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The Highlands Voice

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Join us for the Fall Review 2026: Finding our place in the work ahead

By Jordan Howes, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Across the West Virginia Highlands, communities are confronting a new generation of interconnected threats, from data centers and transmission lines to fossil fuel development and widespread environmental deregulation. These challenges can feel overwhelming, but meeting this moment will require all of us. There is a place for everyone in the movement to protect the lands, waters and communities we love.

That idea is at the heart of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy’s 2026 Fall Review, “Finding Our Place in the Work Ahead,” taking place Oct. 23–24 at Canaan Valley Resort State Park. This year’s gathering will offer opportunities



A fall sunset over Dolly Sods Wilderness Area. (Photo by Dave Johnston)

to get outside, learn more about the Conservancy’s work, build advocacy skills and connect with others working to protect West Virginia’s Highlands.

The weekend will begin Friday afternoon with a hike in Dolly Sods

led by the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards, followed by hotel check-in and registration and an informal welcome gathering at Big Timber Brewing in Davis. Saturday will offer several opportunities to explore the Highlands, including a fish iden-

tification activity, a guided tour of the Abe’s Run wetland and a strenuous four-mile hike through Canaan Valley State Park.

The Fall Review will also provide an inside look at the work being done by the Conservancy. Extractive Industries Committee Chair Andrew Young will discuss the committee’s work and the impacts of mining, Luanne McGovern will provide an update on the fight over data center development in the Highlands and across West Virginia, and Dave Johnston will share the work of the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards. Following the Wilderness Stewards presentation, participants will also have the opportunity to watch a documentary about Helen McGin-

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Join us for the Fall Review 2026: Finding our place in the work ahead

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nis, whose leadership helped secure lasting protections for Dolly Sods and inspired generations of conservationists.

At the center of this year's program is a message that is particularly relevant to the challenges facing the Highlands today: There is no single way to create meaningful change, and there is a place for everyone in the work.

Our keynote speaker, Eileen Flanagan, will help participants explore exactly what that can look like. Flanagan is a Quaker author, speaker, activist and nationally recognized nonviolence trainer known for helping people make their activism more effective, strategic and spiritually grounded. She has spent decades working to build effective movements and helping people remain grounded through difficult and prolonged struggles.

Flanagan has played key leadership roles in three climate campaigns, including an effort that pressured a \$4 billion-a-year bank to pause its financing of mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia. Her experience brings a valuable perspective to the work being done here in West Virginia, where communities continue to organize around the impacts of extractive industries while confronting new forms of development and environmental threats.



Scenic sunset over Bear Rocks. (Photo by Dave Johnston)

Her latest book, *Common Ground: How the Crisis of the Earth Is Saving Us from Our Illusion of Separation*, explores how the ecological crisis can reveal our deep connections to one another and to the living world. Rather than viewing environmental challenges as isolated problems, Flanagan examines how recognizing those connections can help inspire collective action.

That message will carry into Flanagan's Saturday afternoon advocacy training, "The Four Roles of Social Change." The interactive workshop will help participants better understand how social change happens and recognize the different roles people can play within a movement. Some people work within institutions, some organize communities, some provide direct support, and others challenge unjust systems publicly. While tensions can arise when people favor different strategies,

those differences can also make a movement stronger.

The training will give participants an opportunity to identify their own strengths and place in the work, understand why advocates may choose different tactics, and see how different roles can complement one another. As new coalitions form throughout the Highlands and across West Virginia, the goal is to remind us that no single person or strategy can do everything.

Flanagan's keynote address later that evening will build on those ideas. During her 7:15–8:15 p.m. keynote Saturday night, she will draw on her experiences as an author, campaign leader and movement trainer to offer a hopeful and grounded perspective on how people can build connections, sustain movements and act together in defense of the places and communities they love.

The Saturday evening program will also bring our WVHC community together for a reception, silent auction, fundraising dinner and celebration of the Conservancy's work. Funds raised through the event will help the Conservancy continue protecting West Virginia's mountains, waters and communities while also supporting scholarships so students and community members with limited funds can participate in the Fall Review.

After more than six decades of protecting the places that make West Virginia wild and wonderful, the Conservancy knows that lasting conservation depends on people, people willing to learn, organize, speak up, volunteer, build relationships and keep showing up. The Fall Review is an opportunity to meet some of those people, learn more about the challenges facing the Highlands and consider how each of us can contribute.

Whether you have been part of the Conservancy's work for decades or are just beginning to find your place in the movement, we invite you to join us at Canaan Valley Resort State Park on Oct. 23–24.

General admission is free, and registration is now open.

You can also view the full Fall Review schedule or learn more about Fall Review sponsorships and donations. Questions about the event can be directed to Christa Clasgens at christa.clasgens@wvhighlands.org.

