

# M Mountain State Sierran

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January/February 2017

## 66 Testify on FERC Abuses at People's Hearing in D.C.

*April Keating*

On December 2, people from 11 states and the District of Columbia traveled to the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., to state their case at a People's Hearing sponsored by Delaware Riverkeeper Network (DRN), a conservation organization established in 1998 to protect the Delaware River watershed that feeds water to four states.

Speakers came from as far away as Florida and New Hampshire to tell a panel of judges their stories about how they have been abused and the approval process for pipelines and gas infrastructure has been tainted by the only regulatory agency that approves interstate pipelines, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Many have claimed a conflict of interest, since this agency is funded by the fees it collects from companies whose projects it approves. The FERC has only turned down one project in over 30 years.

Those testifying included an economist, a nuclear expert, a medical anthropologist, and a reporter with more than 40 years of experience, two attorneys, an ex-Marine, a grandmother, and several individuals personally affected by irresponsible gas infrastructure build-out practices. Projects represented included the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast Pipelines, the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion Project (Pa. to Mass.), West Roxbury Lateral Pipeline (Mass.), the NEXUS (Ohio, Mich.), PennEast (Pa., N.J.) and the SABAL (Fla.) pipelines, DTI's Cove Point LNG Export Facility, and one organization called Fair Compensation for Underground Storage.

"Every day, there is a new example of how the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is abusing its power and the law in its biased reviews of fracked gas pipelines and its disregard of the rights of people, states and regulatory agencies," the DRN website states. Examples include "aggressive use of the power of eminent domain, creating loopholes that put people in legal limbo, unable to challenge pipelines in court before FERC sends them in to construction, and never forcing compliance with community protection laws as projects proceed through construction."

Testifiers told stories of homes and farms in danger from pipelines running too close for safety, insufficient information being provided in the Draft Environmental Impact Statements, safety measures being skirted or ignored, lost property values, daily stress and lowered quality of life, bullying by landmen, unsafe practices during construction causing property damage and injuries, and police colluding with companies to harass protestors and the general public.

One person described his trepidation at the laying of a gas pipeline over a seismic fault. Another described plans to lay a pipeline near a rock quarry with regular blasting. The Algonquin pipeline, which runs only 105 feet from an aging nuclear facility at Indian Point, N.Y., has been given approval by the FERC. An explosion near this plant could cause human casualties comparable to what occurred at Hiroshima in 1945.



Four West Virginians from POWHR (Protect Our Water, Heritage, Rights) take a 'selfie' during a break from testifying at the People's Hearing in D.C., on December 2, 2016. L to R: Russell Chisolm (Giles County/POWHR ExCom), Bert Bondurant (Preserve Bent Mountain/POWHR ExCom), April Keating (Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance/POWHR ExCom), Kevin Campbell (Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance/POWHR Steering Council).

Speakers also called attention to the revolving door between the gas industry and FERC, the nepotism of FERC commissioners' spouses working in the gas industry while projects by the same company gain approval. Four of the speakers hailed from West Virginia and are members of the POWHR Coalition.

All of the stories will be compiled and submitted to Congress for the record in a lawsuit filed by DRN March 2, 2016, against the FERC with the United States District Court in Washington, D.C. The suit holds that FERC's review and approval process for jurisdictional pipeline projects is infected by structural bias, encroaching on due process rights in violation of the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. DRN seeks changes to FERC's funding structure, as well as other fundamental changes to the agency, to make it accountable and consistent with democratic governance.

Several comments were made to hearty applause in support of the water protectors at Standing Rock. At least one at the hearing, Russell Chisolm, a member of the

POWHR Coalition, was on his way to the camp with more than 2,000 other veterans. Chisolm is among those ready to again put themselves in harm's way to form a human shield to protect others as they stand for the rights of all people and future generations to have clean water.

Although we often feel powerless, especially here in "Gasland," there was such an outpouring of resolve, hard work, determination and love in that room, that it gave us all hope and strength to continue the fight.

Mni Wiconi!  
Water is life!

*PostScript:* Recent news that the Army Corps of Engineers denied the permit for

the Dakota Access Pipeline, though a victory for the water protectors, is not the end of the story. The company that owns the project, Energy Transfer Partners, has stated that it WILL still build the pipeline, whether or not it is re-routed.

As those of us in the pipeline fight know all too well, a re-route is not really a victory, as it simply moves the pipeline onto someone else's land. In our time, the only solution is to stop ALL fossil fuel development. The right of people to have clean water and air, a healthy climate, and health security will continue to be under threat as long as pipelines anywhere and everywhere are approved and built. Though we take each victory as a positive, we must continue to press for better regulations, renewable energy, and energy efficiency measures, and for the triumph of science and reason. These are all part and parcel of the environmental justice that we seek.

