

M Mountain State Sierran

Vol. 43, No. 2 (Supplement)

sierraclub.org/west-virginia

March/April 2017

Jim Sconyers: A WV Sierra Club Icon November 16, 1943 – December 12, 2016

Mary Wimmer remembers

Working with others on this special tribute to Jim has been a labor of love, accompanied by a range of emotions. Here are some of my reflections:

When the WV Chapter of Sierra Club was formed in 1984, I met Jim Sconyers among the other founding mothers/fathers with whom I shared a love of the outdoors and a strong desire to protect and preserve our earth and its special wild places. Jim was a Sierra Club activist in the truest sense. He had studied and appreciated the history of the Club, giving him firm ground on which to stand. He understood every aspect, from conservation to outings to education, nationally, regionally and locally, and was committed to making a difference through Club actions. He recognized the importance of getting others involved — expanding Club membership was an underlying theme in all his activities. And he realized the critical role of sustained Chapter leadership. There



Mary Wimmer, March 1992

Jim gazes out from the cliffs at North Fork Mountain.



Kathy Gregg, October 1984

Paul Turner (left), Jim, unidentified woman, and Bob Coit meet in Buckhannon to begin process of establishing the WV Chapter of Sierra Club.

was great joy in the West Virginia mountains upon learning of his return from New Hampshire! He was a main anchor to which the Chapter was firmly moored for many years.

Jim had an amazing environmental activism skill set. He knew from years of experience how to mount a campaign, how to organize and deliver public testimony, how to lobby, how to get media attention, how to put on workshops and tours, and how to motivate people to act. His work on any issue was supported by careful research and sound argument. He was an excellent writer and speaker. And he was not averse to dressing up to represent an adversary in demonstrations at the State Capitol! He was simply great at exposing issues in a way that empowered and energized people. The extensive amount of conservation work Jim did over three decades is well documented elsewhere in this special supplement to the *Sierran*.

— continued on p. 2



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

A Tribute to Jim Sconyers

continued from p. 1 —

During a large workshop for Conservation Committee Chairs put on by National Sierra Club in our Eastern Panhandle back in the 1980s, each participant had to give an example of how they did NOT act in an environmentally sound way. There were the usual stories (driving when one could have walked, not recycling, etc.), but Jim brought down the house when he simply exclaimed, with perfect emphasis for a West Virginian, “I heat with coal!”

After returning from a few years in New Hampshire, Jim made a significant change in that lifestyle, committing to living “off the grid.” In November 2013, I visited Jim and his dog Max at his last home, a true “green house,” with solar panels, windmill and woodstove, and backup electric heat. No coal in sight!

He took me on a hike around the place, telling stories, of course. My favorite involved the old dilapidated house trailer that he and wife Judy had occupied in that very spot when they first got married. It apparently evolved into the place where teenage son, Jacob, and his friends would enjoy partying, while Jim complained that he was destroying the place. The evidence was clear, beer cans included!

Jim appreciated the volunteer nature of the Club’s conservation activists. He understood that with all the hard, and often frustrating, work must come time for R&R, fun and laughter — time to further bond with fellow activists and find strength for the work at hand. Indeed, Jim was one of my favorite companions as we enjoyed WV Sierra Club outings of all sorts, reminding us of what was at stake. (Of course, his delightful son, Jacob, was often along.) Although we enjoyed wildflower walks near his home and canoeing the newly designated Ohio River Islands NWR, we were most in our element when hiking and camping in and around the wildlands of the Monongahela National Forest. Whether watching comets while camped on the North Fork of the Cranberry, enjoying spectacular views from the cliffs of North Fork Mountain, kicking back at our Otter Creek Wilderness camping spot, or delighting in the spring peepers singing around the pond at Middle Mountain Cabins,



Photo circa August 1986

Jim (left) and Paul Turner enjoy a cold, refreshing brew after a day of trail work in the Laurel Fork Wilderness.

Jim was always relaxed, engaging and fun, exuding happiness at being there.

