

M Mountain State Sierran

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Chapter ExCom increases by 2 members, eager to get to work

Our recent Chapter election included something a little extra: a proposed amendment to change the Chapter Bylaws to expand the Executive Committee (ExCom) from five to seven members. The 4.2 percent of members who returned their ballots voted overwhelmingly in favor of expanding the size of the ExCom, which now includes newly elected members Kevin Campbell (Upshur), Aileen Curfman (Berkeley), Ciera Pennington (Putnam), Dan Taylor (Kanawha), and Eric Engle (Wood), as well as incumbents Laura Miller (Kanawha) and Natalie Thiele (Gilmer).

During January's ExCom meeting at WV Wesleyan College, in Buckhannon, Natalie and Aileen were elected Chapter co-Chairs, and Kevin was elected Delegate to the Council of Club Leaders (CCL). Laura will continue as Outings Chair, Mel Waggy agreed to continue as Secretary for one more year, and Jim Kotcon agreed to continue as Political Committee Chair. On a conference call after the ExCom meeting, April Pierson-Keating and Eric Engle were elected as Gas Committee co-Chairs, and outgoing Chapter Chair, Justin Raines, was appointed to replace Chuck Conner as Member Engagement Chair.

Here are some brief intros to help you get to know the newest leaders in the Chapter:

Kevin Campbell has been a volunteer firefighter and EMT who also worked in the gas industry. He's been an active Sierra Club member since 2012. Affiliated with several other environmental organizations, as well, he has used his knowledge and skills to advocate for clean water in West Virginia. Kevin lives off the grid with a



Kathy Gregg

April Keating addresses teleconferenced participants at the January 12th Chapter ExCom meeting, at WV Wesleyan College, in Buckhannon. Despite the "iffy" weather that day, technology came to the rescue, allowing far-flung members to participate in a successful day-long meeting.

solar-powered system he installed and maintains himself. He believes we must not only fight against gas and other polluting industries, but also for solutions that promote a stable and equitable economy.

Aileen Curfman, a master naturalist who helps maintain segments of the Appalachian trail, says they have not yet seen the high levels of environmental degradation in the Eastern Panhandle like those found further west, but she wants to be proactive in keeping bad forces out. She is part

of the large groundswell that sprang up to fight a Rockwool plant in the Eastern Panhandle and is eager to get their local group of Sierra Club up and running with active membership.

Ciera Pennington, having worked for the Democratic Party, WVCAG, and WV E-Council, has extensive organizing experience. She would like to see the Chapter be demographically inclusive, focus on our messaging — especially to the younger set (i.e., under 40) — and “cast our net” to include a greater variety of impacted groups.

Dan Taylor has worked with the Community Development Hub and is interested in growing our membership. He has worked extensively with OVEC, participating in one of its first actions against Ashland Oil. His legislative work has focused on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and campaign finance.

Eric Engle wants to see coalitions and partners come together to fight the upcoming Appalachian Storage Hub. There are currently several groups working on this topic, which could be more effective if they coordinated their efforts. Since some storage caverns and pipelines for the Hub would run under the Ohio River, Eric worries about water protection. The gas products stored there would also be used to produce more toxic plastics. Eric, along with many others, thinks there are more sustainable substitutes for plastics.

Despite the lower than usual voter returns — due in part, we believe, by the change in ballot delivery via the newsletter rather than in a separate mailing — we surely had a good pool of qualified candidates. The growth in our Chapter and support of our members inspires all of us who volunteer our time and energy to continue working toward the goals of the Sierra Club here in West Virginia.

Save the Dates

SIERRAFEST 2019

Fri-Sun, Nov. 1-3

Pipestem Resort State Park

wvstateparks.com/park/pipestem-resort-state-park

*Celebrating 35-Years of the
WV Chapter of Sierra Club*

Watch for details in the Summer and Fall newsletters.



Chapter Archives to get new home

Newly elected Chapter co-Chair Natalie Thiele (right) and WV Wesleyan's Archivist, Brett Miller, sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the Chapter and the West Virginia Wesleyan College Archives, as WV Chapter archivist, Kathy Gregg, looks on. When college library renovations are completed next fall, the Chapter's archives will be moved to and maintained by WV Wesleyan. Until then, continue sending items to our volunteer archivist, Kathy Gregg (gregg@wwvc.edu).

**Next ExCom Meeting
April 27, in Lewisburg**



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Manchin says climate change must be on “front burner” — but is it even on his stovetop?