**Register
for the
Fall
Review!**



Thoughts from our President

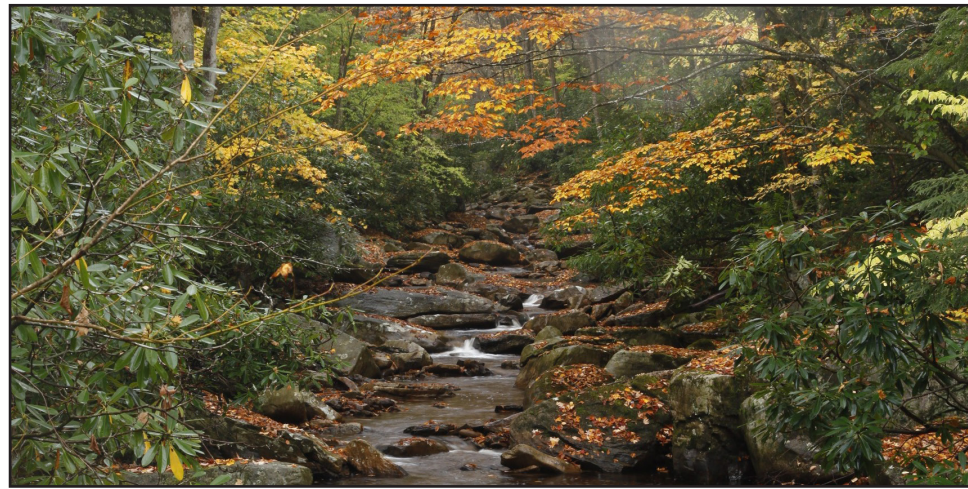
Greetings!

Prophecies about El Niño are abounding, but I don't think anyone really knows what to expect. Warmer? Colder? Drier? Wetter? I guess we'll find out when it gets here. In the meantime, summer has flown by and fall is settling into the Highlands. I hope you all had a wonderful season and found some time to enjoy the outdoors.

Last month, I wrote about all the lawsuits we are involved in and the support we need to keep them going. This month, I'm going to write about something quite different, but just as important to the life of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy: our Annual Fall Review.

The Conservancy has been holding Fall Reviews for 59 years, in various places around the state and with programs covering a multitude of topics. These gatherings have always been an opportunity to learn, explore, catch up with old friends and meet people who share our concern for West Virginia's mountains, forests, streams and communities. This year's Fall Review will be held Oct. 23–24 at Canaan Valley Resort State Park.

We'll kick things off Friday evening with a meet-and-greet at Big Timber Brewing in Davis, followed by registration and hotel check-in at the resort. If you're able



to arrive early Friday afternoon, you can also join the Dolly Sods Wilderness Stewards for a hike. It's a great way to begin the weekend by getting out on the land we work so hard to protect.

Saturday will be packed with activities. The morning will offer several opportunities to explore Canaan Valley and the surrounding area, including hikes and other outdoor activities.

We'll hear updates on some of the issues that have kept us busy throughout the year, including our ongoing lawsuits, our opposition to inappropriate data center development and our work on other threats to West Virginia's lands and waters.

We'll also hold the WVHC Annual Membership Meeting and give everyone a chance to meet our staff and learn more about what goes on behind the scenes. It takes a tremen-

dous amount of work to keep an organization like the Conservancy moving forward, and the Fall Review is a good opportunity to see that work up close and learn how you can become involved.

One of the highlights of this year's program will be our keynote speaker, Eileen Flanagan. Eileen is a Quaker author, speaker, activist and nationally recognized nonviolence trainer. She has spent years working with people and organizations to make their activism more effective, strategic and sustainable.

Eileen will lead an interactive advocacy training Saturday afternoon called "The Four Roles of Social Change." The training is based on the idea that there are different roles people can play in creating social change.

The training will give us an opportunity to think about our own

strengths, understand the different approaches people bring to advocacy and consider how those approaches can work together. Given the many challenges currently facing the Highlands, I think this is a particularly useful conversation for all of us.

Saturday evening will give us a chance to relax and celebrate. We'll have a reception, silent auction and fundraising dinner, followed by Eileen's keynote address. It will be an evening to celebrate the Conservancy's work, support the organization and spend some time with the people who make this work possible.

I hope you will consider joining us. Whether you have been involved with the Conservancy for decades or are just finding your way into this work, the Fall Review is a wonderful opportunity to meet others who care about the same places and issues, spend time with old friends, make new ones and find your own place in the work ahead.

We hope to see you at Canaan Valley Resort State Park on Oct. 23–24. General admission is free, and registration is open on our website.