He and I worked together with the U.S. Forest Service to maintain and protect the places we loved. We organized lots of trail work, especially after the 1985 flood, and became deeply involved in Mon NF management. After working in Laurel Fork Wilderness, High Falls of Cheat and on other trails, there was always a cooler of beer awaiting tired bodies, with time to sit, reflect and enjoy the satisfaction of a productive day’s labor. Our Forest Plan work in the ’80s and beyond protected key areas from roads and timbering. Jim single-handedly began the drive toward permanent Congressional Wilderness designation for Dolly Sods North after federal acquisition. This ultimately laid the groundwork for our 2001-’09 Wilderness campaign (while he was in New Hampshire), in which this area was designated, along with several others.

When I heard Jim was organizing the northern WV buses for the Climate Change Rally in D.C. on a cold February day in 2013, I had to go, as much for Jim as for the issue itself. I had not seen him, or been involved in environmental activism, for several years prior, and I can still feel the warmth, delight and welcome in the looks we gave each other at first sight!

Dedication, commitment, caring. Tenacity, perseverance, inspiration. Intelligence and enthusiasm. A deep love for the Earth’s community of life, and the ability to connect profoundly with it. These are words that come to mind when I reflect on the legacy that Jim Sconyers is leaving to the West Virginia Sierra Club. Jim never let his illness get in the way of this. I suspect that John Muir would be proud of his achievements. I consider it an honor that he was my long-time friend. He will always be a presence in my life.

And so, I will sign off as Jim did at the end of every email he sent: “Remember, Mother Nature bats last.”

Mary Wimmer is a founding mother of WV Sierra Club, a former Conservation Committee Chair and outings leader, and a Mon National Forest activist.



Kathy Gregg, May 1983

Patti DeChristopher (left), Jacob Sconyers in mother Judy’s lap, Jeff DeChristopher (standing), Jim and Chris DeChristopher attend a potluck picnic at Tygart Lake State Park, a forerunner of the annual Chapter Galas and, more recently, SierraFest.



Loosestrife

Fragile whorls of lemon yellow
blooms proffered on long reaching stems
eager to share harmony, sheltered
by pale soothing leaves.

Set strife loose

lose strife

loosestrife

Lysimachia quadrifolia

Herbal secret of peace

Fed by ancient *Lysimachus* to raging bull

Pacified, gentled, calmed, strife lost.

Cooperation, mandatory for yoked oxen

straining sinews to fructify land

of New World

Achieved by lacing grassy hay
with liberal additions of loosestrife.

Oxen lose strife, find harmony,
unite, pull as one,

advance common cause, progress.

Lesson for today in lore of ancients?

What is *Lysimachia* for humankind?

Shall we graze in Appalachian meadows,

or subversively slip loosestrife leaves in,

disguised as lettuce or spinach or

other indigenous greens?

Will we then see blossoming

of peace, love, mutuality,

as strife is lost?

Loosestrife holds red beacon

at heart of flower,

symbol of unity's strength, of kinship's force.

— a poem by Jim Sconyers

Kathy Gregg shares

I think that the first time I met Jim Sconyers was at an outing in May 1983. It was one of the first outreach outings that the West Virginia Group of Potomac Chapter held as we were thinking seriously about applying for Chapter status. In August that year, Jim led what was probably his first official Sierra Club Group outing to Cranesville Swamp Nature Preserve, in Preston County. He also hosted a Group Executive Committee meeting at his home in Cranesville that same day. Those were the early days, when Chapter status was but a small, though growing, spark in our imaginations.

Jim was also present at our first official organizational meeting, held in Buckhannon, in October 1984. Toward the end of the year, he was appointed as an alternate delegate from our Group to the Appalachian Regional Conservation Committee of Sierra Club. Also during 1984, Jim led four Group outings and another in early 1985. The WV Chapter was established in May 1985. What I am trying to convey here is that Jim has been with us, taking leadership roles, from the beginning of our Chapterhood. I remember his enthusiasm about being a steward for the Planet, and his great, friendly, outgoing spirit that was contagious! These traits served the Sierra Club well for more than THIRTY years!

Kathy Gregg's son Jeff (left), Jim, and Dave and Emily Warner take a lunch break during one of the Chapter's early Service Outings, picking up trash near High Falls of the Cheat.