### Upcoming ExCom Meeting

Sat, Jan 14: Morgantown

Kotcon/Elliott home

All members are welcome.

Contact Jim Kotcon for details, [jkotcon@gmail.com](mailto:jkotcon@gmail.com)



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R.I.P.

Jim Sconyers

One of our beloved Chapter leaders lost a long battle with cancer in mid-December, shortly before this issue of the newsletter went to press.

We intend to publish a special section in the March/April issue dedicated to Jim and his many years of devoted service to Sierra Club.

Mary Wimmer will be assembling photos and remembrances from anyone who would like to share them. Please contact Mary by **February 1**, if you have an anecdote or old photo to share. Send items to her at: [monwimmer@gmail.com](mailto:monwimmer@gmail.com)

Jim worked to the last, submitting his final report for this newsletter, as Political Chair (see below).

Election Results for WV Chapter Endorsees: Who Won, Who Lost

Jim Sconyers, Political Chair

The WV Chapter endorsed 22 candidates for election in November 2016. The results for each endorsee, including the candidate's name, office, district and outcome, are listed below.

Nine of the 22 candidates we endorsed won, while 13 lost.

- Mike Manypenny  
US House of Representatives District 1 - Lost
- Charlotte Pritt  
Governor - Lost
- Samantha Fooce  
WV House 14 - Lost
- Joe Fincham  
WV House 17 - Lost
- Kristen Ross  
WV House 31 - Lost
- Margaret Staggers  
WV House 32 - Lost
- Nancy Guthrie  
WV House 36 - Lost
- Larry Rowe  
WV House 36 - Won
- Mike Pushkin  
WV House 37 - Won
- Stephen Baldwin  
WV House 42 - Won
- Richard Iaquina  
WV House 48 - Won
- Tim Miley  
WV House 48 - Won
- Wayne Worth  
WV House 48 - Lost
- Mike Caputo  
WV House 50 - Won
- Linda Longstreth  
WV House 50 - Won
- Tim Manchin  
WV House 50 - Lost
- Barbara Fleischauer  
WV House 51 - Won
- Rodney Pyles  
WV House 51 - Won
- Evan Hansen  
WV House 51 - Lost
- Alan Tomson  
WV House 53 - Lost
- Rod Snyder  
WV House 67 - Lost
- Stephen Skinner  
WV Senate 16 - Lost

Trump nominates Scott Pruitt to head EPA

In 1980, then President-elect Ronald Reagan nominated James Watt to serve as Secretary of the Interior and Anne Gorsuch as EPA Administrator. These were among the most anti-environmental officials ever to run these important agencies. Watt drew outrage from Americans everywhere for his open disdain of environmental protection and his determination to open federal forests, parks and other public lands to mining, timbering and drilling.

In response, the Sierra Club and other groups, in 1981, gathered over 1 million signatures on petitions to oust Watt, and he eventually resigned.

Fast forward 36 years. President-elect Donald Trump has nominated Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to head the U.S. EPA. Pruitt refuses to accept the reality of climate change, let alone the role of fossil fuels in contributing to it, and has led lawsuits to challenge EPA's Clean Power Plan rules to limit emissions of greenhouse gases. He has challenged other EPA rules to limit mercury emissions or water pollution by challenging the definition of "Waters of the United States." He has also challenged Obama administration health care laws and immigration policies.

A consistent theme in Pruitt's legal action is the disdain for science and any facts that conflict with polluter profits. Industry has responded with plenty of backroom support. In 2014, Pruitt circulated on his agency's letterhead a nearly verbatim letter drafted by oil execs attacking oil and gas pollution emissions estimates by EPA. We can be sure the foxes will be guarding our chickens if Pruitt is affirmed.

Just How Bad Is Pruitt?

The fossil fuel industry has few better allies than Scott Pruitt, whose own bio describes him as "a leading advocate

against the EPA's activist agenda." He's spent his time in office working to allow big polluters to do whatever they want, rather than protecting the health, clean air and water of his constituents.

Americans count on the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure our air is safe to breathe and our water is safe to drink, but Scott Pruitt is an extremist who will put those safeguards at risk. As Attorney General of Oklahoma, Pruitt was a key architect of unrelenting attacks on our bedrock, lifesaving clean air and clean water protections. He has also led the fight against climate action and the Clean Power Plan, doing the bidding of the fossil fuel industry.

