



# *The Highlands Voice*

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## Conservation and community drive busy spring for WVHC

By Jordan Howes, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

The past several months have been full of momentum, connection and exciting new opportunities for the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy as we continue building relationships across the Mountain State and expanding awareness of our work to protect West Virginia's treasured public lands, forests, rivers and wilderness areas. From community outreach events and campus engagement to creative collaborations and the release of a long-awaited documentary film, this spring has reminded us just how powerful grass-roots conservation can be when people come together around a shared love of place.

One of the season's first major



Attendees with their WVHC stickers at a recent Green Drinks in Morgantown, WV. (Photo by Christa Clasgens)

outreach opportunities came during Earth Day on the Green at West Virginia University's Mountainlair, where WVHC staff spent the day connecting with students and community members passionate about sustainability, outdoor recreation and environmental advocacy. The

event provided an energizing opportunity to introduce students to the Conservancy's work while discussing everything from public lands protection and trail stewardship to ways young people can become involved in conservation efforts throughout the state. The enthusi-

asm and curiosity we encountered throughout the day served as a reminder that the next generation of environmental advocates is already eager to engage and make a difference.

That same spirit of connection continued at Cheat Fest, where the Conservancy once again joined one of West Virginia's most beloved celebrations of music, rivers and outdoor culture. Set against the backdrop of the beautiful Cheat River watershed, the festival brought together paddlers, hikers, campers, conservationists and music lovers from across the region. Throughout the weekend, WVHC and Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards had the opportunity to speak with countless

*Continued on page 2*

### What's inside:

Conservation and community with WVHC	2	Foraging in May	5	Save the Date: Fall Review 2026	9
Go North Alliance newsletter	3	Leg. session lacked environmental action	6	Become a member	9
Store catalog	4	Coal River Mountain mine permit blocked	7	Groups sue to stop Corridor H	10
Groups sue Amsted Mine	5	Christa's Catch	8	Buy the Mon. Forest Hiking Guide	11

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## Conservation and community drive busy spring for WVHC

*Continued from page 1*

attendees about our ongoing advocacy work, wilderness preservation efforts and the importance of protecting the landscapes and waterways that make West Virginia such a special place to call home. Conversations at events like Cheat Fest are invaluable because they allow us not only to share our mission but also to hear directly from community members who care deeply about the future of Appalachia's public lands and natural resources.

As outreach efforts have continued to grow, so too has the desire to create more opportunities for local environmental advocates and community members to gather informally and build lasting connections. That desire helped spark the return of Green Drinks in Morgantown, which takes place monthly at Apothecary Ale House. The revived gathering has already become a welcoming space for students, professionals, outdoor enthusiasts, nonprofit leaders and curious community members to come together over conversation and shared concern for West Virginia's environmental future. The response so far has been incredibly encouraging and we are excited to continue growing the event in the months ahead.

In addition to community events, WVHC has also been working on several creative projects that



Q&A with Clara Haizlett and Chrsita Clasgens during the Morgantown, WV screening of *Dolly Sods* and the *Legacy of Helen McGinnis* (Photo by Olivia Miller)

celebrate the beauty and ecological significance of West Virginia's wild landscapes. We are currently running a T-shirt sale through our website and are especially excited to soon sell a brand-new design created by local artist Harris Wright honoring the iconic Dolly Sods Wilderness. The design captures the spirit and rugged beauty of one of the state's most beloved wilderness areas while helping support the Conservancy's ongoing advocacy and outreach work. Projects like these allow supporters to celebrate the places they love while directly contributing to efforts to protect them.

At the same time, the Conservancy is also proud to be offering a limited-edition fundraiser print featuring original artwork by Carly Thaw in celebration of the upcoming release of *Ecology and Restoration of Red Spruce Ecosystems* of the Central and Southern Appalachians. The fundraiser highlights the ecological importance of red

spruce ecosystems, which provide critical habitat, safeguard headwater streams and represent some of Appalachia's most unique and vulnerable high-elevation environments. Every purchase helps support ongoing restoration and conservation efforts focused on these remarkable forests, giving supporters an opportunity to contribute directly to the preservation of one of the region's defining ecosystems while also taking home a beautiful piece of original artwork.