Marilyn Shoenfeld

President

West Virginia Highlands

Conservancy

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): \$22.50
- WVHC Hemp Hat (Black or Green): \$25.00
- WVHC 100% Cotton T-Shirts (Kelly Green, Navy Blue, Black) Available in XS-XXL: \$22.00
- Black 50th Anniversary T-Shirt with “Celebrating 50 years” logo. Available in Small, Medium, and XXL: \$20.00
- 50+1 Celebration of Dolly Sods Wilderness T-Shirt (Sage Green, Salmon): \$30
- Square Black Bandana: \$5.00

Please include \$6.25 shipping for Apparel items

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 40, Granville, WV 26534. 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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Valley Link North revives questions of need, cost and sacrifice in West Virginia

By Olivia Miller, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

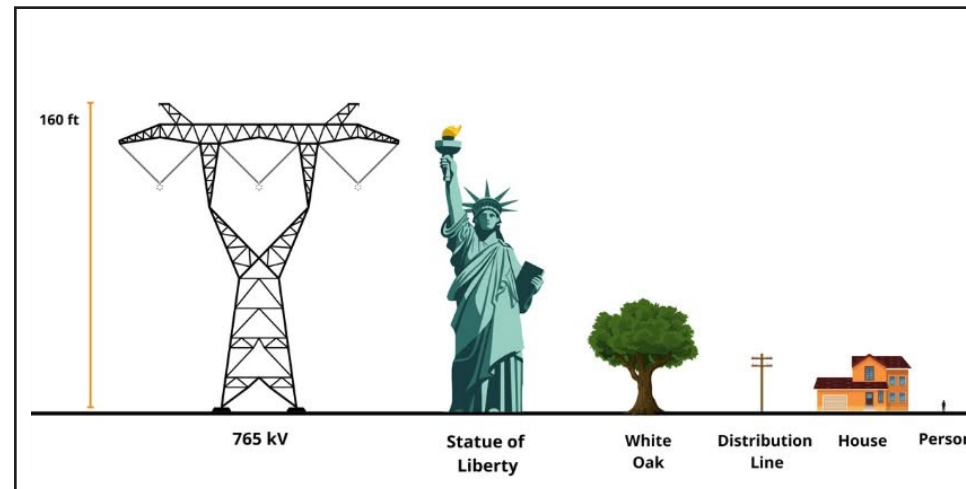
More than 15 years ago, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy joined landowners, community groups and the Sierra Club to oppose the Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline, better known as PATH.

PATH was planned as a massive high-voltage transmission project stretching from the John E. Amos Power Plant in Putnam County, across the West Virginia Highlands and Eastern Panhandle, and into Maryland. Most of the project would have consisted of a 765-kilovolt line, followed by a 500-kilovolt segment into Maryland. Its proposed route crossed 12 West Virginia counties, including Tucker County and the northern edge of the Monongahela National Forest.

The power companies behind PATH said it was necessary to strengthen the regional electric grid. But we questioned whether they had proven that need, especially given the tremendous harm the project would cause to West Virginia's forests, streams, communities and landowners.

Now, West Virginia is facing another massive transmission line that looks an awful lot like PATH.

Valley Link North is a proposed 765-kilovolt transmission line that would stretch approximately 260 miles from Putnam County, West Virginia, to Frederick County, Maryland. Valley Link currently estimates that approximately 225 miles of the line would be built in



Transmission line size comparison. (Photo provided by Stop Valley Link)

West Virginia. The project is being developed by Valley Link Transmission West Virginia, a joint venture of American Electric Power, Dominion Energy and FirstEnergy.

The companies are currently considering route segments in 20 West Virginia counties: Barbour, Berkeley, Braxton, Calhoun, Doddridge, Gilmer, Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lewis, Preston, Putnam, Randolph, Roane, Tucker and Upshur. Only some of those segments will make up the final route, but thousands of West Virginians are now left wondering whether their homes, farms and forests will be in its path.

Valley Link anticipates that the project would require a right of way approximately 200 feet wide. Trees and vegetation would be cleared to make way for transmission structures averaging between 150 and 175 feet tall. Valley Link has not selected a final structure design, but the possible designs it has presented include both self-supporting tow-

ers and structures stabilized by guy wires.

The project is expected to cost around \$2 billion, although that figure could grow as the route and design are finalized. West Virginia electric customers would be required to pay a portion of those costs through their monthly bills, potentially for the next 40 to 60 years.

And then there is the obvious question. What do West Virginians get in return?

PJM says the line is needed because of increasing amounts of electricity moving from west to east across the regional grid. According to PJM, that growth is being driven primarily by the rapid expansion of data centers in Dominion Energy's Northern Virginia territory.

Valley Link North would essentially serve as a massive extension cord, expanding the existing 765-kilovolt transmission system eastward so more electricity can reach Virginia's data center corridor. That electricity could come from West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania or states

farther west. Because PJM generally dispatches the least expensive available power first, the line could even allow out-of-state generators to compete with West Virginia power plants.

The data centers will bring tax revenue and economic benefits to Virginia. West Virginians, meanwhile, will be left with miles of cleared forests, towering steel structures, threatened property and another charge on our electric bills.