An EPA run by Scott Pruitt means more pollution, more asthma attacks, more premature deaths, and more mercury poisoning. If Trump can confirm Pruitt for EPA, the result would not only put our local air and water at risk, but would also cripple U.S. climate leadership and put the stability of our planet in danger.

What You Can Do

First, tell West Virginia's U.S. Senators Joe Manchin and Shelly Capito to stand up for people and the planet by strongly opposing Scott Pruitt's nomination to head the EPA. Insist that the head of EPA must at least respect science and understand that our right to clean water and air is more important than polluter profits.

Second, look for more actions in the weeks to come. Sierra Club will be making a major effort to maintain the central role of EPA as an enforcement agency for all Americans.

Contact Jim Kotcon, [jkotcon@gmail.com](mailto:jkotcon@gmail.com), for other ways you can help protect our air and water.

TAKE ACTION

Petition Signatures Needed

FirstEnergy, the parent company of Mon Power and Potomac Edison, wants to transfer ownership of a coal-fired power plant from one of its Ohio-based subsidiaries to Mon Power. This action would unfairly transfer costs and risks to West Virginia ratepayers, resulting in higher electric rates for Mon Power customers.

The West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC) must approve FirstEnergy's request for ownership transfer of the power plant. The WV Chapter of the Sierra Club is collecting signatures to submit to the PSC, urging them to reject this bad deal.

If you have not yet signed our petition to the WV Public Service Commission regarding FirstEnergy's pending power plant transfer case, please do so by visiting the Energy Efficiency page of our website: [www.sierraclub.org/west-virginia/energy-efficiency](http://www.sierraclub.org/west-virginia/energy-efficiency)

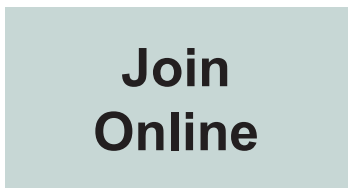


Autumn Long (left), of WV SUN, enlightens Chapter Treasurer Sally Wilts on the benefits of going solar.

Forum educates voters

On October 17, the Mon Group worked with Our Children Our Future, Friends of the Cheat, and the Preston Community Arts Center to co-host "Tunes of Change: An evening of open mic music and voter education on hometown issues."

Chapter member Tom Peterson generously donated the use of his building in Kingwood for the event. Preston County residents presented issues important to them, including Alternative Energy and Energy Efficiency, Water Quality, Industrial Hemp, Importance of Parks and Recreation, and the Repeal of Right to Work. Nine candidates for office attended.



Help your Chapter stay strong for the hard work we do to keep West Virginia wild and wonderful.

One fee covers membership in the national Sierra Club, the West Virginia Chapter and, if you live in the designated region, the Monongahela Group.

Make a quick and easy donation or join "the Club" from the Chapter's home page:

[sierraclub.org/west-virginia](http://sierraclub.org/west-virginia)

View from the Chair

— Jim Kotcon, Chapter Chair

## What Will Those Pipelines Cost Me?

We are in the midst of major campaigns for fossil fuel pipelines, such as the Mountain Valley (MVP) and the Atlantic Coast Pipelines (ACP). Normally, my opening question would attempt to address the environmental and human health impacts, as they should. Those costs are real, and have long-lasting consequences. And, normally, the economics of such development projects would favor the industry promoters.

But is that true with these pipelines?

### Let's follow the money

The MVP is a \$3.7 billion (with a "B"), 42-inch gas pipeline running 330 miles from Wetzel County to Pittsylvania County in Virginia. It crosses streams, limestone Karst topography, steep hillsides, and state and national parks and forests.

But where does that \$3.7 billion come from? Is the MVP even needed? And how does it affect my pocketbook?

It turns out, no one knows; or if they do, they aren't telling.

In theory, the users of the gas transported by the pipeline would pay off the construction costs over the life of the pipeline. But pipeline companies acknowledge that they are likely to "overbuild" pipeline capacity. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) grants high rates of return on equity to pipeline companies, up to 14 percent in many cases. With such returns, there is little incentive to limit pipeline construction or costs.

Studies of pipeline capacity show that the proposed users in Virginia and North Carolina could be supplied by existing pipeline capacity, undercutting the argument for need.

Duke Energy and Dominion Virginia

Electric and Power, however, have signed contracts for gas from ACP anyway, meaning their utility ratepayers will be on the hook for the construction costs (\$5 billion). Why do that? Why would utilities spend \$5 billion for a gas pipeline they don't need? Because they can charge ratepayers for all costs, plus a 14-percent rate of return on equity, even if the ACP is underused! Utilities cannot lose, but customers can.