Perhaps most exciting of all, this season also marked the official release of *Dolly Sods* and the *Legacy of Helen McGinnis*, the long-anticipated documentary film produced by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and directed by Clara Haizlett. The film explores the history and enduring importance of Dolly Sods Wilderness through the story of pioneering conservation advocate Helen McGinnis, whose dedication played a vital role in protecting the area for future genera-

tions. After months of anticipation, the documentary is now available on WVHC's social media platforms and YouTube, allowing viewers across the region and beyond to experience the story of one of West Virginia's most treasured landscapes and the people who fought to preserve it.

Taken together, these events, partnerships and projects reflect a season of tremendous energy and optimism for the Conservancy. Whether through conversations at festivals and campus events, community gatherings in Morgantown, collaborations with local artists, restoration fundraising efforts or storytelling through film, each initiative strengthens our collective commitment to protecting West Virginia's natural heritage. As we move forward into the rest of the year, WVHC remains deeply grateful for the growing community of supporters, advocates, artists, students and volunteers who continue standing with us in defense of the wild and wonderful places that define our state.

For those looking to become more involved in protecting West Virginia's public lands, forests and waterways, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy offers numerous opportunities to engage through advocacy, volunteer work, events and community outreach efforts. Supporting the Conservancy through membership also helps sustain ongoing conservation initiatives, educational programming and wilderness protection efforts across the state. More information about membership, upcoming events and ways to support WVHC's mission can be found at <https://www.wvhighlands.org/membershiprenewals/>.

# Go North newsletter: Go North in Charleston and Thomas, West Virginia

By Go North Alliance



The Go North Alliance has been busy taking the Go North message to the governor and to the citizens of Tucker County.

On April 1, 2026, a group of Go North supporters drove across the state to Charleston to deliver 3000 petitions to Governor Morrisey! Judy, Matt, and Sandra all passionately spoke to the press about the advantages of a northern alternative for Corridor H, and their words and images were broadcast on TV, social media, and in written publications.

One particularly great moment that was captured by the news was Matt wheeling six boxes containing 3,000 signed petitions into the reception room for the Governor (photo below).

Then, on April 7, 2026, the Go North Alliance held two public information meetings at the senior center in Thomas. It was a chance to get informed, ask questions, and help shape a better path forward...



Go North supporters gathered in Charleston, WV. (Photos provided by Loki Kern)

one that puts our communities and the Blackwater Canyon first.

Hugh Rogers explained the project's long-winded history, highlighting some of the bumps along the way. Hugh is a member of Corridor H Alternatives and a Board Member of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. He's been fighting for the best route for Corridor H for the past 30 years and worked on the original Settlement Agreement, which was finalized in 2000.

It's all about trails... Matt Marcus gave a great talk on our recreational economy, breaking down why trails are the biggest reason people come here: biking, hiking, fishing, hunting, kayaking, and skiing all depend on them. Our mountaintop is loaded with trails - some that cross the county, some that cross states, some that cross the country - all of which come together here on top of our mountain. The least damaging route for our trail system is the Northern Route for Corridor H.

The Go North Alliance is planning another community informational event sometime in May. Stay tuned for more details.

## 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
- I Love Mountains Toddler T-Shirts. Available in 18-months, 2T, 3T, 4T, 5/6: \$20.00
- Square Black Bandana: \$5.00

Please include \$6.25 shipping for Apparel items

### Drinkware

- WVHC Hydro Flask 20 oz. All Around Tumbler (Birch, Indigo, Black): \$35.00 + \$5.50 shipping
- WVHC Hydro Flask 21 oz. Standard Mouth Flex Cap Water Bottle (Pacific, Mesa, Indigo): \$45.00 + \$5.50 shipping

### Stickers

- I Love Mountains Bumper Sticker: \$3.00 for one, \$12.00 for 20

### 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](http://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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## West Virginia groups sue Amsted Graphite over alleged Clean Water Act violations

By West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and West Virginia Rivers Coalition

West Virginia Rivers Coalition and the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy filed a federal lawsuit on April 22, 2026, against Amsted Graphite Materials LLC, alleging repeated Clean Water Act violations at the company's graphite manufacturing facility in Anmoore.

The complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of West Virginia, seeks a court order requiring Amsted to comply with its water pollution permit, stop further violations and pay appropriate civil penalties.

"Clean water laws only work if they're followed and enforced. Our review of Amsted's own monitoring reports shows a pattern of violations that put Anmoore Run and downstream communities at risk. That's why we are taking legal action to ensure this company stays within its permit, reduces pollution, and protects our waterways and West Virginians," said Jennie Smith, Executive Director of West Virginia Rivers Coalition.

According to the complaint, Amsted discharges wastewater, stormwater runoff and groundwater into Anmoore Run and an unnamed



Scenic view on the West Fork River.  
(Photo by Christa Clasgens)

tributary of Anmoore Run, which flow into Elk Creek, the West Fork River and the Monongahela River. The groups allege Amsted has violated permit limits for pollutants including lead, copper, zinc, chlorine, total suspended solids, toxicity and several polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, known as PAHs.

"West Virginians have a right to clean water, and companies that discharge into our streams have a responsibility to follow the law," said Olivia Miller, interim executive director of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. "This case is about protecting Anmoore Run, Elk Creek, the West Fork River and the communities and people downstream who rely on healthy waterways."

The lawsuit states Amsted's permit required the company to complete necessary upgrades and meet final effluent limits for several pollutants. The complaint alleges Amsted has continued to report violations in monthly discharge monitoring reports.

## Off the beaten path: Foraging in May

By Cindy Berdine, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

May in the spring is a beautiful month to collect wild edibles from the woods. It is always fun to create your own smorgasbord from the harvest of your wild bounty and marvel at the nutritious and healthy spread you discover.

May is the peak month for foraging offering a diverse compilation of wild edible plants. Wild foods are found at different times throughout the year depending on location and sometimes elevation. From late March through May your target edibles may include violets, watercress, dandelion greens, ramps and morel mushrooms, which typically peak in April.

In summer, usually from late June through August, many focus mainly on berries. Late summer and early fall, pawpaws are a delicacy; they are also West Virginia's largest native fruit. These are just some of the tasty morsels you may find during your excursions. The benefits of foraging provide sustainable organic food sources without any pesticides. Foraging also fosters self-sufficiency and improves mental well-being. It offers the opportunity to engage in physical activity and enhance health through hiking, bending, searching, and learning. Spending time in nature can also reduce stress, improve memory and strengthen your connection to the environment by engaging in traditional Appalachian cooking and maybe discovering a little medi-

nal folklore along the way.

It sure is fun to go out in the woods and spy new things. When I was a little girl, my brother and sister often played "I Spy" with me when Grandma visited. Grandma would always start by saying, "I spy something green or maybe I spy something brown"; it was almost always nature-related, usually ending up being a robin, a daisy, or a tree. That game continued as we got older and Dad would play it with us on car trips that almost always pertained to nature. As we grew older, the identified objects became more specific and scientific ending in a *Turdus migratorius*, *Chrysanthemum lucantheum*, or a specific tree like Hemlock, Sugar Maple or a *Liriodendron tulipifera*. This leads me to a very important point. As fun as it is to forage in nature, there are some very important rules of etiquette you should always follow.

Know the difference between a look alike and the real thing, if you cannot 110% identify it, leave it alone! Remember in West Virginia it is illegal to pick, cut, or remove wildflowers, plants, shrubs, or trees within 100 yards of a public road including highways without written permission from the landowner. Foraging is typically prohibited in National Parks, Forests or Protected Areas. Picking flowers kills the plant's ability to reproduce, harming the ecosystem and limiting enjoyment for others. Forage responsibly, Never dig up roots, never take more than 1 plant for every 20, Do not over harvest, use scissors or a knife rather than pulling by the roots. Always avoid endangered species.

