

M Mountain State Sierran

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Challenges Abound in Protecting Public Lands

Matt Kearns, West Virginians for Public Lands

In February, the conservation community cheered when Utah Rep. Jason Chaffetz announced he would withdraw his controversial bill to transfer 3.3 million acres of federal public land to several western states. The backlash and “victory” over HR 621 highlighted the passion everyday Americans have for our public lands and the strength of grassroots power, especially when sportsmen and conservation groups work together for shared values.

But Chaffetz’s land transfer bill was only one attack among many...

Rep. Bob Bishop, also of Utah, continues to advocate for the sale or transfer of public land. Back in January, he sponsored an amendment to a budget rule package that declared public land to be of no value to the taxpayer when considering a sale or transfer. Now he’s gone even further, asking his fellow representatives for a \$50 million earmark to fund the administrative costs of making such a transfer a reality. Our own Rep. Evan Jenkins is in a unique position to stand up for public lands. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Jenkins has substantial influence on Bishop’s earmark.

Lawmakers used the Congressional Review Act to strike down the Bureau of Land Management’s “Planning 2.0” process. Planning 2.0 would have given the public more input at earlier stages in the planning process; without it energy, ranching, and timber industries will continue to have outsized influence setting the agenda when it comes to development on BLM land. Reducing stakeholder involvement undermines sound multiple-use management and does nothing to fix the quagmire of expensive lawsuits and endless bureaucratic review. And bear in mind that the use of the Congressional Review Act prohibits BLM from issuing a similar rule again.

The Congressional Review Act is being used again on BLM rules to curb methane waste on federal leases. The targeted rule attempted to reduce venting and flaring to ensure that taxpayers would receive royalties on gas extracted from public lands even when industry chooses to waste it — an additional \$300 million. Many folks might not know that the BLM manages mineral rights throughout the federal government, even if the surface owner is a different agency. Therefore, overturning this rule could impact leases in our nearby national forests like the Monongahela and Wayne. Senator Manchin remains a key swing vote.

HR 46 was yet another attempt to use the Congressional Review Act to repeal the Department of the Interior’s “9B” rules. These rules govern extraction under National Park lands in the case of a split-estate (different surface/mineral rights owners), and haven’t been updated since 1978. The future of this bill is unknown, as President Trump recently signed a similar executive order supporting his own review of the 9B rules and other policies to support an increase of energy development and coal leasing on public lands.

Spring in the Mountains

If we don’t act now to protect Public Lands, vistas like this one may become a thing of the past.

Support “West Virginians for Public Lands” and bring all stakeholders together.

Melvin Hartley



One of the most visible fights right now is over national monuments and the 1906 Antiquities Act. S 33, co-sponsored by Senator Capito, would eliminate presidential authority to designate national monuments and instead place that responsibility solely in the hands of Congress — with necessary approval from both state and local governments. Opponents to the Antiquities Act cite federal overreach, but the Act can only be used on existing federal public lands. What do the Grand Canyon and the Grand Teton have in common? They were both opposed by local governments at the time they were established as national monuments and have since gone on to become among the top destinations and economic engines for their respective states.

A few lesser known bills have been introduced and linger in committee. Another Chaffetz bill, HR 622, would eliminate federal law enforcement on Forest Service or BLM land. HR 232 would allow up to 2 million acres of National Forest to be sold to each state for timber production. Remember that budget rule amendment that passed in January? Those public lands now have no monetary value and therefore could be “sold” for nothing.

Two million acres would transfer the Mon twice over to the state of West Virginia. How would West Virginia manage more land? In the face of budget cuts, the state has already leased mineral rights beneath Ohio Valley Wildlife Management Areas and closed camping and recreation facilities at four DNR managed sites in the southern part of the state: Berwind, Bluestone, Laurel Lake, and Plum Orchard.