The MVP is different. Its capacity has been contracted by gas suppliers. Thus, the risks are to gas company investors. They make money if they can transport cheap gas in West Virginia to more expensive markets on the East Coast. EQT Corp., the largest owner of the MVP, will continue to be threatened by weak prices for gas and may not be the long-term stable partner that communities seek. Market projections show that the price gap will narrow in coming years, meaning that the revenue may not cover the cost of building the pipeline.

The ratepayers using the MVP gas include customers of Consolidated Edison and Roanoke Gas. They will obviously be at risk for any cost overruns and revenue shortfalls. If the price differences between West Virginia gas and the gas from other sources drops, ratepayers will be required to pay rates for MVP gas much higher than market prices.

These scenarios assume that the gas is needed to reduce greenhouse emissions from coal-fired power plants. In the short-term, President-elect Trump has proposed canceling the Clean Power Plan, meaning demand for gas may be lower than projected, at least for a few years. And since climate change is real (science does not care what Donald Trump thinks),

when climate action is taken in a future administration, the opportunities to use gas as a transition fuel will be much more limited.

"Okay," you say, those other customers on the East Coast might be at risk, but West Virginia needs jobs. True, but short-term construction jobs do not build a stable economy. One of the few advantages held by West Virginia to attract new business and manufacturing is our low energy costs. Building pipelines will tend to raise prices for local consumers, while lowering the energy costs in surrounding states. How does that help West Virginia compete?

And now we come to what this means to me and my pocket book: higher gas prices for West Virginia customers. Even if these pipelines do not serve West Virginia customers, by raising the value of WV gas, local utilities will pay more — and will have to charge me more — for the gas I use to run my kitchen stove and the furnace that heats my house.

How much more? I have asked both FERC and the WV Public Service Commission to estimate the rate impact to WV consumers like me. They agree that rates will likely go up, but they don't know how much, and do not plan to find out.

West Virginia consumers like me are on the hook, and no one is telling us for how much!

Next time local politicians tell you how important it is to build these pipelines, ask them why they want to raise your utility rates and why they want West Virginia to be less competitive for jobs!

**P.S.** The best analysis of these economic risks that I have found is available at: <http://ieefa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Risks-Associated-With-Natural-Gas-Pipeline-Expansion-in-Appalachia-April-2016.pdf>



Like us on Facebook to get more up-to-date information about our "doings."

Sierra Club West Virginia  
Mon Group of the WV Sierra Club  
WVSC Marcellus Shale Campaign



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## Blowing in the Wind

It's time for America to get smart about energy and become less dependent on fossil fuels. We need to increase our use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.

Giving's a Breeze. JOIN Sierra Club.

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Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35

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## What You Missed at SierraFest 2016

Jim Kotcon

It started with "Blood on The Mountains," a documentary film by Marilynn Evans, about the often-violent history of the mining industry and the fight for social and economic justice in West Virginia.

SierraFest 2016, at Blackwater Falls State Park, Oct. 28-30, was an inspiring weekend of fun and celebration. An homage to the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, as well as current efforts to protect public lands via our own Birth Place of Rivers (BPOR) National Monument campaign.

Mike Price coordinated the Outings Leader training workshops and put preaching into practice by leading well-attended hikes around the State Park. Prospective outings leaders took First Aid training, as well as an introduction to the basics of leading a Sierra Club outing, or Outings Training 101.

Saturday afternoon included a series of presentations on politics — after all, it was only 10 days before the election. Our keynote speaker, Robert Rupp, a professor of Political Science at Buckhannon Wesleyan College, talked about the political shift in West Virginia, once a reliably Democrat state, but one increasingly shifting toward Republican in recent elections.

Bill DePaulo gave some intriguing facts about how the energy industry is changing, with the increasingly rapid onset of renewables, and the "utility death spiral" as companies long dominated by large coal-fired power plants are suddenly finding themselves out-competed by renewables.

The Chapter Conservation Round-up reviewed our campaigns

for wildlands, energy efficiency, climate, coal, and natural gas issues. Even the newest Chapter members had input. In a hands-on workshop led by Laura Yokochi, people were asked how they felt about all they had heard during the weekend — "overwhelmed" was one of the more frequently used words, but "inspired" and "hopeful" were also mentioned.

The Chapter Awards ceremony was held Saturday night. The three main awardees were introduced in the last issue (Nov/Dec). Special awards were presented to Mike Price and April Keating, surprising both recipients.

Sunday provided another hike, more workshops and some time for quiet reflection.