Remember, you are never too old to play games and walk in the woods.

# WV lawmakers did little to nothing for environmental protections during legislative session

By *Quenton King, West Virginia Watch*

This year was not the “start of a different path” that I had hoped for the West Virginia Legislature.

In January, I wrote that environmental advocacy organizations in West Virginia came together to write a blueprint for environmental policy. It contains concrete steps that the Legislature, governor or state agencies could take to begin addressing real problems facing West Virginians.

As I said then, West Virginians have been vocal about their frustrations regarding high energy bills, unsafe water, lack of flood protections and the fact that our lawmakers seem intent on sacrificing our communities at the altar of almighty data centers.

We’re not alone in feeling that frustration. Many in the country are fed up with seeing their electric, gas and water bills continuing to rise. And they’re angry that corporations continue to get away with polluting our air and water because state and federal regulators turn a blind eye.

With all of that in mind, this year West Virginia legislators had the chance to pick up the pieces that the Trump administration is dropping as it cuts environmental protections.

So what did we get?

Empty promises. After ramming the data center bill through in 2025, West Virginians made their voices loud and clear. They want a say when it comes to development in their communities. Some law-



West Virginia State Captol Building in Charleston, WV. (Photo by Olivia Miller)

makers have expressed some range of remorse or second thoughts. Even Senate President Randy Smith told his district that some changes are in order and that it was hard to vote against the governor’s bill last.

But he made no such moves. The law creating the high impact microgrid and data center program sits unchanged. Local control is still nonexistent. Gigantic natural gas plants and diesel generators are coming for your children’s air and the data centers are coming for your grandchildren’s water.

We’ve seen several lawmakers happily post on social media about selling their communities out for data centers. I encourage you to remember their names.

While this unfolds, don’t expect to see your utility bills decrease anytime soon, either. The West Vir-

ginia Senate spent precious committee and floor time debating and amending bills to force Appalachian Power and First Energy to fire coal plants even when it wouldn’t be cost effective to do so. Even Public Service Commission Chair Charlotte Lane advised against a bill. Senators didn’t listen.

That bill, which would effectively force power plants to burn coal no matter what, didn’t pass. However, lawmakers didn’t spend much time considering proactive ways to reduce power bills. Other states — even Texas — are deploying utility-scale solar and wind energy to provide cheap power quickly. Our state doesn’t seem to want to include renewable energy in our future, even though it is part of the rest of the country’s future. In legislation to essentially codify the governor’s

50 gigawatt by 2050 plan, lawmakers removed references to energy efficiency and renewable energy.

It seems like every year we revive the same old aboveground storage tank dance between environmental advocates and the oil and gas industry. In 2014, lawmakers placed registration and inspection requirements on tanks that store toxic chemicals following the chemical spill that left 300,000 West Virginians without water. Since then, the oil and gas industry and their lawmakers have chipped away at the requirements, removing tank after tank from required inspections.

This year, industry and lawmakers engaged in a blatant smear and misinformation campaign. That misinformation included passing out pamphlets to lawmakers with incorrect information on the contents of some tanks, as well as claiming that it’s “mom and pop” shops that are under assault. Most of the tanks are owned by large, regional producers. Ultimately their bill was reduced in scope, but we all know they will try again.

It was another year in which the worst didn’t happen, but we must ask for more than crumbs. I look at my colleagues in other states that are securing policy wins that will create meaningful improvements in people’s lives. There is another world that we can seize. That includes cleaner air, stable water infrastructure, protecting democratic norms, lower energy bills and more. But we have to demand more from our lawmakers to get to that world.