Photo circa April 1985



As the WV Chapter became established, Jim continued to serve in many different capacities (see Timeline, back page). In addition to administrative and other leadership duties, Jim made time to get involved in a multitude of conservation issues. Several years ago, I was surprised, proud and pleased to see him at an important hearing in Buckhannon meant to educate the public — from the power company's point of view, of course — about the high voltage PATH transmission line being proposed. Jim was there representing the Chapter, with lots of Sierra Club handouts that portrayed this project as the ill-planned —and now fortunately defunct — scheme that it was. The reason I emphasize this is that Jim didn't live close to Buckhannon, and he cared enough about this project to make a special 2-hour trip (one-way) over and around mountains for an evening meeting to spread the Sierra Club word.

Jim took time to make sure our members met and enjoyed each other. I for one appreciate very much that he restarted our Chapter galas after a long hiatus. He has been with the WV Chapter from the beginning, fighting for the beautiful hills of West Virginia alongside the rest of us. He was ALWAYS THERE for us.

Kathy Gregg is a founding mother of the Chapter, past Mon NF activist and outings leader, and current Chapter Historian/ Archivist.



Trail work continued on the High Falls Trail during an August 1985 outing. Two on left unidentified, Paul Turner, Jim Sconyers, Greg Good, and kneeling, Ann and Dave Warner with daughter, Emily.

Julie Archer

Project Manager for WV CAG

I was sorry to hear of Jim's passing. He was one of the people I met when I first became active on environmental issues. It was 2000 or 2001 and I was volunteering at the WV CAG/WVEC office. He and Jim Kotcon stopped by while they were in Charleston doing something at the PSC related to electricity deregulation. More recently, I got to know Jim better through the collaborative work of our and other organizations on Marcellus Shale-related issues. I always admired and appreciated his enthusiasm and dedication. He was a kind curmudgeon with a sense of humor, and he'll be sorely missed!

Sam White

Leaning Pine Farm, Mount Savage, MD

<http://www.leaningpinefarm.com>

The first time I met Jim was in a carpool ride to the Southern Appalachians regional training in South Carolina for Sierra Club volunteers and staff, back in the late 1990s. He was a tried-and-true rural member of the Club who valued all things "nature" and a good beer.

There were several hundred people there, and like a good Appalachian, he was the only one wanting to go grab some beer with me. He made that weekend for me, talking about forest issues and the Club over several good beers. He could really make us laugh.

Last time I saw him was on the bus he organized to pick up Tristan Apple, Desiree Bullard and me for the February 2013 Climate March in Washington, D.C. We talked about First Energy's plans to increase their coal consumption, and how the West Virginia Chapter and the Western Maryland Group should team up to stop this.

He will be missed.



Bill Hughes

Marcellus Shale activist, Wetzel County

Jim had a very long-time connection and contribution to the Sierra Club in WV. Mine has been short, and rather narrowly focused just on Marcellus Shale topics. It is interesting that my most memorable conversation with Jim took place a few years ago at West Virginia Wesleyan College during a Sierra shale workshop between my presentations. But our conversation had nothing at all to do with the environment or shale gas or even the Sierra Club. It was much more simple, a topic that binds all of us, in due time.

We shared some of our insights and concerns. As older guys, both with similar and serious health concerns and circumstances, we comfortably disclosed our fears and hopes on death and dying, pain and suffering, and the miracle of medical health interventions when combined with the healing and powerful good wishes and prayers of friends. We knew we each had a limited number of days and were on borrowed time. Jim must have borrowed fewer days than I did. I think we reflected on using our days well and being more grateful for our allotted time. I do not remember any other conversation topics with Jim, and to be honest, none of the others seem important now. We shared the important ones. Life and death, hopes and fears — not much more to discuss, is there?

Dave Saville

Former WVSC ExCom member, and long-time forest activist with the WV Highlands Conservancy

Many people will recall fun times with Jim: outings, events, celebrations, etc. Not to throw cold water on the time I spent with Jim, but my recollections are mostly not of the “fun” type. Not that we weren’t happy to do it, or that we didn’t enjoy it, but Jim and I were Forest activists together, comrades who were birds-of-a-feather when it came to protecting our public lands. Especially the Monongahela National Forest. We were brothers-in-arms!

