law that coal companies have successfully exploited and lax enforcement by regulators. That's why Appalachian Voices worked with 51 other organizations to craft a legislative platform that would address these issues by ensuring coal companies clean up their own messes and mining communities are protected from pollution and other risks. We continue to work with congressional leaders to introduce solutions that will help SMCRA live up to the ideals of those 200 grassroots leaders who joined President Carter in the White House Rose Garden in 1977.

What is the Trump administration doing to support coal communities?

At the same time as we work on improving SMCRA, the Trump administration is looking to expand coal mining as a false solution for Appalachian communities' economic challenges under the political framing of a “national energy emergency.” While the administration claims to be acting in the best interests of coal communities, we have already seen many examples of the administration disregarding community and worker protections for the profit of the coal companies. So

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The state of coal community protections 48 years after landmark mining law

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far this year, Congress and the administration have:

Designated metallurgical coal, a mineral used in traditional methods to make steel, as a critical mineral and approved a new 2.5% tax credit for its production, all while repealing communities' access to clean energy tax credits that were creating a new, cleaner economic vision for Appalachia. The majority of metallurgical coal currently produced in the United States is shipped overseas to countries such as India and China, proving we don't have a domestic shortage of the material. Additionally, between U.S. tariffs and steel-making technology shifting away from using metallurgical coal altogether, current market conditions do not favor a self-sustaining industry.

Moved to open Appalachia's public lands to coal mining while also allowing for the use of U.S. Forest Service roads for hauling coal through the Monongahela National Forest in Southern West Virginia.

Expedited mine permit review and moved to limit community input on the scope and impacts of energy projects, regardless of concerns about community protections.

Eliminated positions with OSMRE that provide critical oversight of mining operations, coal

company financial obligations and reclamation progress.

Shuttered federal offices engaged in monitoring and preventing black lung disease among coal miners, a debilitating occupational hazard on the rise in Appalachia. Following intense advocacy from community members, public interest organizations and Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., and Rep. Riley Moore, R-W.Va., the Department of Health and Human Services reinstated employees set for termination at the National Institutes of Occupational Safety and Health working on monitoring black lung disease in coal miners. However, much is still unknown about the future of federal research on preventing black lung disease.

Delayed implementation of a new silica dust standard meant to protect coal miners from dying from the worst form of black lung disease caused by silica dust.

Revoked community grants being used for economic development projects in the coalfields of Southwest Virginia.

Our communities have become resilient to efforts by D.C. politicians to sell us out for campaign contributions. While we work to improve SMCRA and defend our hard-fought victories against an administration and Congress seeking profits for their friends over good jobs in healthy communities, we continue to be inspired by our neighbors to do the hard work and show up for each other. We may be 48 years after the passage of SMCRA, but our mission to protect our mountains remains steadfast, and we will stay in the fight until we secure the future we, and generations of local advocates, know our communities deserve.

154 organizations call on Congress to strengthen and permanently protect America's roadless areas

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy joined over 150 conservation organizations from across the country in submitting a letter to Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to go above and beyond preserving the current Roadless Rule and instead enact strong, loophole-free, permanent protections for the nation's inventoried roadless areas. The USDA announced on June 23, 2025 that the Roadless Rule would be rescinded.

The Fortify Roadless Protections letter — drafted by Eco Advocates NW, Eco-Integrity Alliance, John Muir Project, and Western Watersheds Project — calls for legislation that would end all commercial logging, road construction, livestock grazing, and other extractive activities within these irreplaceable landscapes. Conservation groups are offering a legislative solution to strengthen protections in Congress.

"Our roadless lands are the best of what is left of America's wide open spaces — generally undeveloped and wild," said Adam Bronstein, Oregon director of Western Watersheds Project. "Yet in many places, they are subjected to livestock grazing, road building, logging, and mining. The Roadless Rule was an important first step but we must seek bulletproof and durable solutions. Like many admin-

istrative actions, we're learning that maintaining the status quo leaves us vulnerable."

"As crucial as it is to stop the roll back of the existing Roadless Rule, right now 18,500 acres of supposedly protected Colorado Roadless Areas are on the chopping block in what appears to be the largest logging project in state history," said Josh Schlossberg, Colorado Advocate for Eco-Integrity Alliance. "Until we close such massive loopholes, these precious ecosystems will remain under constant threat."