# Judge blocks Clean Water Act permit for mountaintop removal mine on Coal River Mountain

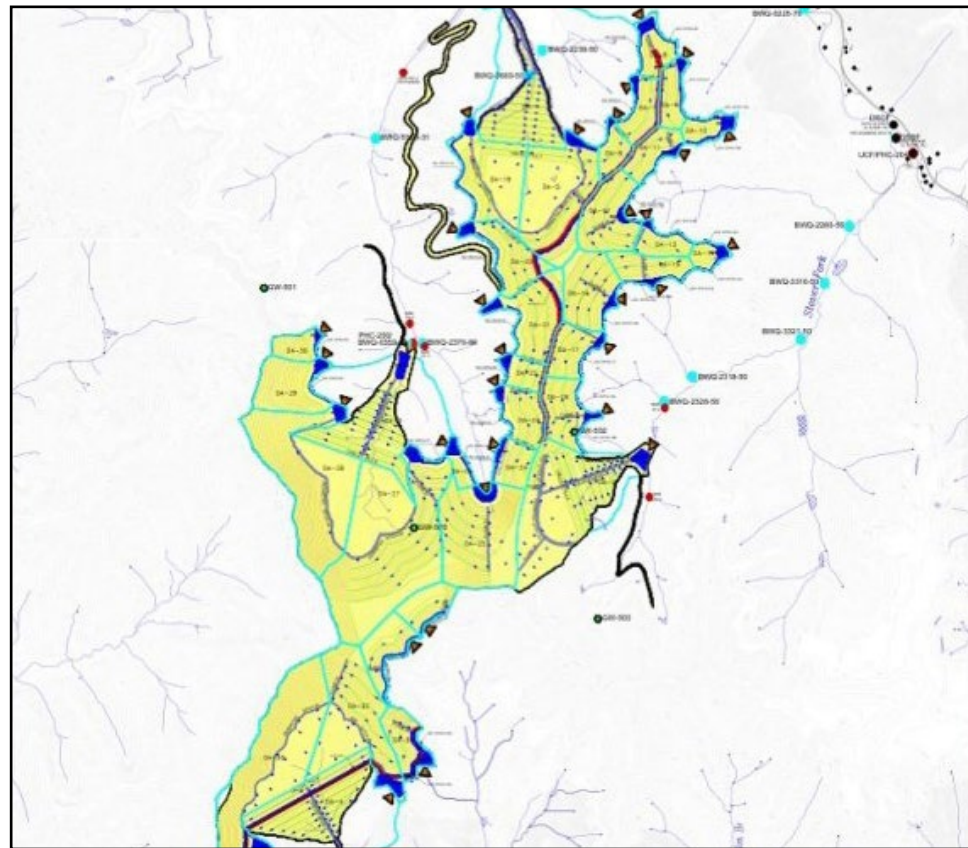
By Sierra Club of West Virginia

On April 21, 2026, a judge in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia ruled in favor of Coal River Mountain Watch, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Appalachian Voices, and Sierra Club, blocking the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision to grant a Clean Water Act permit for valley fills associated with the Turkeyfoot Surface Mine.

Mountaintop removal mining involves blowing up the tops of mountains to extract coal and dumping waste, dirt, and rocks – called mining spoil – into adjacent valleys and streams. The waterways where spoil is buried are called valley fills. Lawyers from Appalachian Mountain Advocates, representing the advocacy groups, successfully argued that – despite the Army Corps' past assurances – there is significant evidence of water quality standards violations and degradation of aquatic communities surrounding valley fills. The court held that the Corps did not adequately consider that evidence.

The Army Corps of Engineers previously authorized a Clean Water Act permit for four valley fills near the Alpha Metallurgical Resources' 1,086-acre Turkeyfoot Surface Mine on Coal River Mountain in 2023. The authorization allowed the mining company to dump mining spoil into more than 3.5 miles of local streams. The advocacy groups sued to challenge the project's Clean Water Act permit in February 2025.