Back in the 1990s and before, the focus of the land managing agencies was “get the cut out.” Meaning that timber harvesting was the number one priority, and any of the other multiple uses the agency was supposed to be managing for were secondary. We were strategizing, gathering information, studying the laws and guidelines, mobilizing people, interacting with managers, getting the help from lawyers, developing media and outreach materials, and organizing campaigns. We were butting heads with timber beasts, arguing about the value of old-growth forests, clean streams, unfragmented forest habitat, and quiet, contemplative recreation. We were advocating and speaking up for our collective constituency, whom we believed were not being represented fairly, nor were our interests receiving the consideration they were due. It wasn’t always fun and games. But it was our shared vision, our similar interests and staunch resolve that brought us together and allowed us to keep up the fight.

I’m glad we both lived long enough to see a turnabout within these agencies. Some of them anyway. Then, it was called “ecosystem management.” Now, clean water, forest soils, wildlife and recreation enjoy a much-elevated status and receive the important consideration in management decisions that they deserve.

I like to think it was the work of people such as Jim who were the force behind these important changes in management priorities. I think, in recent years, Jim could sleep better at night knowing he’d played a part in those changes. I think his concerns diversified and his resolve was focused on other issues he felt were important, like global climate change. Indeed, the Forest Service on the Monongahela National Forest is now doing much more to restore the original forest than they are to destroy it. It was Jim, and others like him, whom we can thank for that.

Yes, we were able to enjoy the forest together, too, and those were very fun times. But when I think of Jim, I think of making a difference, about fighting for what’s right. Cheers to Jim and the Mon!



The Chapter’s first Service Outing involved a major clean-up of garbage near High Falls of the Cheat, in April 1985. The group hiked along the railroad track from Glady to the work site, and ended up filling 20 or so garbage bags with all kinds of stuff. The Forest Service arranged for bag pickup near the railway.



Mary Wimmer (left), Jim Sconyers, Paul Turner and Linda Butler enjoy a cold brew after an August 1985 outing.

Photo Gallery



Jim Zulkowski, Fall 1997

Jim warms up with a soothing beverage (coffee or ??) while staying at the Middle Mountain Cabins during a Chapter outing.



Jim Zulkowski, Spring 1998

Picnics were always a highlight of Jim's Middle Mountain Cabin outings. Tom Prall (left) and others join Jim, with "spring peeper pond" in the background.



Jim Sconyers (in red jacket) ponders the river during a 2008 winter hike through the Blackwater Canyon, an annual Jim Kotcon-led trip for Sierra Student Coalition and other Chapter members.



Jim leads a X-country ski outing in Otter Creek Wilderness.

Jim Zulkowski, circa 2000

Jim Kotcon pays tribute

Current Chapter Chair

I knew Jim for many years. We got a lot of comments about "the two Jims" in Sierra Club, and while I have certainly been active, no one worked harder, cared more passionately or loved the outdoors more than Jim Sconyers. He had a passion for the Mon Forest, Blackwater Canyon, and all the wild places of West Virginia. Even as he battled the cancer that ultimately took his life, Jim lived for Sierra Club. He served as Chair of the Chapter's Political Committee through most of 2016, fighting to help elect better leaders to our Legislature and Congress. I know that was tough for him, but those who knew him best also said it gave him purpose. I join the others here in offering tribute to one of our proudest, most active and longest-serving members.



Jim Zulkowski, February 2000

Jim (red hat) loved winter. Here, he joins X-country skiing companions Steve Selin (left), Paul Wilson, Jim Kotcon, Jenny Selin and Sarah Kotcon (kneeling) for an outing in Canaan Valley State Park.

Photo Gallery

Mary Wimmer's son, Ben, had his first "long" hike on this Jim-led trip along the East Fork of the Greenbrier River.

Joining them are Bill McNeel (left); Becky, Tim and David Holmes; Jim, Ben, Beth Little, Carolyn Sharp and Laurie Cameron.



Mary Wimmer, Oct. 2007



Photos by Mary Wimmer, November 2013

Jim built his final home (above) in Preston County entirely off the grid. Solar panels and a windmill generated all his electricity, with an array of batteries to store any excess. He shared his little slice of Heaven with canine companion Max (left).