The environmental costs would be severe and permanent. Cutting a 200-foot-wide corridor through hundreds of miles of forest would fragment wildlife habitat and expose steep mountain soils to erosion. Construction would require access roads, heavy equipment and work areas around each tower.

Altogether, approximately 10,000 acres of forest and other land could be affected along the route. Once cleared, the right of way would have to be continually maintained to prevent trees from growing back beneath the line.

For landowners, the uncertainty is already deeply personal. A line on a preliminary map can pass through a family farm, a homeplace held for generations or the only road leading to someone's house. Once Valley Link announces its preferred route, possibly later this year, company representatives may begin asking landowners for permission to survey their property or for options to purchase easements.

Landowners are not obligated

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Virginia and West Virginia groups file injunction to stop Corridor H

By Stewards of the Potomac Highlands and Virginia Wilderness Committee

Citizens groups in West Virginia and Virginia have now filed an injunction to stop any Corridor H construction on the 6.8 mile section from Wardensville, WV to the Virginia line. Stewards of the Potomac Highlands and Virginia Wilderness Committee had challenged WV Division of Highways and Federal Highway Administration in a federal lawsuit Apr. 30, 2026, saying their environmental studies failed to consider the option of spot safety improvements to existing two lane Route 48/55. WVDOH let out bids anyway on June 16, for the section's first phase of construction, leaving the groups with no other option. Represented by attorneys Andrea Ferster and Brad Stephens, the two groups filed the injunction in federal court in the Northern District of West Virginia Friday Aug. 28.

"Since Virginia declared it won't build its originally planned section to I-66 and I-81, it just doesn't make sense to run an over-built West Virginia four-lane to the state line," said Bonni McKeown, Stewards president. "Virginia is widening Route 55 and plans to improve safety in the hills and curves by adding some left turn lanes and passing lanes.

Why can't West Virginia do the same? It would save taxpayer



Wardensville section of Corridor H.
(Photo by Olivia Miller)

money, preserve 2.4 miles of intact George Washington National Forest land, keep tourist traffic flowing through Main Street in Wardensville, and avoid bridge-building damage to trout streams in the Cacapon River watershed."

"Rich forest ecosystems, wildlife habitat, native trout streams, and many outdoor recreational resources of this Allegheny Mountain region, are all threatened by the Corridor H boondoggle," said Virginia Wilderness Committee board member Andrew Young. "We are suing to force public officials to take another look before spending \$540 million here."

For press inquiries, reach out to Bonni McKeown, Stewards of the Potomac Highlands, 773-209-4712 barrelhbonni@yahoo.com; Andrew W. Young, Virginia Wilderness Committee, (434) 202-4397 AndrewWYoung1993@gmail.com.

Editor's note: The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy is not involved in this lawsuit. The case is an independent effort brought by new plaintiffs. WVHC remains bound by its 2000 settlement agreement.

Valley Link North revives questions of need, cost and sacrifice in West Virginia

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to casually accept those requests. They should carefully review any document presented by a company representative and seek advice from an attorney before signing an easement agreement. If the project eventually receives approval from the Public Service Commission, Valley Link could seek to acquire rights of way through eminent domain.

PATH followed a similar playbook. When its proposed route was made public in 2009, power company officials described the line as vital to the reliability of the grid and said its route minimized effects on people and the environment. At the same time, affected landowners did not yet know exactly where the 200-foot right of way would fall within a much wider study corridor.

The project was presented as urgent. It was presented as necessary. It was presented as inevitable.

It was none of those things.

PATH was ultimately removed from PJM's transmission plan because the projected need for it did not hold up. That experience should weigh heavily as the Public Service Commission considers Valley Link North.

Electricity demand is changing, and data centers are certainly consuming enormous amounts of power. But that does not mean ev-

ery project proposed in response is reasonable, properly planned or in the public interest. Forecasts can change. Proposed data centers can be delayed or never built. Less destructive alternatives may be available.

Before West Virginians are asked to pay billions of dollars and sacrifice thousands of acres, Valley Link must prove that the project is necessary—not merely convenient or profitable for the companies involved. It must also show that alternatives have been thoroughly considered and that West Virginia customers will receive benefits proportionate to the costs they are being asked to bear.

The Public Service Commission must determine whether the line will contribute to reliable and adequate electric service and whether it represents an acceptable balance between power needs and environmental impacts. That review cannot become a rubber stamp for a project PJM has already selected.

West Virginians need to be heard throughout this process.

Valley Link plans to hold another round of open houses after selecting a preferred route. The company expects to file its formal application with the Public Service Commission during the first half of 2027. Once the application is filed, the PSC will open a case, accept public comments and establish a deadline for affected landowners and organizations to intervene.