Decades of staunch grassroots



Photos of Coal River Mountain and the affected areas of mountaintop removal from the Turkeyfoot Mine. (Photos provided by Coal River Mountain Watch)

organizing and other successful legal fights by affected communities, as well as other factors, have resulted in less frequent mountaintop removal mining proposals. Despite the consequences, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to issue Clean Water Act permits for

large-scale surface mines with numerous valley fills, turning a blind eye to the well-documented negative effects on nearby communities and the environment.

“Our grandchildren deserve better than having their neighborhood mountains and streams

blasted, buried, and polluted,” said Debbie Jarrell, Co-Director of Coal River Mountain Watch. “These valley fills will pollute the receiving streams for decades, just as every valley fill before them has done. We don’t have the luxury of waiting a generation to hope it gets better.”

“The court has ruled in a common-sense way to protect West Virginia’s most valuable natural resource, water,” said Bill Price, Sierra Club West Virginia Chapter Chair. “Clean water is essential for good health, sustainable communities, and economic vitality. Right now, our state is experiencing a water crisis, with many families unable to access clean, usable water for daily living. It is critical that we invest in communities and protect our families from the harm caused by the continued use of valley fills.”

“I’ve spent a lot of time in the communities around this mine in the course of my life, and I know quite a few people that live right there,” said Mike Whitten, a retired coal and railroad worker from nearby Peytona, West Virginia, who volunteers regularly with conservation groups. “The people around here hunt, fish, gather mushrooms, pick berries.... everybody enjoys getting out and walking the woods. But when the industry comes in, it destroys the water, causes flash floods and creates so many problems. It’s just really sad. You can’t do without good water. I’d like to see these valley fill permits go away. I don’t want to see the contamination continue.”

# Native species highlight: The Smallmouth Bass

By Christa Clasgens, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

During the spring, a remarkable process unfolds in rivers and streams across West Virginia as many native fish species enter their spawning cycles. While some species spawn in the fall, others — including the Smallmouth Bass — begin spawning in the spring, when warming waters and longer days signal the return of seasonal activity.

Smallmouth Bass typically spawn from April through June. During this period, the fish become more territorial, aggressive and protective as they guard nests and remain close to spawning areas to ensure reproductive success. For anglers across the Mountain State, the season is considered one of the best times of year to fish for Smallmouth Bass, particularly for those hoping to land a trophy-sized catch after spending long hours on the water.

Unlike Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass are most commonly found in rivers and streams with moderate to strong currents. They prefer rocky riverbeds, gravel bottoms and large submerged rock structures that provide shelter and feeding opportunities. During spawning season, anglers can often locate Smallmouth Bass in shallow to moderately deep waters near eddies, depressions in the riverbed and areas directly behind large rocks where currents slow.

West Virginia is home to several waterways known for quality Smallmouth Bass fishing, including portions of the New, Greenbrier, Elk and South Branch Potomac rivers. Although overall populations remain stable in many areas, larger



Photos of a Smallmouth Bass caught by Chrsita Clasgens. Catch and release practices were in place. (Photo by Christa Clasgens)

Smallmouth Bass — generally measuring between 17 and 22 inches — are becoming increasingly uncommon. Fisheries experts attribute this trend to several environmental factors, including shorter growing seasons, habitat limitations and rising water temperatures.

Extended periods of drought

mouth populations and reduce the number of fish reaching older, larger sizes.

Conservationists and anglers alike encourage responsible fishing practices to help maintain healthy Smallmouth Bass populations for future generations. Anglers should refrain from targeting Smallmouth Bass when water temperatures exceed 68 degrees, as warmer water increases stress on the fish after they are caught and released. If caught, fish should be handled carefully, kept in the water as much as possible and released quickly after landing.

Beyond their popularity among anglers, Smallmouth Bass play an important role in maintaining balanced river ecosystems throughout West Virginia. As a native species, they contribute to the health of waterways and serve as indicators of overall river conditions. Responsible stewardship from the fishing community can help ensure these fish continue to thrive in West Virginia's rivers for years to come.