WV Chapter Establishes Memorial Fund

A special memorial fund has been set up with the Sierra Club Foundation to support sustainable trail construction and maintenance in some of Jim's favorite places in the state. To

donate, contact our Chapter Treasurer, Sally Wilts, 304-379-7567, sallywilts@yahoo.com, or "Donate" online from the Chapter web page with a memo that it is in memory of Jim Sconyers.

Memories from Outings Companions



Greg Good (left), Cindy O'Brien and Jim make their first foray into the Cheat Mountain 6.2 Area. Jim was one of a group who enjoyed exploring the 6.2 Areas of the Mon, those areas designated for backcountry recreation in the Monongahela National Forest Plan.

Mary Wimmer, circa late 1980s

Greg Good

A founding member of WV Sierra Club in 1984, and former Outings Leader

I don't remember when or where I first met Jim Sconyers. Despite his and my love of hiking and the mountains, I am sure it wasn't outside. It was likely at a Sierra Club ExCom meeting, almost definitely. In 1983 and 1984, he and I both were at lots of them. So, I met him as he usually was, engaged in protecting the trails and mountains he loved.

I remember many trailhead meetings, with Jim and Judy and Jacob perched on the tailgate of a pickup truck, Jim's crooked smile and laugh and that direct way he looked into my eyes, anyone's eyes.

My clearest memory came back just yesterday, thanks to Cindy O'Brien. As often is the case, a deep memory was triggered by a smell: Ramps! Cindy, Mary Wimmer and I, around 1986, were staying at Shot Cherry Cabin near Spruce Knob. We were on a trail work planning trip. I had been out on my own the afternoon before they arrived, gathering ramps. That evening, we cracked a few beers and fried up the ramps in butter, and had a feast!

The next day we were to meet a few people in Glady to hike into the Cheat Mountain 6.2 Area from the north, to see if there was any possible route to develop as a trail. We drove over to Glady, got out and started walking the hundred feet or so toward where Jim Sconyers was parked. We hadn't gotten but a few steps when Jim's smile turned around and he let loose a few choice words and said something like, "Stop right there! How many ramps have you eaten?" A keen nose and a sharp tongue!



Photo circa May 1985

Paul Turner (left) and Jim help Jim's son, Jacob, cross the Upper Laurel Fork River.

But we went on to explore Cheat Mountain that day, hiking old logging roads and dense rhodo thickets. We hiked many more mountains together over the years, but I never ate ramps on a trip with Jim again. I saved them 'til I got home!

Sally Wilts/Duane Lazzell

Friends and hiking partners

My husband Duane and I, like so many others, first met Jim as he led a Sierra Club outing. By this point in his life, he had retired and built his off-grid, energy efficient home on his property adjacent to Cranesville Swamp Preserve. He lived the life he knew was necessary to reduce our impact on the environment and avert the worst of global warming, and he spread that message to everyone he knew.

Jim had returned to WV after living out of state for several years, and he made his adopted state and the WV Chapter of Sierra Club the center of his life. He applied his considerable intellect, passion and energy to defending our environment. It is astonishing to me that he was so devoted to our Chapter and brought so much determination and effort to us. He became Chapter Chair and, working with others, developed a Marcellus campaign that won a National Sierra Club Communications Award in 2012. While he was Chair, he helped to organize Marcellus Academies for three years, to develop an online course on inspecting natural gas facilities, to conduct workshops on accessing, analyzing and reporting on self-reported ash landfill water quality discharges, and participated in lobbying in Charleston, attended WV DEP hearings, organized protests, wrote letters to the editor, wrote for our Chapter newsletter, restarted an annual Sierra Club event for our members, and did so much more.

Duane and I continued to go on outings with him, and our friendship grew. Jim was open-hearted and shared so much of himself in his stories of his life and adventures. We enjoyed all the times we spent with him, whether paddling kayaks or hiking or exploring for wildflowers. He was an excellent naturalist and reacted with wonder each time he saw wildlife, a beautiful landscape or a new plant.

He seemed to have an insatiable curiosity and loved having his Smart phone as a reference and camera. Posting on Facebook allowed him to share his experiences with a wide group of friends and family.

Carpe diem was his motto, and he did not want to be identified by his illness. He continued to live his life as fully as his pain allowed and was very courageous as he faced setback after setback. His family was incredibly supportive, and it was wonderful to see them answer his needs.