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Next Chapter ExCom Meeting

Sat, May 20: Lewisburg

All members are welcome.
Contact Laurie Ardison for details
ikeandash@yahoo.com

Chapter Leaders Retreat

Fri-Sun, Aug 4-6: Cacapon SP

This event is for new and experienced leaders in the Chapter to become acquainted and have some fun. It’s also for our members to discover more about what the Chapter does and how they can help with our many campaigns. More info to come. Check our Website.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Toward Energy Efficiency and Energy Independence

Pamela Ellis, Energy Efficiency Liaison

Take action with the WV Sierra Club by asking the state's Public Service Commission (PSC) to reject FirstEnergy's proposal to transfer the Pleasants Power Plant to Mon Power and Potomac Edison ratepayers. The proposal filed with the PSC (Case No. 17-0296) would allow FirstEnergy to purchase 100 percent of the Pleasants Power Plant. In comparison, investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy would cost less than half the amount of power generated by the Pleasants power station, and with lower health costs and environmental degradation.

According to a commentary in *U.S. News & World Report* (March 17, 2017), "Right now, America's solar industry employs nearly 209,000 workers, compared to about 150,000 jobs remaining in the domestic coal industry. A study published in the journal *Energy Economics* found that the growth of solar-related employment could absorb coal-industry layoffs and provide full-time careers for coal workers during the next 15 years. After retraining, the study concluded, salaries for technical workers in the solar industry would surpass the money they made working in coal."

Rather than agree with the companies' analysis that they are purchasing "an affiliated company" that benefits WV ratepayers and our tax base, the PSC should require Mon Power and Potomac Edison to ramp up their energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts in WV, efforts that are currently ranked among the lowest in the country. Taking this step will ensure that any projected energy capacity shortfall would be met satisfactorily for decades to come, making purchase of the Pleasants Power Plant unnecessary and ill-advised.



A solar-powered car gets a "fill-up" by plugging in at a Solar Open House hosted by John Christensen and Mountain View Solar, in Berkeley County on April 2, showcasing how West Virginia residents are making strides toward energy independence.



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

View from the Chair

— Jim Kotcon, Chapter Chair

Trump Administration Discovers That Facts Matter!

A frequent promise from then-candidate Donald Trump was to roll back Obama-era rules and get coal miners back to work. Early efforts included repeal of the Stream Protection Rule and other regulations designed to prevent adverse impacts from coal mining. His most recent effort was an Executive Order directing EPA to "review" the Clean Power Plan.

But President Trump is discovering that he cannot undo years of legal work with a simple "order." His first few months in office have resulted in one boondoggle after another. An Executive Order to restrict Muslim immigrants was overturned in court. Investigations of alleged "wire-tapping" ordered by then President Obama have failed to uncover a shred of evidence, despite Trump's efforts to double down on the charges. A bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act unraveled when Congressional Republicans could not agree on a replacement. Turns out that Health Care is complicated.

Likewise, the efforts to overturn the Clean Power Plan have run into reality. It appears that President Trump's refusal to accept the science of climate change illustrates another case of reliance on wishful thinking, arrogant hubris and self-deception, not to mention a failure to comprehend basic facts and well-established science.

The Clean Power Plan had its origin in a 2007 ruling by the Supreme Court (*Massachusetts v. EPA*) that concluded that EPA could regulate greenhouse gases as pollutants under the Clean Air Act, and directed EPA to act. EPA responded with a 2009 "finding" that greenhouse

gases endanger public health and the environment, and this "Endangerment finding" was upheld by the D.C. Circuit Court.

Over the next several years, EPA developed several rules to restrict greenhouse gas pollution, including auto fuel efficiency standards, appliance rules and others. But the single largest unregulated source of greenhouse gases is from electric power plants, especially coal-fired power plants. EPA proposed the Clean Power Plan in June 2014, held numerous hearings, took testimony and hundreds of thousands of public comments, and issued a "final rule" in August 2015. That makes it the law of the land.

The Final Rule was challenged in court by fossil fuel industries and a coalition of states led by West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrissey. But numerous other states, and a broad coalition of public interest groups, filed legal documents in support of the rule. In February 2016, the Supreme Court issued a "stay," halting implementation of the final rule until the lower court could issue a ruling on the merits of the appeals. The Court heard numerous hours of hearings, testimony and legal briefs.

Then, President Trump assumed office and issued his Executive Order to "review" the Clean Power Plan. EPA took the unprecedented step of asking the court to delay any ruling until this EPA review was completed.

Environmental groups have responded, insisting that EPA's petition for delay be denied. Such a step would allow EPA to ignore the overwhelming scientific evidence for climate change, as well as the clear

requirements of the Clean Air Act, their own endangerment finding and the federal Administrative Procedures Act, all of which require implementation of the Clean Power Plan.