# Save the Date for WVHC's 2026 Fall Review: "From Ridges to Rivers: Safeguarding What Sustains Us"

By Jordan Howes, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

This fall, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy invites conservationists, advocates and community members from across the region to gather in the highlands for a weekend of learning, reflection and connection.

Mark your calendars for **Oct. 23–25**, when WVHC's annual Fall Review returns—this time at Canaan Valley Resort in Davis, West Virginia—under the theme **"From Ridges to Rivers: Safeguarding What Sustains Us."**

From the forested ridgelines that define Appalachia's skyline to the streams and rivers that sustain our communities and wildlife, the landscapes we cherish are deeply interconnected. The 2026 Fall Re-



The WVHC's last Fall Review at Canaan Valley was in 2024. (Photo by Olivia Miller)

view will explore how we protect these vital systems—and the people who depend on them—in the face of growing environmental pressures.

Set against the sweeping views of Canaan Valley, the weekend will

bring together environmental leaders, scientists, advocates, and concerned citizens to share ideas, build partnerships, and strengthen the movement to protect West Virginia's lands and waters.

As always, our Fall Review will offer opportunities to dig into the issues shaping our region's future while also enjoying the outdoors and the company of fellow conservationists. Whether you're a long-time supporter or new to WVHC's work, this gathering is a chance to recharge, reconnect, and recommit to the work ahead.

We're currently developing the weekend's program and will share more details—including speakers, sessions, and activities—in the coming months.

For now, save the date and plan to join us in beautiful Canaan Valley this October for a weekend dedicated to protecting the ridges, rivers and communities that sustain us all.

Registration information will be announced soon.

## BECOME A WVHC MEMBER

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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### Membership categories (circle one)

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

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

**West Virginia Highlands Conservancy**  
**Working to Keep West Virginia Wild and Wonderful**  
 You may also join online at [www.wvhighlands.org](http://www.wvhighlands.org)

# Citizen groups in Virginia and West Virginia sue to stop Corridor H

By Stewards of the Potomac Highlands and Virginia Wilderness Committee

Citizen groups in Virginia and West Virginia filed suit in federal court on April 30, 2026 to stop construction of a seven-mile section of Corridor H highway from Wardensville in Hardy County, W. Va. to the Virginia line. The groups say the four-lane highway would deflate the local rural economy and threaten drinking water supplies, wildlife habitat and other natural resources in both states.

West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) had announced plans earlier this year to let out construction contracts by this month, but the suit could throw another roadblock to the long-controversial project.

Stewards of the Potomac Highlands and the Virginia Wilderness Committee, represented by attorneys Andrea Ferster and Brad Stephens, filed suit against WVDOH and the Federal Highway Administration in the U.S. District



Corridor H segment in Wardensville, WV. (Photo by Olivia Miller)

Court for the Northern District in West Virginia. They argue that the highway agencies failed to consider less expensive and less environmentally damaging alternatives.

Now estimated to cost \$542 million, this Wardensville to Virginia line section of Corridor H would “cross through the iconic George Washington National Forest

and bypass and severely impair the economy of Wardensville’s historic Main Street district.” It would also “impact the lives of farm and homeowners in its path,” reads the legal complaint. “The far-reaching consequences of this project will have economic, environmental, and other ripple effects decades—indeed, centuries—into the future.”

The groups also launched a website to raise awareness about the proposed highway—Corridor H: Highway to Nowhere ([highway-tonowhere.org](http://highway-tonowhere.org)).

In the 1960s, the Appalachian Regional Commission planned the four-lane highway which was slated to reach 15 miles into Virginia to connect with I-81 and I-66 in Strasburg. Since 1995, however, the Commonwealth of Virginia has said that it has no plans to build this Virginia section. Further, the Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors and the Town of Strasburg declared their opposition to Corridor H in

*Continued on page 11*

## 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 [christa.clasgens@wvhighlands.org](mailto:christa.clasgens@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/WVHCemailsignup](https://bit.ly/WVHCemailsignup)**

## Citizen groups in Virginia and West Virginia sue to stop Corridor H

*Continued from page 10*

2022.