We feel tremendous gratitude that our friendship with Jim enlivened our lives with his well-read knowledge and critical thinking skills, and sharing magazines, books and film recommendations. His legacy is all those whom he influenced by sharing himself, whether as a teacher, a leader or as a friend.

Bill Potter, *Hiking companion*

Several years ago Jim Sconyers, Tom Prall, and I were hiking on Dolly Sods. We started talking about doing our laundry. It went on for about half an hour. We covered favorite detergents, mixing lights and darks, and permanent press; and our laundry failures.

The idea of three bachelors hiking on a beautiful summer day and talking about washing clothes seems a little surreal.



Mary Wimmer, June 2015

Jim at Siriani's, a never-to-be-missed meal after hiking at Blackwater Falls State Park. On this occasion, Sally Wilts, Duane Lazzell and Mary Wimmer accompanied Jim for a fine hike along Dobbin House Trail.



Jim Zulkowski, Summer 1998

Jim (right) joins Bill Potter and another for a backpack trip in Blackwater Canyon.

Graeme Donovan reminisces

WV Sierra Club Outings participant

Dolly Sods Hike: On Sunday August 16, 2009, I left home at 6:30 a.m. and drove to the Foodland in Oakland to meet Jim Sconyers for the first time. We rode together in Jim's Toyota Tacoma truck to Dolly Sods and parked at the Red Creek Campground. Our party of nine (Jim, Gentry, Cheryl, Tom, JoNell, Bill, Carol, Fred and me) left at 10:45 a.m. on the Blackbird Knob Trail west, crossed Red Creek, took the Upper Red Creek Trail, then north on the Dobbin Grade Trail, traversing a beautifully made beaver dam. We had a late lunch near the junction with Beaver View Trail, hiked to the left fork of Red Creek and retraced our steps to head north on Beaver View Trail (marked as Raven Ridge). Eventually we reached Bear Rocks Trail and turned east, to finish our hike at Bear Rocks, riding back in the truck to the Red Creek Campground.



Graeme Donovan, August 2009

Jim (center) loved leading hikes in Dolly Sods North, especially when the wild blueberries were ripe. Here, Jim identifies the flora and talks about the formation of 'Dolly Sods.'

At the Davis Shop 'n Save, three of the party left for Grafton, and the remaining six stayed for dinner at Siriani's Restaurant in Davis before Jim returned me to Oakland by 10 p.m. and I drove home by 11. It was a long, long day, and that testifies to something Jim insisted on in leading this hike, as he did with all his hikes, "stopping to smell the roses." For him this meant his intense and prolonged savoring of the Dolly Sods atmosphere in which he so openly and unabashedly reveled, as well as an extended tutorial for hike participants in the botany and ecology of the area, which Jim knew intimately and exhaustively. On this day, the landscape was

lush with swelling blueberries, which we picked all along the way; some prepared for this better than others, carrying containers they filled to take home.

The weather was beautiful at 4,000 feet, with that unique Dolly Sods "feel in the air," and Jim's ability to teach (honed by his school career) deepened everyone's appreciation of all the berries (blue, black, cran, mul, and elder), not to speak of Golden Rod, St. John's Wort, Gentian, Aspen, Alder and Norway and Red Spruce, many young trees slowly repopulating a landscape laid bare by clear-felling an ancient forest, wildfires that literally scorched the dried earth, and then intentionally shelled and bombed by the military. Jim opened our eyes to how beavers had reshaped this landscape, as well as to the dynamism of all the natural processes going on beneath our feet and before our eyes.

Charleston MTR Rally: On Monday December 7, 2009, Jim met me at Ashebrooke Square (Cheat Lake) at 10:40 a.m. (having driven from his home at the edge of Cranesville Swamp) and we rode together in his maroon Prius to Charleston, to the Department of Environmental Protection HQ to attend a rally organized by Coal River Mountain Watch and the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, to protest blasting off the top of Coal River Mountain. There were about 300 present at the protest, and 200 miners heckling, symbolically between us and the DEP, with police in a no-man's land in between.