Intervening allows a person or organization with a direct interest in the case to participate more fully. Intervenors can request information from Valley Link, submit testimony,

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Neb-nosers seek to interfere with enforcement in Amsted Graphite Materials lawsuit

By John McFerrin, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

There has been a new development in the efforts by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition to force Amsted Graphite Materials near Clarksburg to comply with the Clean Water Act. The Pacific Legal Foundation has jumped into the fight on behalf of Amsted Graphite Materials, arguing that the section of the Clean Water Act under which the groups are proceeding is unconstitutional.

Under the federal and state Clean Water Act, this company was issued permits that allow it to discharge water containing limited amounts of pollutants. A permit might say, for example, that the water leaving the site may contain up to three parts per million of iron, 0.5 parts per million of aluminum, etc. If the concentrations are greater, then the company is in violation.

In the case of Amsted, the pollutants are copper, lead, zinc, aluminum and a long list of unpronounceable chemicals with names like benzoanthracene and indenopyrene. The pollutants are entering a tributary of Anmoore Run approximately two miles from its confluence with Elk Creek, a tributary of the West Fork River. The concentrations of pollutants in the water being discharged are dramatically greater than the concentrations allowed by the permits.

That the violations of the Clean Water Act occurred is not really in doubt. The way the system works, companies are required to sample



Scenic photo along the West Fork River. (Photo by Christa Clasgens)

the water leaving their operations and report the results to the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. Some grumble that having companies do their own sampling and reporting is the osprey guarding the koi pond or the locust guarding the wheat field. When, as here, that sampling shows violations, the proof becomes much more straightforward. The company can hardly deny the violations; it's their own data.

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection would, of course, have the right to take enforcement actions in response to these violations, as would the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Neither of them did.

When this happens, any interested citizen has the right to file a complaint, asking that the court enforce the law. This is what the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition did in this case.

Before filing a complaint, the interested party has to give the company, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the

United States Environmental Protection Agency 60 days' notice of the violations. The notice that WVHC and the Rivers Coalition sent to the company, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had an attachment listing the violations. It went on for 28 pages. That's either impressive or depressing, depending upon one's perspective.

The law makes the cheery assumption that, once the company has been shown the error of its ways, it will fix the problems and all will be right with the world. Failing that, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will notice the violations and spring into action to enforce the law. Neither of these things happened here, so WVHC and the Rivers Coalition filed suit.

Now defendant Amsted Graphite Materials has moved to dismiss the case. It does not deny that it is in violation of the law. Instead, while implicitly admitting that it is in violation, it argues that only the govern-

ment may enforce the law. It claims that the government agencies, even though they knew of the violations, made a principled policy decision to ignore those violations. The government, having made its decision, a citizen may not interfere.

Citizen suit provisions have a long history. They have been part of the Clean Water Act since 1972. They are part of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, as well as numerous other federal and state statutes. The citizen plaintiffs don't receive any of the fines that might result from such suits. They only receive the benefits to the general public: cleaner water, relief from illegal mining, etc. Since the government has a duty to enforce the law and presumably wants the law to be enforced, citizen suits make more enforcement possible without the government having to spend its resources.

On a more basic level, citizen suits rely upon the unfortunate truth that the state won't do anything, but a judge will.

Amsted Graphite Materials is represented by both a West Virginia law firm and the Pacific Legal Foundation. The Pacific Legal Foundation is a public interest law firm that litigates in order to advance a libertarian political viewpoint. It is safe to assume that it has no interest in the waters of West Virginia, enforcement policy at the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection or anything else that is specific to this case. It is here to make a political point.

Stakeholders statewide unite to form the WV Data Center Accountability Project

In response to the rushed attempt to build data centers across West Virginia, stakeholders and impacted communities have united to form the West Virginia Data Center Accountability Project (WVDCAP). WVDCAP opposes the unchecked buildout of data centers overriding our communities. We stand united in the following popular demands: (1) Let the People Decide: Local Control and Community Consent; (2) Clean Air & Clean Water for the People – not for Data Centers; (3) West Virginia is not for Sale; and (4) Community Over Computers. More information can be found at www.wvdcap.org.

Morgan King, WV Citizen Action Group Climate and Energy Manager, stated: “The formation of this statewide collaborative network will shape data center developments and demand accountability from the very government and corporations pursuing these projects without local input or consideration of environmental, economic, and health risks. When West Virginians across the state stand together, we are stronger and more effective at achieving our goal of putting community over computers.”

Heather Ransom, Putnam United, stated: “The size and scope of these facilities means that the very fabric of the communities they land

in will be forever changed. Therefore, the people who’ve chosen to build their lives in these beautiful rural towns should have a say in whether a hyperscale data center is a good fit for them. The people of Buffalo have made it very clear that we aren’t against progress, but that it needs to be progress to benefit the residents. This project does not. We should be considering all the ways these sites will impact the people of West Virginia, instead of only seeing tax dollars, which, by the way, are far less than they should be thanks to 2014.”