SierraFest would not have been possible without a lot of hard work by the planning committee. Jim Sconyers, Laura Yokochi, Liz Wiles, Mike Price and Sally Wilts, along with many others, deserve our gratitude. I am especially grateful to Regina Hendricks, who coordinated our Silent Auction, and I appreciate the work that Jim Sconyers, Sally Wilts and the rest of the Awards Committee did to identify the truly deserving recipients. From outstanding speakers to excellent accommodations to music and entertainment, there was never a dull moment.

My happiest discovery was the number of new people who came to a Sierra Club event for the first time. These new friends brought their energy and enthusiasm, and I look forward to seeing them again soon.

Look for our Chapter Retreat in 2017, and another SierraFest in 2018.

# Going Solar in Roane County

## Jan and Bob Mertz hold Open House

Laura Yokochi

On a crisp, sunny Saturday afternoon in early November, a steady stream of cars snaked up, over and around the picturesque hills off Route 33 in Roane County. The two lanes of paved road turned to one lane, then to gravel. Finally, at the top of a rutted dirt drive was a sign: Solar Open House. Here, most visitors opted to leave their cars on the side of the narrow road and walk the last half mile down to the Mertz homestead.

In an outbuilding a short walk from the old, white-painted farmhouse, Bob and Jan Mertz, as well as their neighbors and co-hosts Mary Wildfire and Robin Wilson, welcomed guests with refreshments and talked about their reasons for going solar. Of course, solar energy is cleaner, but they all feel that producing one's own power adds to energy security in a way that massive, grid-tied systems do not. Terrorists (or a natural disaster) could take out the entire grid with one well-timed attack, but would find it difficult to take out many individual systems. True independence lies with household solar, not "energy corridors."

Bob then led visitors on a scenic hike up to see the solar panels. On the way, he pointed out the cisterns that provide water to the household, fruit and nut trees that he'd personally grafted, and a large recessed cave across the hollow. At the top of the hill, some friendly horses came out of an ancient log stable to greet the hikers. Just on the other side, in full sun, the panels were installed on adjustable wooden racks, low enough to reach with a broom when it snows. On the way back, the more adventurous of the group crossed the narrow bridge to the cave, viewed the mysterious drawings on the ceiling, and discussed future possibilities for the massive natural structure.



Back at the house was an impressive array of batteries to store the power produced. Bob and Jan explained the way the system works for them and answered numerous questions. The house is supplied with conventional grid-tied electricity, but the solar power is not tied to the grid. Appliances can be switched from one source to another as needed.

Bob and Jan were inspired to install solar power after attending the open house at Hickory Ridge in October 2015 (see *Mountain State Sierran*, Sept/Oct 2015 and Nov/Dec 2015). At that event, approximately 40 visitors braved the rainy, cold weather to view Robin and Brenda Wilson's grid-tied system and the off-grid system of neighbors Don Alexander and Mary Wildfire. Mary said, "Our fondest hope is that someone who comes to this year's event at Bob and Jan's house will be inspired, and instructed, enough to put in their own system — and perhaps host an event in 2017."

## MONONGAHELA GROUP

Fri, Jan 20, 6-8 p.m.

Meagher's Irish Pub

26 Betten Ct #101, Bridgeport

Charles Pointe, north of Bridgeport along I-79

This is an opportunity for members to meet the new Mon Group ExCom and socialize. Formal ExCom meeting/orientation, 6-7 p.m.; social hour, 7-8 p.m.

### FEBRUARY Activities

We are tentatively planning a film screening in Morgantown, co-hosted with WVU SSC.

For info, contact Autumn Long at [autumnlong11@gmail.com](mailto:autumnlong11@gmail.com) or 304-841-3539, or watch for email announcements from WV Sierra Club (Sally Wilts). To be added to the Mon Group email list for receiving monthly activity reminders, contact Sally at [sallywilts@yahoo.com](mailto:sallywilts@yahoo.com).

## National Board of Directors Election Coming in March

The 2017 election cycle for the Board of Directors is underway. A slate of seven candidates has been put forward by the national Nominating Committee.

Four others have indicated their intention to run as petition candidates. They have until January 11 to deliver the requisite number of valid petitions in order

to become "candidates" for the Board election.

The WV Chapter will try to review all valid candidates at the January 14 ExCom meeting in Morgantown. If any member feels strongly about any of the candidates, please let a member of the Chapter ExCom know your opinions.

If any candidates appear to be obvious choices, the ExCom may provide endorsements, which would appear in the next issue (March/April) of this newsletter.

Members may begin voting in early March, so please acquaint yourself with the candidates and take the time to make your voice heard by the Sierra Club.