Inventoried roadless areas encompass 58.2 million acres of national forest lands across the United States. "Roadless areas are vital connectors that link wilderness, parks, and habitats, forming a network essential for wildlife movement and ecosystem resilience. Yet loopholes continue to allow harmful activities that break these connections, threatening the long-term survival of these landscapes and the communities depending on them," said Shannon Wilson of Eco Advocates NW. Loopholes in the current 2001 Roadless Rule — and in separate state rules in Colorado and Idaho — allow destructive activities under the guise of "forest health" or wildfire mitigation.

The coalition's letter outlines specific policy improvements, including:

- Closing loopholes that permit logging and road-building in the name of wildfire risk reduction, despite scientific evidence showing such activities do not protect communities.
- Prohibiting commercial

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A Letter to the Editor

*Submitted by Janice DePollo Lantz,
Greensburg, PA*

I have a soft spot of Tucker County, my great-grandfather came here from Italy to work in the coal mines in the late 1800's. He liked it so well he moved his wife and family across the Atlantic Ocean to live here. He built a successful business, DePollo's on Front Street in Thomas and contributed much to the area. He was a good neighbor to many, ensuring local residents had groceries when times were tough.

His legacy is important to me, that is why I feel the people of Thomas and Davis are getting a raw deal with the Ridgeline Power Plant planned for their doorstep. The WV Department of Environmental Protection is letting the air quality permit sail through even though it is filled with redacted trade secrets. They've taken a narrow line on the parameters of the permit when there is little proof that Ridgeline should be considered a synthetic minor source of emissions. In fact, all indicators say otherwise.

Local government officials who might normally be a voice of reason in this situation, were cut out of the equation early on by the WV Power Generation and Consumption Act (HB-2014). Unfortunately, they will be the ones to contend with any problems created by having the plant in proximity to their communities.

If all that hasn't created enough ill will, Governor Patrick Morrissey recently unveiled his "WV Grows" initiative to create jobs and cut the red tape around permitting so West



Tucker County residents gather to organize in opposition to Fundamental Data's proposed power plant and data center. (Photo by Tucker United)

Virginia can be an easy reach for businesses looking to locate here. That explains a lot and I won't be surprised if Ridgeline developer Fundamental Data even qualifies for a stipend from the governor's WV Jobs initiative.

I am concerned because I worked for Allegheny Energy for most of my career, and I know the positives and negatives of having a power plant in a community. Allegheny no longer exists, but I built and operated a number of combustion turbine facilities similar to Ridgeline. Allegheny knew its busi-

ness well and was a conscientious plant operator. But despite its skills and good intentions, there were still unintended consequences of operating these facilities.

One facility, a 550-MW combined-cycle combustion turbine plant like Ridgeline, was required by regulators to have the stack extended hundreds of feet to make sure the emissions dispersed properly. Another site had a noise vibration issue that rattled doors, windows and foundations in a ten-mile radius. Still another plant trapped emissions during temperature inver-

sions because it was in a low-lying area surrounded by mountains.

Yes there were a lot of construction jobs with these projects, but once built, the largest had less than 50 full-time employees because operations were computerized. The small ones had a roving maintenance crew as they could be started remotely.

Whenever there were problems, Allegheny worked hard to be a good neighbor. The company employed local government liaisons and had community boards that engaged with local and state leaders to find solutions.

There is so little information available about the Ridgeline project and fundamental Data, it's hard to know if they will be a good neighbor or not. So far, the developer has refused to meet with anyone from the local community. No other officials, save the DEP employees who sat through a five-hour public meeting and the Mayor of Davis, have participated either. Residents are entitled to more. All the stakeholders need to come together to make a project like this work.

The residents of Thomas and Davis deserve to know who they are getting as a neighbor now and not wait until after Fundamental Data has its air permit in hand. By then it is too late. Such close-knit communities should not have a project like this forced upon them without so much as a handshake. State officials should find Ridgeline another location if they want it so badly.

This letter to the editor was originally published in The Parsons Advocate.

Board highlights from August 2025

By John McFerrin, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

The July 2026 board meeting of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy was a combination of saying hello to our new friend and goodbye to an old friend. In addition to all the hellos and goodbyes, we did the usual business stuff and were inspired to hear reports of all that we are involved in.