Elaine Matheny, Mason WV United, stated: “The Monarch Compute Campus is going in beside a long-standing neighborhood and has created health problems and flooding problems from the beginning. The people of Mason County had no say in whether they wanted a Data Center. HB2014 was designed to keep the public from knowing about data center development projects before they start construction. This is government overreach, and it’s all about the money that can be made on the front end. The jobs created will not justify all the destruction of the environment, health and welfare of our county. Our state and county governments should be protecting the people, not the corporations.”

Jim Kotcon, WV Chapter of Sierra Club Conservation Chair, stated: “Data centers in West Virginia should not be allowed to threaten the health and welfare of local citizens. That means stringent protections for the air we breathe and the water we drink. Too many of the current proposals want to emit as much as they can get away with, and the State

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question company witnesses, file briefs and, if necessary, appeal the PSC’s final decision. Other residents will also have opportunities to submit comments and speak at public hearings.

Already, opposition to Valley Link North is bringing together people from across West Virginia. At least 12 county commissions, including the Tucker County Commission, have adopted resolutions opposing the project. Stop Valley Link, a grassroots organization formed by people along the proposed routes, is helping landowners understand what is coming and how they can participate.

The Highlands Conservancy has a long history of standing against large-scale projects that would sacrifice our mountains and communities for the benefit of powerful corporate interests. We fought to save Canaan Valley from the proposed Davis Power Project. We opposed PATH. Today, we continue to challenge destructive routes for Corridor H and the unchecked expansion of data centers and their fossil fuel infrastructure.

Valley Link North is part of that same troubling pattern. West Virginia is once again being treated as a place to extract power from, build across and pass through, while the



greatest benefits flow somewhere else.

Our state should not become a sacrifice zone and transmission corridor for Virginia’s data center boom. West Virginians deserve honest answers about who needs this line, who will benefit from it, who will pay for it and what will be permanently lost if it is built.

We stopped PATH because the need for it did not withstand scrutiny. Valley Link North deserves nothing less than that same careful examination. Our forests, streams, homes and electric customers should not be made to carry the burden of another supposedly inevitable project without a fight.

To learn more and get involved, visit stopvalleylink.info. West Virginians Against Transmission Line Injustice also has a petition opposing Valley Link North and the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link.

**Petition opposing
Valley Link North
and the Mid-Atlantic
Resiliency Link**



We’re changing our Bylaws and you get to vote

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy members are invited to vote on the proposed amendments to the organization’s bylaws. WVHC has had the same bylaws since 1985. It is time for a change. The Rules Committee is proposing the changes shown in the linked document below. The new language is underlined. Things to be left out are stricken through.

In the big picture, the revised Bylaws do two things:

1. Move us into the 21st century. The old bylaws contemplated communication by real mail or possibly be telephone. That’s not how we do things anymore. The revised ones contemplate email, etc. The old bylaws also assume that we will do all our financial transactions by physical check. We don’t do that anymore either. The revised bylaws contemplate electronic transfer, etc.



2. Change the board makeup to kick off the Membership Secretary and the Voice Editor. Their membership on the Board is from a time when those functions were

done by super volunteers. Since either of those jobs would be both essential and too much to ask a true volunteer to do, we gave them Board seats and the possibility that

they would be paid. Now that those things are being done by staff, there is no longer a reason to give them Board seats.

There are other changes as well so you should read the whole thing. For example, the functioning of the Executive Committee duties are revised; the bylaws are easier to change in the future.

A change in the Bylaws requires a vote of the membership. To review the changes, you can see the old bylaws and the proposed new bylaws using the QR code below.

Vote on our Bylaws!



BECOME A WVHC MEMBER

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Thomas water supply no longer a deterrent to the northern route

By Go North Alliance

One concern we frequently hear about a Northern Route for Corridor H is its potential impact on Thomas’s drinking water reservoir, which is located north of Route 90 near its intersection with Route 219.

Because the West Virginia Division of Highway’s design for the Northern Route has not been made public yet, the Go North Alliance investigated this issue with the help of Barry Sulkin, an environmental consultant who primarily focuses on water quality and has worked on highway projects before. WVDOH is expected to release its design as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Oct. 5. The analysis used Friends of Blackwater’s design of their preferred Northern Route, pictured in Fig. 1.