EPA cannot decide to disobey the law just because President Trump wishes it to, as the Sierra Club argued in its brief.

And President Trump is finding out that other actions of climate denial have important consequences. Pulling out of the Paris Climate accords, as he had proposed during the campaign, would actually leave the U.S. isolated and alone among our important allies.

Numerous other states are moving ahead with their own greenhouse gas restrictions. Consumers are driving the demand for clean energy, with major corporations insisting on 100-percent renewable energy for their facilities. Growth in renewable-energy jobs far exceeds jobs in fossil fuels.

Another statement by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt that challenged whether carbon dioxide emissions from humans contributed to warming is now being investigated by the EPA Office of Scientific Integrity. EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy requires EPA officials and staff to ensure the agency's work respects the findings of the broader scientific community. The complaint filed by the Sierra Club states, "While Administrator Pruitt is free to advocate for policy changes, he may not do so while distorting the basic science underlying the policy he opposes."

Facts Matter! Who Knew?

Well, anyone who has been paying attention — and President Trump is finding it out, too.

Public Lands — cont'd from p. 1

Oregon's Elliott State Forest serves as a timely example of the clouded future that might befall public lands when management responsibilities are left to states. In January, the Oregon State Land Board approved the sale of the 82,000 acre Elliott State Forest, Oregon's first state forest, to private interests to generate revenue in the face of lagging timber sales. The sale would result in the loss of public access to half of the acreage and access fees for the remainder. The decision by the Land Board whipped up a fervor of support; amid this public outcry and political backlash the Oregon State Legislature introduced a bill to save the forest — but it comes with a \$100 million price tag. At press time the fate of the Elliott remains uncertain.

The lessons learned from the small victories amidst the numerous attacks on public lands tell us that we must continue to be vigilant while forming new alliances and partnerships. We must amplify our collective grassroots power to ensure coordinated, effective communications and outreach. In this spirit, several organizations and

businesses have started "West Virginians for Public Lands," a partnership to bring many voices to the defense of public lands.

The first actions of West Virginians for Public Lands included a rally in Charleston and a letter to Senators Manchin and Capito asking for their support of our public lands system.

As Americans, every West Virginian is also a stakeholder in all our federal public lands. We share the land in pursuit of pastimes, traditions and recreation. Many businesses are directly connected to public lands; many more are patronized by visitors coming to or from West Virginia's exceptional public landscapes. Our small rural towns and communities benefit from the quality of life and sustainable economic opportunities offered by their proximity and access to public lands. Hikers, hunters, business owners, local communities; all Mountaineers stand to lose if our public lands don't remain so.

Let's keep it public!

Mike Price: Consummate Outdoorsman

August 31, 1954 – February 25, 2017

Ann Devine-King

Friend and WV Outings Leader

The WV Sierra Club community, along with family and friends of Mike Price, are using this space to remember Mike, a great leader and outdoorsman, after he recently lost his final battle with cancer.

Mike followed his passion, enjoying the outdoors and teaching others how to do the same. He served as the Chapter's Outings Chair and was on the Chapter Executive Committee until his final days. Under his leadership as the WV Outing Chair, Mike tirelessly recruited new leaders, and sought new ideas and outings opportunities. He inspired leaders to offer a variety of outdoor experiences including nature walks, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, service outings and backpacking. Group outreach included the Wilderness Society, National Park Service, Paddle for Peace, Kanawha Trail Club, Sierra Club's Military Outdoors, The New River Gorge National River volunteer program and contacts through Meetup.com.

Passionate about hiking, he encouraged others to participate in the National Park's "100-Mile Challenge," and he was among the first to receive their 100-mile challenge patch in 2016. Accepting a Certificate of Appreciation for his excellent leadership at Sierra Fest 2016, Mike stated simply that he did it for his love of nature, wanting to protect it and for the enjoyment of taking people outdoors.

Mike was not afraid to stand up for his beliefs and fight for what was important, sometimes crossing industry and environmental borders. As the president of United Steel Workers-AFL-CIO, WV, and working at Elkem Metals (which is now WVA Manufacturing), Mike believed it was in the best interest of industry to follow a more sustainable policy in protecting the environment. While advocating for new wilderness protection in WV (2007–09), he spoke to Congressional representatives in Washington and was instrumental in winning WV AFL-CIO endorsement to support permanent protection.