The new friend is Christa Clasgens, the Conservancy’s new membership and outreach director. She takes the position that Crys Bauer previously held. As Crys did, she will manage our membership, mailing list as well as send out merchandise people order from our online store. In addition, she will help us with outreach. She had only been on the job for a couple of days so

she was still getting her feet on the ground, etc.

The old friend is Helen McGinnis. She has been a long time Conservancy member and a true advocate for wilderness, going back several decades. She was instrumental in the designation of Dolly Sods and Otter Creek Wilderness Areas. She is now moving to Massachusetts to be near family; she leaves behind a treasure trove of records, mementos, photos and reports from her years of advocacy. The Board passed a resolution expressing our appreciation. Truth be told, members of the Conservancy—especially the old timers—appreciate her more than any resolution could express.

We had the plodding but necessary stuff. Treasurer George Hack reported that we are doing well fi-

nancially. Revenue from memberships is up, as is revenue from the fund appeal. We have to have an audit so we are in the process of doing that. Larry Thomas keeps an eye on our savings accounts so he reported on how we were doing.

This is where the inspiration started. Program Director Olivia Miller reported on what she had been doing. As part of the Alliance for Appalachia, she led our delegation to meet with and educate representatives in Washington about the data center buildout, the water crisis in southern West Virginia, cuts to Environmental Protection Agency grant funding, and public lands protections. She worked in opposition to a proposal in the federal budget reconciliation bill that would have resulted in the sale of public land. Those efforts were successful. She

has worked on the opposition to Corridor H, especially the Wardensville section. She has helped Tucker United with opposition to the data center. We are joining with Appalachian Voices, the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance, and others to launch a new coalition campaign to defend the Monongahela National Forest from coal mining.

Luanne McGovern reported on efforts in response to Fundamental Data’s proposal to build a power plant and data center in Tucker County. There are two Facebook pages to provide information. There is a dispute over the application for an Air Quality permit for the natural gas power plant. The application was heavily redacted, making commenting difficult. The Conservancy has

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Working to Keep West Virginia Wild and Wonderful
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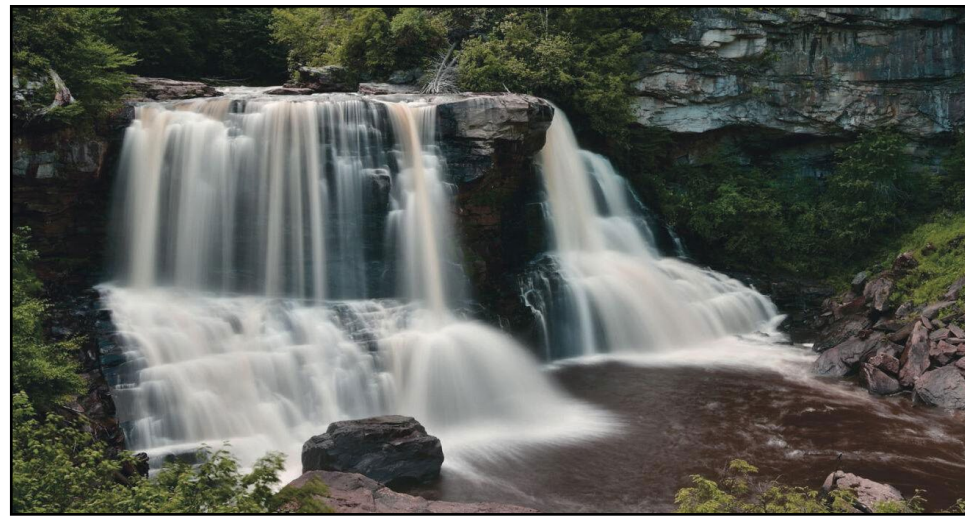
The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's 2025 Fall Review: "Environmentalism in a Changing World"

As Appalachia faces escalating environmental threats—from policy rollbacks and extreme weather to industrial development and habitat loss—this fall, conservationists, advocates, and concerned citizens will gather in the heart of Tucker County for a critical weekend of reflection, strategy and action.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's annual Fall Review returns to Blackwater Falls State Park the weekend of Oct. 31–Nov. 2, convening some of the region's most trusted voices to examine how we can defend Appalachia's lands, waters, and communities in the face of profound change.

With political landscapes shifting and climate impacts intensifying, the Fall Review will explore how we respond—through policy, advocacy, and grassroots action—to ensure a just and resilient future for the Mountain State and beyond.