Sulkin analyzed Friends of Blackwater’s conceptual northern route using a U.S.G.S. analytical tool called StreamStats. StreamStats was used to delineate the watershed that supplies the Thomas reservoir and identify the land area where runoff and streamflow contribute

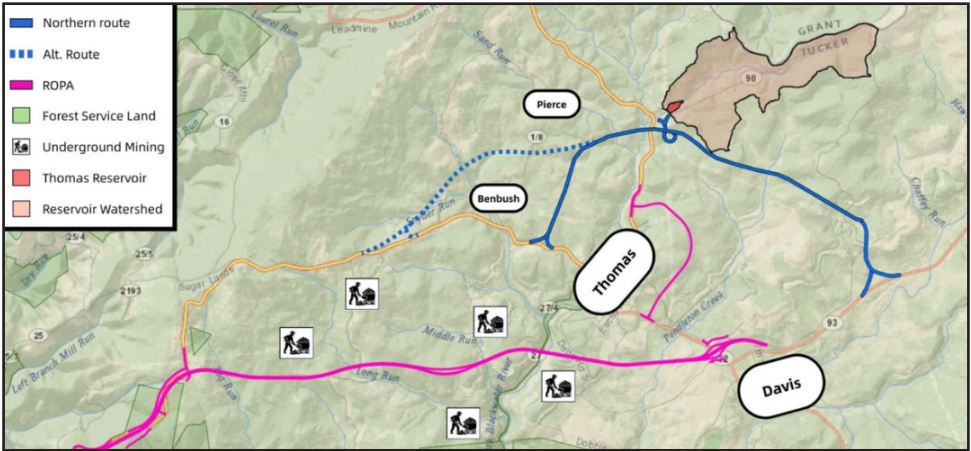
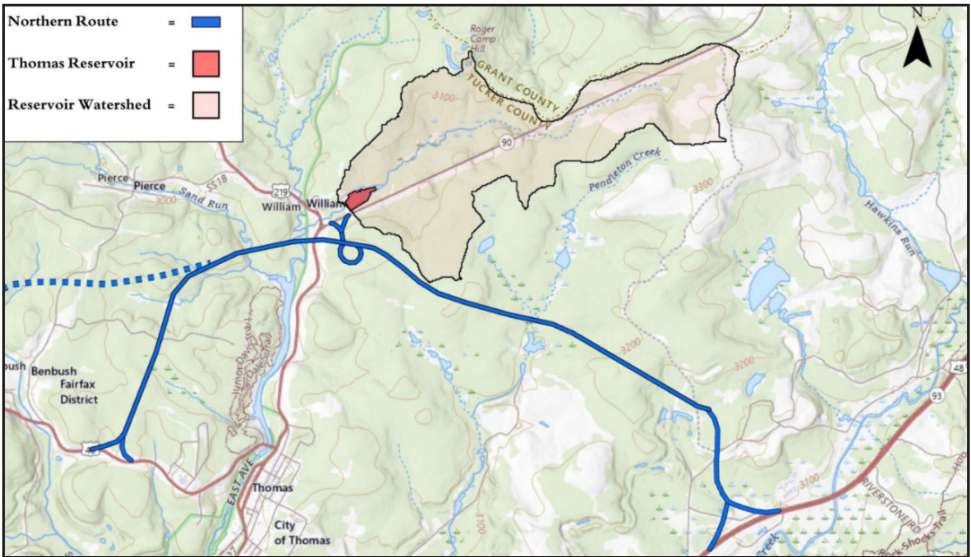


Figure 1: Friends of Blackwater’s design of their preferred northern route. (Map by Go North Alliance)



Map of Corridor H northern route and Thomas reservoir watershed. (Map by Go North Alliance)

water to it. The analysis showed that the reservoir’s watershed extends primarily northeast of the reservoir and comes from an unnamed stream that follows Route 90 heading southwest. The whole watershed drains approximately 1.2 square miles. FOB’s proposed Northern Route was overlaid on the watershed map and an adjustment was made to move the route a bit to the south to stay completely out of the watershed.

In short, readily-available tools demonstrate that Corridor H’s Northern Route can feasibly be created without disturbing the Thomas Reservoir’s watershed. The analysis demonstrates that a northern route can be designed to avoid the reservoir watershed altogether while also avoiding many of the serious impacts associated with the currently preferred “ROPA” through the Thomas-Davis area.

As WVDOH prepares to release its own northern alternative this fall, the Thomas reservoir should not be treated as an obstacle that rules out going north.