The labor union resolution remains inspiring —

As an organization devoted to protecting jobs in West Virginia, we unanimously decided to support additional wilderness in the Monongahela National Forest. We did so thinking of our state's future, taking a sustainable approach to economic well-being.

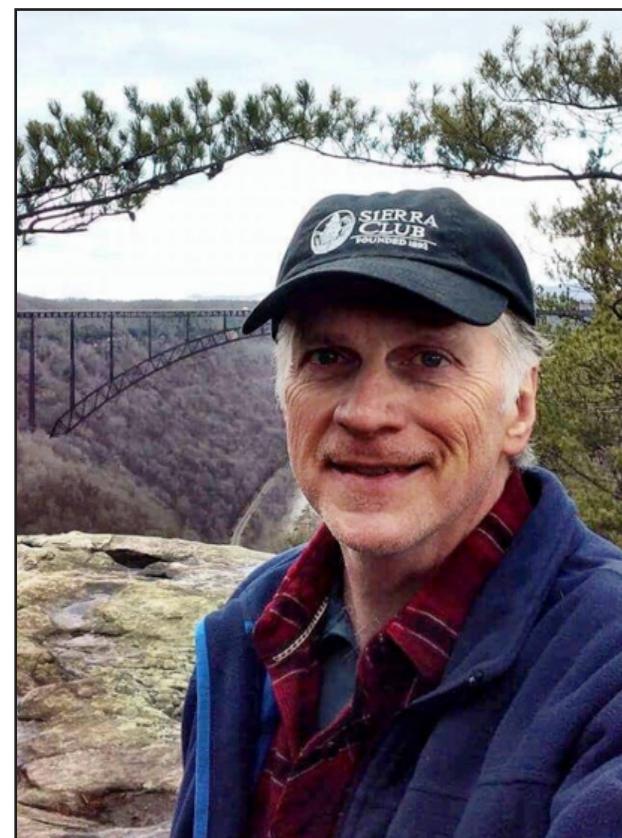
Mike's efforts helped lead to the addition of three new Wilderness Areas — Spice Run, Big Draft and Roaring Plains West — and the expansion of existing Wilderness Areas — Dolly Sods, Cranberry and Otter Creek.

A former U.S. Marine, Mike connected with other veterans through Sierra Club's Military Outdoors trips. The group's motto, *Semper Paratus* — Always Ready, was evident during a June 2016 trip into the proposed Birth Place of Rivers National Monument, when a devastating storm that brought killing floods hit the area where the group was camped. Watching the rising water levels in Tea Creek and Williams River, Mike advised the group to evacuate. Escaping the flood waters, their trip was adapted to the changing circumstances. Mike wrote in one of his columns for this newsletter that as outings leaders and veterans, we are trained to make the best of a bad situation, and what was potentially a bad event became an experience no one would forget.

Matt Keller

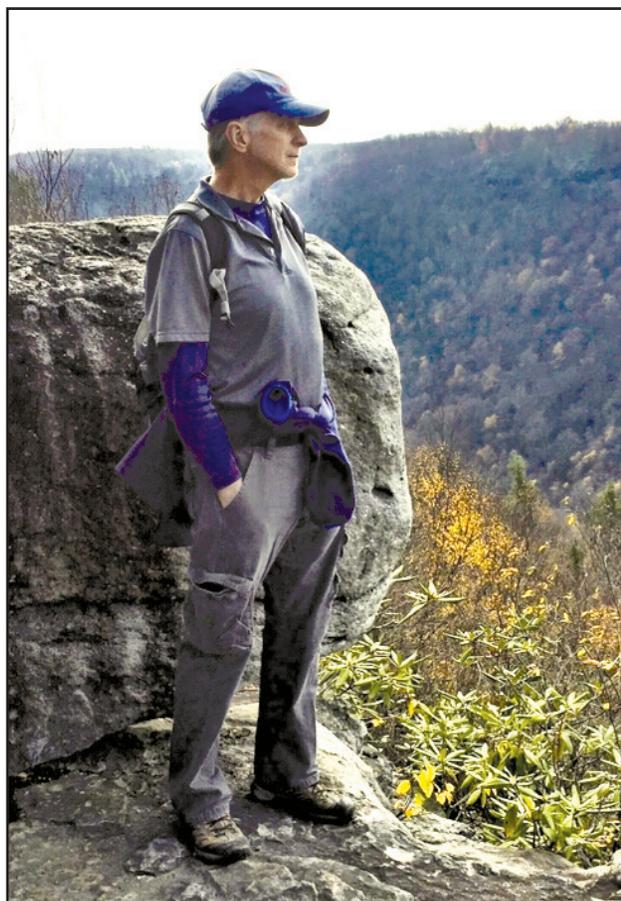
Wilderness Society contact and colleague