We'll be announcing a very special keynote speaker soon, but in the meantime, panel sessions will feature environmental leaders, at-



Lookout at Blackwater Falls State Park. (Photo by West Virginia Department of Tourism)

torneys, scientists, and advocates, including:

Federal Policy and Appalachia – a look at national policies shaping the region's future—from climate legislation to conservation funding with experts from local, regional and national environmental organizations.

West Virginia's Legislative Landscape – an insider's view of the most pressing state-level policy battles, featuring voices from the WV Rivers Coalition, the West Virginia

Environmental Council, and other key advocates.

Citizen Advocacy 101 – a hands-on session to empower attendees to speak up and organize effectively in their communities.

Looking Back, Moving Forward – a tribute and knowledge-sharing panel with veteran environmental champions, offering lessons from past struggles and hopes for the future.

Outdoor Adventures and Connection – it wouldn't be a WVHC

event without going outside. Attendees can look forward to:

- A guided hike on Saturday
- A nighttime nature walk and sound-listening session
- A peaceful Sunday birding excursion

Why It Matters – from defending public lands to confronting polluting development and climate-driven disasters, Appalachia needs engaged citizens now more than ever.

This year's Fall Review isn't just a conference—it's a call to action. Whether you're a seasoned advocate or new to the movement, this gathering offers the knowledge, tools, and relationships to make a difference.

Registration opens soon. Don't miss this opportunity to learn, connect, and help shape the next chapter of West Virginia's environmental movement.

This event was made possible with the generous support of the American Water Charitable Foundation.

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 for years to come.

Your thoughtful planning now will allow us to continue our work to protect wilderness, wildlife, clean air and water and our way of life in the mountains. Contact crys.bauer@wvhighlands.org

Are you on our email list?

Signing up to receive emails from the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is your gateway to staying actively engaged in conservation efforts and volunteer opportunities in West Virginia.



Staying informed with our action alerts will empower you to advocate for environmental policies that matter the most. **Sign up today at bit.ly/WVHCemailsSignup**

Board highlights from August 2025

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joined with Appalachian Mountain Advocates, Friends of Blackwater, and the Sierra Club in efforts to get the information that was redacted.

The permit is likely to be issued soon. One major bone of contention is that it will be permitted as a “minor source”, a lesser category that would be subject to different standards than would a “major source.”

We noted that the data center proposed for Tucker County is not the only one proposed for West Virginia. There are two proposed for Mingo County and another for Mason County. They are expected to be big emitters and pose threats to public health similar to the one proposed for Tucker County. There was considerable sentiment expressed for our standing in solidarity with those who oppose the data centers in Mingo and Mason counties. In spite of this, we didn’t have enough information to take action. Instead, we are going to gather more information and address this later.

Andrew Young gave the report of the Extractive Industries Committee. There is a lot going on. Since it is coal mining, he is always fighting uphill. There is a dispute with South Fork Coal Company over its using



a road through the Monongahela National Forest as a haul road. In mid-July the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement approved that use of the haul road. We are exploring the possibility of an appeal of that decision. There is also ongoing litigation over the use of a National Forest road as a coal haul road and the approval of that.

Making all of this more complicated is that South Fork Coal Company has filed for bankruptcy. Normally such a filing would automatically stop all actions but Andrew and co-counsel managed to persuade the bankruptcy court to allow our actions to proceed.

As if this was not enough to keep the committee busy, they are working with a national working group on mining issues, raising awareness through tabling events, and planning for a skills and training camp in the spring.

Dave Johnston reported that

the Dolly Sods Stewards are going great guns. The core of what they do is the Trailhead Stewards program. Although they cannot cover every trailhead all the time, the trailheads continue to be staffed regularly. They recognized eleven people who had volunteered for at least forty hours in 2024.

The Backcountry Stewards—begun last fall—continue to take the leave no trace message away from the trailheads and into the backcountry. The Crosscut Saw and Trail Maintenance Teams continue to be active. The Solitude Monitoring program is beginning a new three year cycle. They collect data in different seasons each year. Currently, they are collecting data for the summer season.

Planning for the Fall Review, scheduled for October 31-November 2, is racing forward. The theme will be how we are changing, with the possibility of sessions on how state and federal laws are changing. There will be a banquet.