The rally proceeded from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., with a keynote address by Robert Kennedy Jr., who presented a raft of devastating statistics about the true costs of coal, including the long-term effects of mercury poisoning on children's IQ. Kathy Mattea sent a message that was read to the rally, and other speakers included Episcopal and Unitarian ministers, Lorelea Scarbro (a miner's widow), Larry (a retired coal miner), the modern "Mother Jones" of the region, and numerous others including Judy Bonds and Maria Gunnoe. Massey Energy had organized a stream of large coal trucks that continuously circled the streets surrounding the protest venue, honking loudly each time they passed. Kennedy took to shouting out amid his speech, "Honk if you want to save



Graeme Donovan, August 2009

Jim (right) crosses a well-built beaver dam while leading an outing in Dolly Sods North.

Memories from Outings Companions

Coal River Mountain,” and of course the passing trucks honked loudly, as if on cue. Kennedy had also taken considerable time before the rally to speak to the coal miners who were mounting their counter protest (again organized by Massey), engaging them on issues as important to them as to anyone else in the communities surrounding the mountain.

For me it was an important lesson in political protest, how to deal with adversaries in the fight to prevent environmental damage, and in the companionship of the struggle — thank you, Jim, for inviting me, and once again widening and deepening my experience! He even took well my teasing for burning so much wood through the winter that it surely added quite a lot of carbon to the atmosphere, a minor glitch in his decision to live off the grid.

Blackwater Falls State Park Outing: On Saturday February 19, 2011, Sally Wilts, Duane Lazzell, Jim and I hiked in the snow (not

quite heavy enough for the promised snow shoes) from Pendleton Lake along the trail to Pase Point above the Blackwater River, with Jim - as was his wont - identifying trees all along the way (for me, at least – the others probably knew them well, already). Then we visited the Blackwater Falls overlook, heavily crusted with ice and snow but swollen with winter torrents, before driving to Douglas, and taking the high trail from Douglas Falls along the North Fork to the confluence with Blackwater. It was a striking day for me, not the first that Jim had helped etch beautifully in my memory.

I’m deeply grateful to him for these three trips that he guided, on which I was a fortunate beneficiary of his knowledge and experience. His determined, dedicated, humane activism on behalf of the environments he loved continue to bear fruit in those environments, as well as in the lives of his companions on the way. Thanks for the wonderful and enduring memories.

Jim (center) takes a group on a hike in Blackwater Canyon

Jim Zulkowski, Summer 1997



Beth Little remembers

Long-time WV Sierra Club activist on Wilderness/Mon NF and Marcellus Shale

Jim Sconyers was just about the most dedicated Sierra Club member I know.

We worked together on Monongahela National Forest issues before his job-related move to New Hampshire, where I understand he became as involved in Club work as he was here. He held a staff position as the EPEC organizer on Blackwater Canyon and the Mon National Forest, and organized many important actions, such as getting a hearing scheduled with the Forest Service on the Roadless Campaign that was packed to overflowing. He began the move to achieve wilderness designation for the newly acquired Dolly Sods North expansion, and the materials he developed were instrumental in our success when we formed the WV Wilderness Coalition.

I had the pleasure of shuttling Jim in Pocahontas County when he hiked the entire Allegheny Trail in West Virginia as a celebration of the Sierra Club Centennial in 1992. There was quite a stretch of the trail on roads between Marlin Mountain and Watoga State

Park. I provided vehicular travel on that stretch and got to hear how he wandered around lost on Marlin Mountain where logging roads intersected and scrambled the trail without any helpful signs. But Jim was a deeply experienced hiker and Life Member of the Sierra Club, so he managed.

After returning from New Hampshire, he served the WV Chapter tirelessly. Although enduring significant health problems, he still organized the attendance of others and continued to drive across state and to Washington, D.C., for meetings, hearings, lobby events, marches, protests, etc. Having gone through chemo therapy myself, I was amazed when I called him for something and didn’t realize he was at the medical center waiting for treatment until he told me he had to leave because they’d come to get him.

In his personal life, he walked the walk, having built a completely self-sustained solar/wind-powered home and started a nonprofit that donates CFLs to low-income homes.

These are just a few of many good memories I have from over the years of knowing Jim — I will miss him.

Timeline of Jim's WV Sierra Club Activities

Compiled by: Kathy Gregg & Sally Wilts

1980s and '90s

Spent much time backpacking in Monongahela National Forest with son Jacob.