Mike Price was a force to be reckoned with. While generally a soft-spoken gentleman, his passion for West Virginia's public lands was strong and clear. This came across clearest to me when he testified in front of the House Natural Resources Committee in favor of the Wild Monongahela Act, which was ultimately enacted in 2008. His voice was pivotal in demonstrating the diversity of support that existed for that legislation, as well as the Mon National Forest in general, and illustrated what an important resource public lands are for all West Virginians. I heard directly from committee staff how impressed members of Congress were with his testimony



Mike at New River Gorge.

and the fact that a leader of organized labor had brought that community together around the legislation. It was a big deal for Mike to be the voice of such an important, and often unrepresented, constituency in the public lands debate. He contributed greatly to the success of the campaign, and all those who enjoy the new and expanded areas it protected owe him a debt of gratitude.



Mike ponders the view at Blackwater Falls State Park, October 2016.



Mike (standing left) and other Outings Leaders, at SierraFest, October 2016.

A Tribute to Mike Price

Annie Balthazar

Iraq War veteran, founder of "Paddle for Peace," and WV Outings leader

Annie remembers finding Mike through her Google search of "wilderness therapy for veterans." After completing a 103-day, 2,250-mile solo paddle of the Mississippi River, she experienced a healing in her wounds of war. Annie was determined to share the miracle of the outdoors to other suffering veterans by escaping on the rivers of West Virginia.

She feels it was not by chance, but for purpose, that Mike came into her life in 2016. Their first scouting expedition was paddling the Cheat. She said, "there was an immediate, unspoken connection between us." An avid fisherman, Mike displayed his skills, "pulling in a fish on every cast."

She was impressed with Mike's unfaltering dedication and passion for Sierra Club. She will remember his sarcasm, strength and gentle heart.



Mike and Annie Balthazar, at New River Gorge.



Mike shows off his catch.

Laura Miller

WV Outings Leader

Laura agrees, "though a man of few words, he taught me many lessons."

Laura was touched by Mike's kindness, humbleness, gentle smile and his appreciation of and connection with nature. She followed Mike's columns in the *Mountain State Sierran* and found "Nature's Healing Ways" (Nov/Dec 2016) particularly beautiful and inspiring, as it expressed Mike's inner strength in connection with nature.

"Nature can heal us in mind, body and spirit.... Nothing on TV or any electronic device can come close to how our bodies respond whenever we take the time to reconnect with the awesome power of the outdoors." [Other columns by Mike may be found in the Newsletter Archive on the Chapter website.]

Daniel Price

Son and fellow outdoorsman

They say nature and nurture influence a person. Undoubtedly, growing up in West Virginia molded Mike. His children, Misty, Daniel and Rachel, each have special memories of growing up with their dad.

Daniel recalls how his dad always taught him to enjoy, respect and protect the outdoors. Starting young, they would go hunting, hiking or fishing, and Mike would teach him to find his way in and out of the woods. On one occasion, after walking into the woods for a mile or so, over ridges and down into hollows, Mike looked down at the youngster and said, "All right, take us back to the truck."

Astonished, Daniel replied, "Really?" and Mike said, "Yes. What would you do if we were out and something happened to me?"

With a little coaching and hints from Mike, they made it

back to the truck. The lesson was well-learned and now Daniel prides himself on being able to go just about anywhere and easily find his way back out. Mike also taught him about survival, tracking and how to travel through the woods leaving only as minimal a trace as possible.