April Keating and Eric Engle, Gas Committee co-Chairs

Senator Joe Manchin III, senior senator from West Virginia, now finds himself as the top Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. According to the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*, the senator had this to say when leaving the Independent Oil and Gas Association Winter Meeting in Charleston:

“We’re going to surprise a lot of people, because climate change has to be on the front burner. Everything we do has to be done with climate change in consideration.”

While this is certainly refreshing to hear, talk is cheap. What will the senator actually do to back this up? That’s a tough question to answer. The senator has passionately backed oil and gas development in our state and throughout Appalachia, including pipelines, ethane cracker plants, and an Appalachian Storage Hub that will store liquid natural gas (LNG), the feedstock for plastic, underground in old salt caverns between WV and OH, making us the new “cancer alley.” He backs extensive petrochemicals development throughout Appalachia in a world drowning in plastic.

According to the Huffington Post, “By 2030, the U.S. is on track to produce 60 percent of the world’s new oil and gas

supply, an expansion at least four times larger than in any other country. By 2050, the country’s newly tapped reserves are projected to spew 120 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. That would make it nearly impossible to keep global warming within the 2.3 degrees Fahrenheit above pre-industrial averages, beyond which United Nations scientists forecast climate change to be catastrophic, with upward of \$54 trillion in damages.”

Carbon dioxide is not even the most worrisome greenhouse gas when it comes to oil and gas development. Natural gas consists primarily of methane, a greenhouse gas that is 86 times more efficient at trapping heat over a 20-year period than CO₂. Methane is released in large quantities at all stages of oil and gas development, from extraction to shipping to storage to use. Gas extraction is toxic from cradle to grave.

We need an immediate phase out of all fossil fuels. Will Sen. Manchin support this? Well, there’s one concrete measure he can support for starters. The Energy Innovation & Carbon Dividend Act (HR 763) has been reintroduced this session in the U.S. House, and no doubt will be introduced in the Senate as well. This is bipartisan legislation that places an increasing price on carbon at the

source but refunds the costs of the carbon tax 100 percent to American households in the form of a dividend to help lower- and middle-income Americans afford the price increases. The legislation is expected to reduce emissions by 40 percent in the first 12 years, and 90 percent by 2050.

Senator Manchin should put his full support as the ranking Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee behind the Energy Innovation & Carbon Dividend Act. He could even be the senator who reintroduces it with bipartisan support in the Senate.

There are also legislative initiatives at the state level that Sen. Manchin could throw his support behind. One is The Modern Jobs (MOJO) Act (HB 2589) introduced by Del. Evan Hansen, and the other is SB 409, a bill permitting third-party ownership of renewable and alternative generating facilities, being advocated for by the West Virginians for Energy Freedom coalition (wv4ef.org).

Our state’s senior senator can make the difference he claims he wants to make, and surprise us all, but it’s going to take more than words.

Call or write Sen. Manchin today and insist that he take tangible steps toward preserving our future and protecting the citizens of West Virginia, the U.S., and the world!

Calls to Congress needed to reauthorize Land and Water Conservation Fund

Karen Yarnell

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was created by a bipartisan act of Congress in 1964, the same year as the Wilderness Act. The money was intended to expand and develop access to outdoor recreation facilities by protecting national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and areas around rivers and lakes from development, to provide matching grants for state and local parks and recreation projects, and to protect wildlife habitat, critical drinking water supplies, and disappearing battlefields. Every year, the LWCF is authorized to spend \$900 million in royalties paid by energy companies drilling for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf. However, over the history of the fund, just under half the full amount has been appropriated.

In West Virginia, the LWCF has invested more than \$241 million to protect forests, wildlife refuges, and historic sites, and

to increase recreation access, from backcountry trails to community parks. Over 500 projects in 54 of 55 WV counties have been funded: \$184 million for Federal Public Land, \$8 million for WV State Parks, \$4 million for at-risk Civil War Battlefields, \$35 million for County and City Parks, and \$6.4 million for Hunting, Fishing & Wildlife.

Even with the success of this act, Congress continues to break its promise to the American people, diverting much of this funding to uses other than conservation. The LWCF expired in September 2015 and was extended for three years. Unfortunately, the LWCF was not renewed when it expired again on September 30, 2018. The Sierra Club and our partners in West Virginians for Public Lands have been seeking permanent reauthorization in Congress so that the LWCF cannot expire, as well as full and permanent funding for it. Both Senators Manchin and Capito cosponsored bills in 2018.