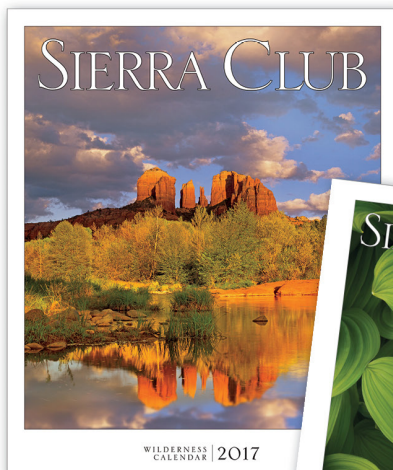


Jim gets a political pinata ready for a 'beating' at the Mon Group Winter Potluck, Dec. 7, in the Kotcon/Elliott garage.



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## 2017 Sierra Club Calendars



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Make checks payable to: WV Sierra Club		Subtotal: _____	
Mail orders to: Candice Elliott - Calendars 414 Tyrone Avery Rd Morgantown WV 26508		Shipping: _____	\$6.00
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Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates. Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to the Editor at:

**[celliot2@comcast.net](mailto:celliot2@comcast.net)**

414 Tyrone Avery Rd  
Morgantown, WV 26508

**Deadline for  
March/April issue**

**February 4**

Opinions expressed in the *Mountain State Sierran* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Sierra Club. This newsletter is published bimonthly by the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club and distributed to all paid members.

# OUTINGS

Sun, Jan 1

**Day Hike: New River Gorge Nat'l River**  
*rated moderate* — Join us for the first hike of the New Year. Beginning at the Fayetteville Town Park Trailhead on the Fayetteville Trail, this 5-mile loop hike will meet the Long Point Trail to the parking area and then take the Timber Ridge Trail back to the start.

**Leader:** Mike Price, [mp54wv@gmail.com](mailto:mp54wv@gmail.com), 304-400-8354

**Nearest town:** Fayetteville, WV

**Web info:** <https://www.nps.gov/neri>

Sun, Jan 1

**Day Hike: Appalachian Trail, Keys Gap**  
*rated moderate* — Start the New Year off right with a nice day of exercise. We will hike a little over 6 miles on the Appalachian Trail, starting at Keys Gap in Harpers Ferry and hiking south to the Blackburn Trail Center. We will leave cars at both ends; please let me know in advance if you plan to attend so we can arrange shuttles.

**Leader:** Pam Peitz, [pspeitz@hotmail.com](mailto:pspeitz@hotmail.com), 240-818-6554

**Nearest town:** Harpers Ferry, WV

**Web info:** <http://www.appalachiantrail.org/home/explore-the-trail>

Sat, Jan 7

**Eagle Survey: Bluestone Lake**  
*not rated* — We will join the Pipestem State Park staff and other volunteers for their annual Eagle Survey along the New River and Bluestone Lake.

**Leader:** Mike Price, [mp54wv@gmail.com](mailto:mp54wv@gmail.com), 304-400-8354

**Nearest town:** Hinton, WV

**Web info:** <http://www.pipestemresort.com>

Tue, Jan 10

**Evening Hike: Coonskin Park**  
*rated easy* — This is an easy out-and-back evening hike along the Elk River at Coonskin Park, just outside of Charleston.

**Leader:** Lisa Stanley, [citycritik@gmail.com](mailto:citycritik@gmail.com), 304-617-7154

**Nearest town:** Charleston, WV

Sat, Jan 14

**Day Hike: New River Gorge, Stonecliff Trail**  
*rated easy to moderate* — We will hike 5 miles along the New River.

**Leader:** Mike Price, [mp54wv@gmail.com](mailto:mp54wv@gmail.com), 304-400-8354

Sat, Jan 28

**Educational Hike: New River Gorge, Trails of Nuttallburg**  
*rated easy to moderate* — We will hike on trails in the historic mining town of Nuttallburg, in the New River Gorge National River park. Besides hiking, you will learn historic facts about the old mining community.

**Leader:** Annie Balthazar, [rivergal1720@gmail.com](mailto:rivergal1720@gmail.com), 530-902-9740

**Nearest town:** Fayetteville, WV

**Web info:** <https://www.nps.gov/neri>

Sat, Feb 11

**Day Hike: Watoga State Park**  
*rated moderate* — Meet at park headquarters at 10:30 am for a 4- to 6-mile hike in WV's largest state park. We will begin and end at the Lake Trail. There are some elevation changes, but hikers will find the trails in decent condition. Loop

variations will be offered. Bring good hiking boots and proper clothing for weather conditions, snack and water. Hiking poles are recommended. Heavy snow or ice cancels the outing.