Hugh Rogers reported on the Highways Committee. Right now, all the action is in the Wardensville section. There is a decision expected on August 15, 2025, so all of the Department of Highways’ energy and enthusiasm is channeled in that direction. On the Parsons to Davis section, the decision on the Environmental Impact Statement is now not expected to come out until August 2026. This will give the Department of Highways plenty of time to thoroughly study the northern alternative.

154 organizations call on Congress to strengthen and permanently protect America’s roadless areas

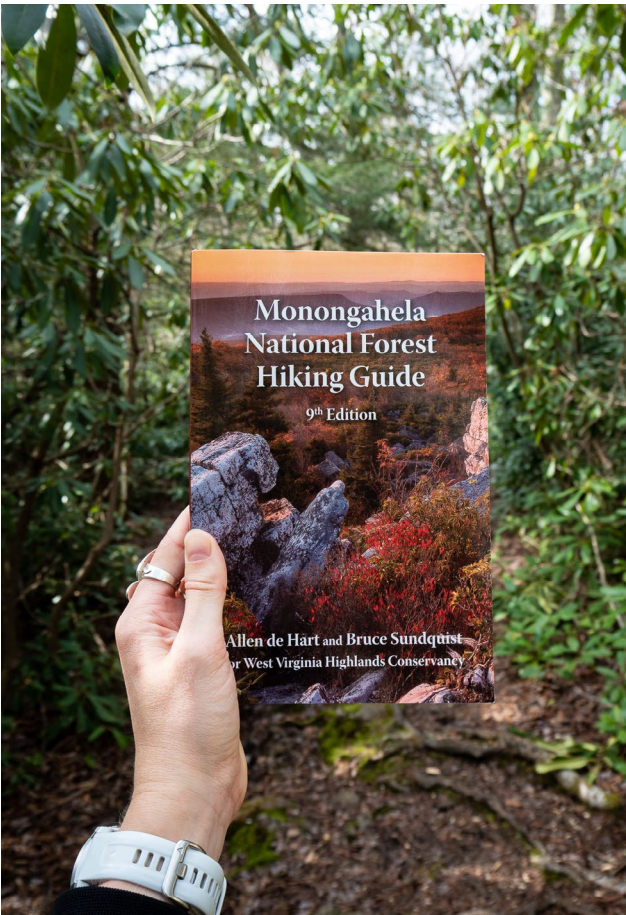
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grazing and motorized recreation to protect watersheds, soils, wildlife, and cultural resources.

- Strengthening NEPA review to ensure full public transparency and environmental safeguards.
- Updating roadless inventories to include qualifying areas identified since 2001.

“We need more wild, intact ecosystems—vibrant landscapes that include everything from bustling post-fire snag forests to ancient old growth,” said Jennifer Mamola of the John Muir Project. “Nature has governed itself for eons and must continue to do so if we’re to protect biodiversity, store carbon, and sustain air and clean water. Humans shouldn’t have the final say over these irreplaceable lands—we need to pass permanent protections that respect and safeguard the natural balance that sustains us all.”

Hit the trails with our 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.

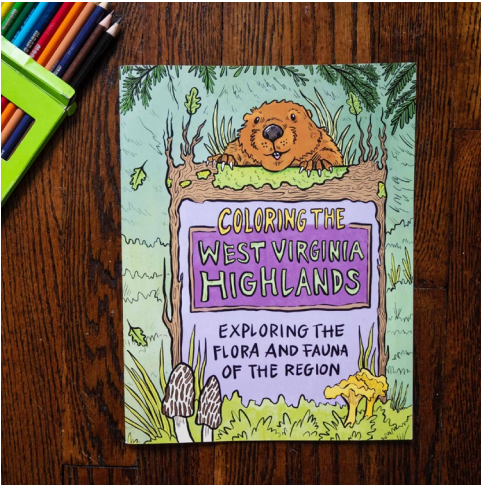
The Monongahela National Forest has long been known as a ‘Special Place.’ The hiking, backpacking, and cross-country skiing opportunities it provides are among the best in the eastern U.S. New wilderness and backcountry trails have been added to the outstanding areas we have appreciated for decades – 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 \$21.95 plus \$5.38 shipping to: West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, P.O. Box 306, Charleston, WV 25321 OR order from our website at www.wvhighlands.org

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