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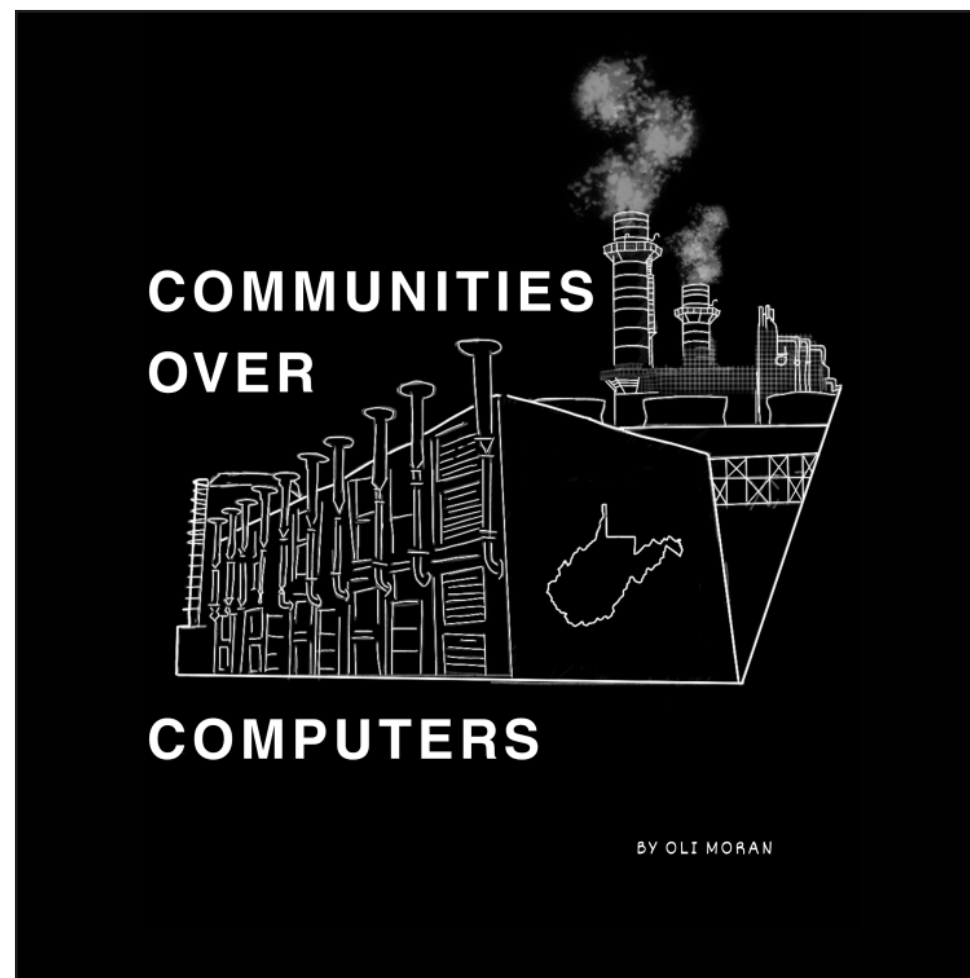
Stakeholders statewide unite to form the WV Data Center Accountability Project

Continued from page 8

seems determined to let them. Allowing major new pollution sources is not going to benefit West Virginians.”

Amy Margolies, Tucker United Director, stated: “We stand united with communities around the state who demand a say in data center developments that will forever alter their homes. We support economic growth, but it must be on our terms and in a way that benefits our communities. HB2014 takes away our right to make our own decisions and shape the future we want to see. Fundamental Data’s proposed hyperscale facility in Tucker County will consume our water, threaten our health, and permanently transform the landscapes we love. Even Governor Morrissey called Fundamental Data “shameful.” It’s time to stop the shameful data center companies who only see West Virginia for what they can extract. We look forward to working with WVD CAP to help establish enforceable guardrails, stop irresponsible proposals, and give communities a real voice in data center developments.”

Amanda McWhorter, Ohio



(Graphic designed by Oli Moran)

County Resident, stated: “The proposed Silicon Foundation Data Center project in Warwood is currently projected to be less than 90MW and would fall under the ordinances and oversight of the City of Wheeling and not under HB2014. Despite this project still being under local control, residents are being met with little to no answers from city officials after pleading with them to protect the community that they represent. Frustration is increasing as the community sees other municipalities across the country doing the right thing and passing moratoriums. At

every level of our government, the decisions being made about data centers will affect generations of West Virginia families and our communities.”

Rupok Bhuiyan, No Data Centers in the Eastern Panhandle Member, stated: “In the Eastern Panhandle, we are fighting multiple data centers planned right next to people’s homes. Families here worry about their well water, about noise that never stops, about their health from air pollution, and about electric bills going up to pay for power these companies need. HB 2014 took

away our local control before most of us even knew what was coming. Site fights are grassroots, run by volunteers who give up nights and weekends with their families, and no community should have to start from scratch. That is why WVD-CAP matters. When one county figures something out, every county gets it. Elected officials should take note that this is bipartisan. Across the country, dozens of towns and counties led by both parties have passed moratoriums to pause data center development while they figure out the impacts on water, power, and land. West Virginia has become an outlier, expanding as fast as possible instead of listening to the people who live here. Protecting homes and water is not partisan.”

Olivia Miller, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy Interim Executive Director, stated: “People all across West Virginia are raising the same concerns about the speed and scale of data center development and what it could mean for our water, air, communities and quality of life. These projects are moving incredibly fast, and without public input. Bottom line, West Virginians deserve a real voice in what happens in their communities. We have a responsibility to make sure our natural resources are still here for future generations, and we should not be asked to sacrifice them in the rush to build data centers.”

Learn more at www.wvdcap.org.



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