**Leaders:** Susan Chappell, [susan2hike@frontiernet.net](mailto:susan2hike@frontiernet.net), 304-653-4770; Beth Little, [blittle@citynet.net](mailto:blittle@citynet.net)

**Nearest town:** Marlinton, WV

**Web info:** <http://www.watoga.com>

Sat, Feb 18

**Day Hike: Long Point, Summersville Lake**  
*rated easy* — This is a 3.2-mile out-and-back hike to Summersville Lake's Long Point, with beautiful views of the lake.

**Leader:** Mike Price, [mp54wv@gmail.com](mailto:mp54wv@gmail.com), 304-400-8354

**Nearest town:** Summersville, WV

Sun, Feb 26

**Day Hike: Black Rock/Annapolis Rocks**  
*rated moderate* — We will begin at the trail head on White Oak Drive, off Crystal Falls Drive, then hike up the Thurston Griggs Trail — a VERY steep climb with rocky footing — up to the intersection of the Appalachian Trail. We will head south on the AT, taking in Black Rock cliff as well as Annapolis Rocks, both of which have great views. We will return the same route for a total of about 7 miles.

**Leader:** Pam Peitz, [pspeitz@hotmail.com](mailto:pspeitz@hotmail.com), 240-818-6554

**Nearest town:** Hagerstown, MD

## FEBRUARY CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

As weather permits, Brent will post dates and times for short-notice ski outings on the Chapter website: [www.sierraclub.org/west-virginia](http://www.sierraclub.org/west-virginia). To be notified when outings are planned, please contact Brent.

**Leader:** Brent Carminatti,  
[brentcar1@frontiernet.net](mailto:brentcar1@frontiernet.net),  
703-999-8679



## Perspectives on Outings

— Mike Price, Outings Chair

## Review of 2016, a Look Ahead at 2017

What a great year 2016 was for offering outings to our members.

It was one of the best years ever in the history of our outings program. More than 60 outings were listed in our newsletter or on the Chapter website. And there were at least an additional 30 outings posted on the new WV Sierra Club Meetup websites. About 85 percent of these outings attracted participants, ranging from as few as two to as many as 15 people attending, plus a few dogs. I want to personally thank everyone who attended one or more of our outings this year.

I am especially very thankful of our outings leaders. They offered a variety of outings in and outside our state. There were backpacking trips, canoe/kayak trips, Veterans outings, short hikes and long hikes. The leaders volunteer their time to make these great outings possible. I hope 2017 will be just as successful as this year has been.

I took a look through the newsletter archives from 2011-16 to get a feel for how the outings program has evolved. There were 50 separate outings offered in 2011; 51 in 2012; 41 in 2013; 31 in 2014; and 27 in 2015, for a total of 200 outings over five years. With this year's 90 outings added to the mix, the total is close to 300 outings over six years.

We trained new leaders in 2016 and now have 12 active outings leaders. Some long-serving leaders have moved on, but new ones have signed up. We are always in need of new leaders, so if you love sharing the outdoors with others and might be interested in leading outings in your area, please contact me or one of the other outings leaders. We offer training for new leaders, Outings Leader Training 101, and will pay for your First Aid and CPR certifications.

We expressed appreciation this year for "Outstanding Achievement" by two of our outings leaders. Ann Devine-King and Pam Peitz received this award for leading 50+ outings during their time as Outings Leaders. I presented the awards to them on October 29 at SierraFest. Their outstanding leadership in our outings program has made it possible to offer so many outings. Thank you so much for your efforts Ann and Pam.

This year's SierraFest, at Blackwater Falls State Park, was very successful. More than 50 people attended, with several great speakers and interesting programs. Dan Chu, of Sierra Club Wildlands, and Jeff West, a ranger with the New River Gorge National River, gave wonderful presentations. Six prospective new leaders attended Outings Leaders Training 101. Hikes were offered each day, and with the weather so fine, many of the attendees joined us walking the great trails in the park with their beautiful views of the Blackwater River canyon.

## Coming in 2017

Consider joining us this year for one or more of our outings.

Visit the new and improved website for a list of outings and events offered by the WV Chapter. The website is user friendly, thanks in large part to the efforts of Autumn Long, our webmaster. I am always adding new outings to the calendar, so check our website weekly for an updated list.

The WV Sierra Club will start accepting contributions specifically to help fund our Outings Programs. Any contribution is appreciated, and all designated monies will go to Outings Training and Events. Contributions may be given to me, the Outings Chair, or to the Outings Leader on any outing you attend.