Some final thoughts

Ann D. King

It has been an honor to compile this memorial article about Mike. His contributions and influence in our world helped make it a better place. I would like to end with some of Mike's own words, from his final column for the *Mountain State Sierran* (March/April 2017).



Daniel Price, with dad, Mike.

A Season for Every Purpose

We walk through the woods and float along the rivers in our wild places to unwind from everyday life and the world's conflicts.... Yes, the trails can be hard or easy, but we reconnect with ourselves and with all Creation. Continue throughout your life to spend as much time as possible outdoors, or indoors working to protect our wild spaces for the future, especially in today's world of so much uncertainty.... Get outdoors. Now. Not tomorrow. The seasons are changing.

Memorial Contributions

Contributions to the **Sierra Club** are not tax deductible, as they support our advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Tax deductible contributions can be made to **The Sierra Club Foundation** and mailed to 2101 Webster St, Suite 1250, Oakland, CA 94612.

Make your check payable to **The Sierra Club Foundation** and note that it is for the WV Chapter on the memo line.

Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates. Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to the Editor at:

celliot2@comcast.net

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Morgantown, WV 26508

**Deadline for
July/August issue**

June 3

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.



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Contributions, gifts & dues to Sierra Club are tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$ 7.50 for a subscription to *SIERRA* magazine and \$ 1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Enclose a check and mail to: Sierra Club, PO Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041 or visit our website: www.sierraclub.org

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Each Day a Gift, Plan to Make the Most of It

In all too short a time, two great leaders of our Chapter have passed into the great beyond. We lost former Chapter Chair Jim Sconyers in December, and then only a couple months later, Outings Chair Mike Price shuffled off his mortal coil. It was our good fortune to have known these gentlemen as outdoor advocates, mentors, hiking companions and friends. As Mike said in his final column for the *Sierran*, all seasons come to pass. His final season arrived in February.

For those of us who remain, the seasons continue. Though the circumstances are regrettable, I am honored to continue Mike's legacy by serving as Interim Outings Chair. I've been leading hikes with Sierra Club since 2007 and have been mentored by several previous WV Outing Chairs, including Nate Parr, Dan Soeder, Russ Flowers and Mike Price, as well as Mike Juskelis, of Howard County (Maryland) Sierra Club. I appreciate that each day, season, year is a gift. Being outdoors in the forests, mountains and waterways has been my peace and my passion, and I look

forward to promoting outdoor experiences for others through our Outings Program.

Our outings are open to everyone, Sierra Club member or not. Our goal is to introduce as many people as possible to the great outdoors that is in our own backyard. Trained leaders will guide you in a variety of outdoor experiences including nature walks and hikes; backpack, kayak and canoe trips; and several types of service outings. We strive to offer various levels of difficulty and changing scenery for a diverse outdoor experience.

This year, let's all plan for what we can do **IN** the outdoors, as well as what we can do **FOR** the outdoors.

We are always looking to add new leaders. If you enjoy the outdoors and sharing it with others and might be interested in leading outings in your area, please contact me or one of the other outings leaders. We offer Outings Leader Training 101 and will pay for your First Aid and CPR certifications.

OUTINGS

Sat, April 29

Day Hike: Loudoun Heights

Distance/Difficulty: 7.5 miles, strenuous

Meet: Contact Leader to RSVP and get exact meeting time and location.

Description: We start in downtown Harpers Ferry but quickly move to a steep, uphill climb to Loudoun Heights, with a great view of the Potomac River from the top. We will return by the same route. Dogs are welcome but must be leashed. Parking requires a National Park pass or day pass. Allow 4 hours for this hike. Pack plenty of water and lunch.

Leader: Pam Peitz, 240-818-6554, pspeitz@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Harpers Ferry, WV

Sat, May 20

Day Hike: Kanawha SF

Distance/Difficulty: ~3 miles, easy to moderate
Meet: 11 AM, Dunlop Hollow/Picnic Area parking (GPS: 38.260596, -81.669034)

Description: Enjoy nature in this beautiful deciduous/conifer mix forest, one of the treasures of the state's Capitol. We will go up Polly trail to Wildcat Ridge trail, follow it to the junction of Beech Glenn trail, turn around and complete the loop back down to the parking area following Wildcat Ridge trail. Bring good hiking boots; there's some tricky footage in spots. Polly trail has a series of switchbacks and interesting rock outcrops. We'll stop for a snack at the top of the ridge. We will also spend time observing flora and fauna, so bring your nature guides if you like. Heavy rain will cancel the outing.