If built, the Wardensville to Virginia line section of Corridor H would end abruptly at the state line, funneling traffic into the two-lane Route 55/48, a designated Virginia Scenic Byway also known as the John Marshall Highway. The citizen groups warn this would add more peril to hikers on the popular Tuscarora Trail as they cross Route 55/48 on the crest of Great North Mountain.

Most sections of Corridor H have been built across eastern West Virginia, from I-79 to the western edge of Wardensville, except for another controversial section in Tucker County, where environmentalists are urging a different, northerly route. But WVDOH acknowledged traffic on the corridor is only half what it projected in its 1996 environmental documents.

“We object to an unneeded four-lane that would rip through 2.4 miles of intact forest in the George Washington National Forest,” said Virginia Wilderness Committee board member Andrew Young. “During Earth Month we celebrate the rich forest ecosystems, wildlife habitat, native trout streams, and

many outdoor recreational resources of this Allegheny Mountain region – all of which is threatened by the Corridor H boondoggle.”

“Legal action could, and should, cause our officials to re-think their priorities,” said Bonni McKeown, president of Stewards of the Potomac Highlands. It’s time our transportation policies take ‘wild, wonderful West Virginia’ seriously and support our natural beauty, our historic towns, and people’s homeplaces and farms instead of tearing down our special places.”

WVDOH acknowledged in its 2025 federally required environmental documents that the four-lane construction would traverse 2.4 miles and 300 acres of George Washington National Forest in West Virginia, cut through an aquifer supplying drinking water for the Town of Wardensville, and decrease customer traffic to businesses on Wardensville’s Main Street. However, WVDOH has refused to consider the alternative of making safety improvements to the existing two-lane Route 55/48 over Great North Mountain.

West Virginia public officials, including Gov. Patrick Morrissey and U.S. Senators Jim Justice and Shelley Moore Capito, have continued to prioritize Corridor H, even though Morrissey announced last year that the state highway budget is inadequate. Highway engineer groups rank West Virginia among the most deficient states in the U.S. in bridge repairs.

## Hit the trails with our Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the West Virginia Highlands

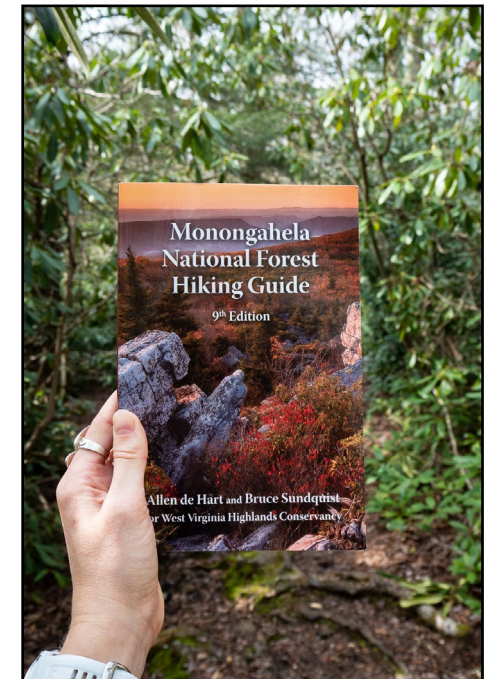
Conservancy, the new edition of the treasured guide to every trail in the Monongahela National Forest features brand-new topographic maps and Kent Mason’s gorgeous photos, all in color.

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](http://www.wvhighlands.org).

*The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is a non-profit corporation which has been recognized as a tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. Its bylaws describe its purpose: The purposes of the Conservancy shall be to promote, encourage, and work for the conservation—including both preservation and wise use—and appreciation of the natural resources of West Virginia and the nation, and especially of the Highlands Region of West Virginia, for the cultural, social, educational, physical, health, spiritual, and economic benefit of present and future generations of West Virginians and Americans.*



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