May 1983: Kathy Gregg first met Jim at an official West Virginia Group Sierra Club outing to Tygart Lake in Barbour County. This was one of the first outings the Group held, as our WV Group (of the Potomac Chapter) began publicizing to members our hopes about becoming a full-fledged Chapter.

August 1983: Jim and Judy Sconyers hosted an outing to Cranesville Swamp and a Group Executive Committee meeting at their home in Cranesville, WV.

October 13, 1984: First Chapter organizational meeting was held in Buckhannon, WV. Jim was one of the participants!

December, 1984: Second Chapter organizational meeting was held at the Catholic Conference Center in Huttonsville. Jim was appointed as an alternate delegate to the Appalachian Regional Conservation Committee of Sierra Club. Also, during 1984, Jim led four Group outings.

May 1985: The West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club was officially established. Jim became a member of the Conservation Committee, and led one Group outing in 1985.

1986-'89: As a Chapter Outings Leader, Jim led three Chapter outings each in 1986 and 1987, and participated in the numerous WV Sierra Club trail work outings on the Mon NF after the 1985 Flood.

In 1986, Jim became Newsletter Editor for the Mountain State Sierran, serving until the end of 1989. During that time, he also became very active with Beth Little and Mary Wimmer on Monongahela National Forest issues as a member of the Chapter's Forestwatch Team.

1994-early 1996: Served as Chapter Rivers Chair/Canaan Valley Task Force Chair

1997: Applied for and received a \$30,000 grant from REI for Forest issues, and Forest Watch continued working on the comprehensive plan for the Mon National Forest. Also, served as Chapter Chair in 1997.

1998-1999 (2 years): Served as Chapter Conservation Chair.

2000s and '10s

As the Chapter's first paid staff person, Jim was hired by National Sierra Club as an Organizer on Blackwater Canyon and the Mon National Forest, and when funding ran out in 2000, the Chapter continued his funding for that year.

2000-Mar/April 2001: Served as ARCC Delegate and Blackwater Canyon Chair.

2001-'06: Jim lived in New Hampshire, where he became Chair of the SeaCoast Group of Sierra Club. Worked on White Mountain and energy issues.

2007: Jim finally returned to WV, and WV Sierra Club, and built his Green Home. Yeah!

2008-2015: After a short stint as Chapter Vice Chair, Jim became Chapter Chair again in late 2008, and served continuously in that role until early 2015.

After returning to WV, Jim's activities were many and diverse, summarized here:

- Restarted the Chapter's Annual Sierrafest, helping

Jim acting silly at Blackwater Falls State Park, during the celebration of the Chapter's 30th Anniversary.



Photo circa Sept. 2014

organize our 25th Anniversary celebration in 2009 at Camp Virgil Tate, and our 30th Anniversary celebration at Blackwater Falls in 2014.

- Campaign to defeat PATH transmission line
- Helped form the Chapter's Marcellus Shale Committee and organize Marcellus Academy three times. Marcellus campaign included media blitz, website, logo and bumper sticker, and brochure. He represented the West Virginia Chapter at a major hearing in Buckhannon. This campaign won the Chapter a Communications Award from National Sierra Club in 2012.
- Organized Coal Ash Permit workshop
- Organized Gas Well Watchers workshops on-line
- Organized buses to carry activists to the DC demonstration against fracking, the "Forward on Climate" Rally
- Organized demonstrations at Rep. David McKinley's office in opposition to his efforts to pass bills to disallow EPA from regulating coal ash
- Longtime WVSC Outing Leader, with a special focus on Blackwater Canyon and Dolly Sods North. More recently, restarted water outings, kayaking the Cheat and Blackwater Rivers.

Environmental Awards

1988 1st Jan Tyler Memorial Special Service Award from WV Sierra Club "for his initiative and creativity in producing the chapter's excellent publications."

1992 Outstanding Outings Leader from WV Sierra Club

1994 Monongahela Award from WV Sierra Club

1999 Mother Jones Award from the WV Environmental Council "for his work on the Forest Watch and Blackwater Canyon campaigns"

2012 Communications Award to WV Chapter of Sierra Club from National Sierra Club for primarily Jim's work on the Marcellus Shale Campaign.

2013 Special Service Award from National Sierra Club