Leader: Laura Miller, aepicysta@gmail.com

Nearest town: Charleston, WV

Tues, May 23

Day Hike: Canaan Mountain — Shelter to Overlook

Distance/ Difficulty: 6.0–7.6 miles (depending on shuttle), moderate

Meet: Contact Leader to RSVP and get exact meeting time and location.

Description: Hiking in Canaan Mountain of the Monongahela National Forest, we will pause at an Adirondack-style shelter and continue to one of the most spectacular views in the Cheat

Ranger District. Elevation changes will be less than 500 feet. Foot paths can be narrow, passing through dense rhododendron and mountain laurel. The tread is often wet, with several stream crossings and bog areas, and some clear but rocky paths at times. Total travel distance is 7.6 miles, unless a second shuttle is set up for a shorter 6-mile total. Pets must be preapproved by the leader and must be under owner's control at all times. Parking is limited; a short car pool from Davis is recommended.

Leader: Ann Devine-King, 304-594-2636, atdking@gmail.com

Nearest town: Davis, WV

Additional info: www.blackwaterfalls.com; www.midatlantichikes.com; "Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide"

Sat, June 10

Day Hike: Sleepy Creek WMA

Distance/Difficulty: 7-mile loop, strenuous

Meet: Contact Leader to RSVP and get exact meeting time and location.

Description: The hike starts in The Woods Resort and will include the Tuscarora trail as well as the Old Tuscarora Trail. There are some very steep sections with difficult footing. Please bring water shoes as there will be two water crossings without bridges or rocks to cross. Dogs are welcome. Allow 4 hours for this hike. Pack plenty of water and lunch.

Leader: Pam Peitz, 240-818-6554, pspeitz@hotmail.com

Nearest towns: Hedgesville, Berkeley Springs

West Virginia Chapter Outings

Updated outings are listed on the Chapter's website: 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.

MONONGAHELA GROUP

Cheat Fest

Friday-Saturday, May 5-6

Albright, WV, on the Cheat River

Come say hello to Mon Group and WVU SSC leaders at the Non-Profit Tent at Cheat Fest 2017. The annual Cheat River Festival is a celebration of new life and the annual fundraiser for Friends of the Cheat. Rain or shine, Cheat Fest is always a good time!

Info: www.cheatfest.org

Ice Cream Social

Sunday, June 11, 1-4 pm

Coopers Rock SF, Shelter 2

Join us for the Mon Group's annual ice cream social at Coopers Rock. You help make ice cream the old-fashioned way — with ice, salt and a hand-cranked ice-cream maker. Bring a dish to share. Explore the trails. Have a sweet day!

Mon Group Hosts Public Forum with New WV DEP Secretary Caperton

Emily Bushman

On February 27, the Monongahela Group of the WV Sierra Club joined with WVU's Sierra Student Coalition to host a public forum with West Virginia's newly appointed Secretary of the DEP, Austin Caperton, and his environmental advocate, Ed Maguire. The event was set in West Virginia University's Mountainlair and was one of Caperton's first instances speaking publicly as the Secretary.

Caperton gave a 30-minute introduction of himself and his history before opening it up to two more hours of submitted questions by the public. The Secretary and advocate faced questions on climate change, energy policies, economic development and more. Admitting a lack of experience and limited time on the job so far, Caperton often struggled answering these questions. At one point, he said, "The DEP is not in the climate change business."

Many forum attendees later expressed disappointment that the new Secretary would not fully answer such important questions. At the same time, some in the crowd appreciated his honesty about not knowing certain topics. He would regularly confess being unaware of the issues his constituents expressed, but still answered each question to the best of his ability.

By the end of the forum, both Caperton and Maguire noted their excitement in working together. Maguire mentioned his upcoming tour of West Virginia's environmental issues, and both were very interested in taking the public's comments and questions back with them to the capital. Caperton mentioned his hopes of holding other forums soon and with better answers to the public's questions.

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 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.



**SIERRA
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(Put name of recipient under subject)

Messages for legislators can be left at:
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Mail address:

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House of Delegates
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website: www.legis.state.wv.us
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