In the coming year, we will start two NEW Outings Programs: WVSC Outings Attendance and WVSC Outings Challenge. For WVSC Outings Attendance, you will receive a WVSC Outings patch and certificate when you attend at least five Chapter outings listed in our newsletter, or on the Chapter website or our MeetUp sites. For the WVSC Outings Challenge, you must hike 50 miles by attending our Chapter's outings. You will receive a WVSC Outings patch, Sierra Club ballcap and certificate. I will list each member who completes one of the programs in the newsletter and on our website.

Join us Outside and on the Trail in 2017!

## Sierra Club Liability Policies For Chapter Outings

Sierra Club outings are open to everyone, members and non-members alike. Each outing is intended to be a wholesome, safe, and enjoyable experience in the outdoors. Participants must have suitable clothing, gear, and stamina, and are encouraged to select activities that match their individual abilities for outdoor adventures.

The Club offers a variety of outings from "easy" to "moderate" to "strenuous" that suit all activity levels. The difficulty of each outing is clearly designated in the announcement. Reservations are generally not required unless noted, but the outing leader may be contacted in advance for questions about the terrain, the difficulty and recommended gear.

Activities are normally held "rain or shine," but may be postponed at the leader's discretion for safety reasons in the event of inclement weather. Participants are reminded that all outdoor activities carry a degree of risk, and some take place in locations where professional emergency medical aid may be two or more hours away. People with health concerns

should consult a physician to determine the advisability of participating in these or similar activities. The leader is responsible for the safety of all participants, and has the final authority to decide whether or not an individual may participate on a specific outing. Sierra Club safety policy requires that helmets be worn on bicycling outings, and a personal flotation device (PFD) be worn when using personal watercraft such as kayaks or canoes.

Unless noted in the announcement, Club outings are intended for adults. Children and dogs are not normally permitted, unless an outing is so designated. Minors (under 18 years of age) must be accompanied by a parent or a legal guardian, or they must have both 1) a signed permission slip, and 2) the leader's prior consent to participate in the Club outing. Sierra Club outings officially begin and end at the trailhead.

Travel to the official starting point and back, even from an advertised meeting place, is the sole responsibility of each participant. While the Club encourages car-pooling, such

arrangements are strictly between the riders and the drivers, and are not a part of the outing. Participants assume full responsibility and liability for all risks associated with such travel.

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver, which can be viewed at [www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms](http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms) or by calling 415-977-5630.

The Sierra Club does not charge for chapter outings, although payment of park entrance fees, a share of campsite rental costs, permit fees, equipment rental charges, etc. may be required from the participants. The Sierra Club practices "leave-no-trace" trail techniques, including hiking and camping on durable surfaces, minimizing campfire impacts, packing out all trash, respecting wildlife, being considerate of other visitors, and leaving the environment as it was found.

The Sierra Club's California Seller of Travel identification number is CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

## West Virginia Chapter Outings

Updated outings are listed on the Chapter's website: [sierraclub.org/west-virginia](http://sierraclub.org/west-virginia), and also on two Meetup.com groups: "West Virginia Chapter Sierra Club" (Morgantown) and "WV Sierra Club-New River." Outings are added to these sites weekly.



**SIERRA  
CLUB**

**Sierra Club**  
West Virginia Chapter  
PO Box 4142  
Morgantown, WV 26504  
[sierraclub.org/west-virginia](http://sierraclub.org/west-virginia)

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(202) 456-1111 Fax: (202) 456-2461  
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State Capitol  
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email: [governor@wvgov.org](mailto:governor@wvgov.org)

### **To Contact STATE LEGISLATORS**

email to WV Legislature:  
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(Put name of recipient under subject)  
  
Messages for legislators can be left at:  
1-877-565-3447 or 304-347-4836  
Mail address:  
  
Member, WV Senate or  
House of Delegates  
Bldg 1  
State Capitol Complex  
Charleston, WV 25305  
  
website: [www.legis.state.wv.us](http://www.legis.state.wv.us)  
has contact information for all state legislators.

**Regional Sierra Club Staff**  
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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

## *Preserve the Future*

Not everyone can make a large gift to protect the environment during their lifetime, but you can preserve the environment for generations to come by remembering Sierra Club in your will. There are many gift options available. We can even help you plan a gift for your local Chapter.

For more information and confidential assistance, contact:

**Sierra Club  
Gift Planning Program**  
85 Second St, Second Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
[gift.planning@sierraclub.org](mailto:gift.planning@sierraclub.org) • (800) 932-4270

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