HR 502 was introduced to permanently

reauthorize the LWCF with 242 listed bipartisan cosponsors by the end of 2018, more than half the House. S 569 (also mandating full funding) and S 896 in the Senate had 52 cosponsors between them to permanently reauthorize LWCF. In fall 2018, the House Natural Resources Committee passed HR 502, and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed out S 569. Neither bill got a full vote before the 115th Congress ended.

Now in the 116th Congress, Chairman Grijalva of the House Natural Resources Committee, hopes to get a stand-alone LWCF bill through as quickly as possible in 2019 under “suspension of the rules” (skipping the normal committee process by getting 2/3 of the House to support it). All continuing 204 cosponsors and all 94 freshmen in the House of Representatives must be urged to support the House Leadership’s efforts to get the LWCF permanently reauthorized as quickly as

possible, whether as a stand-alone bill or as part of a lands package. Please contact your representative about co-sponsoring and supporting the new LWCF bill.

Permanent reauthorization for the Land and Water Conservation Fund is included in the sweeping lands package that was reintroduced in the Senate at the start of the 116th Congress as S 47. Please ask your Senators to support this. It is necessary to have permanent, or at least long-term, reauthorization for the LWCF because negotiations by land trusts or others for acquiring private lands for public purposes are often delicate, take many years to complete, and need assurance of future funding availability. This is one positive campaign for parks and outdoor recreation that we can win, even in this Congress, with your help!

If you have questions or want to help lobby, contact Vicky Hoover, Chair of the Sierra Club LWCF Task Force, at Vicky.Hoover@sierraclub.org or 415-977-5527.

Mon Valley Green Space team aims for rec use at new reservoir

Rick Landenberger

The Mon Valley Green Space Coalition, a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit greenspace advocacy organization and partner with the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club, has been discussing recreational use at the Morgantown Utility Board’s (MUB) George B. Flegal Dam and Reservoir. The dam and associated reservoir will provide a backup water supply if and when a chemical spill pollutes the Monongahela River. It has been in the planning stage since the Elk River chemical spill that resulted in the drinking water crisis in the southern half of the state. Currently, the reservoir is planned to be completed in late 2020. The site is roughly 125 acres and is located in the Morgan District of Monongalia County

(outside the Morgantown city boundary), approximately three miles upstream from the existing Cobun Creek reservoir.

In January, the Green Space Coalition Board of Directors submitted a letter to MUB and BOPARC stating that the organization would like to see public non-motorized recreational use at the site. We recognized MUB’s critical mission to provide clean source water and noted that non-motorized, semi-primitive trails would not necessarily conflict with this mission. The opportunity for additional low-impact non-motorized recreation in protected greenspace in the Greater Morgantown area is becoming increasingly rare due to our growing population and associated land development. Among the most popular recreational trails in our community are

those located at existing or former water management projects, including at White Park, Cheat Lake, and the West Virginia Botanic Garden. We emphasized that our proposed trails could significantly address the community’s need for additional outdoor recreational, health and wellness, and greenspace assets.

Our letter resulted in a front-page story in the Sunday, January 27th, 2019 Dominion Post quoting MUB General Manager Tim Ball, who stated that MUB supports recreation at the site subject to “very few constraints” and that BOPARC was the logical organization to manage recreation at Flegal. MUB board member Ron Bane was quoted as saying that no reservoir development funding can be used to develop recreational infrastructure.

The Green Space Coalition understands Mr. Ball’s and Mr. Bane’s comments and we appreciate the fact that MUB supports recreation.

The Green Space Coalition aims to partner with MUB and BOPARC by leveraging our expertise in trail planning, design, development, and maintenance. In so doing, we aim to facilitate cost-effective recreational infrastructure at the reservoir and dam that will provide for safe and enjoyable public use. The Coalition sees a great opportunity to develop a broad consensus in support of recreational development at Flegal and asks the Mon Chapter of the Sierra Club to help us as we advance the idea and work cooperatively with BOPARC and MUB.



Sophia Spangler at the Capitol, on E-Day.

From Vogue to Rogue

Sophia Spangler

When I first toured West Virginia University, I came in with the mindset I was going to major in Fashion Merchandising and minor in Sustainable Design, hoping to help reduce the fashion industry's impact on our climate. Throughout the years, I have learned that policy is the most influential form of progressive change and quickly adopted a Political Science major. I have no political experience aside from courses taken at WVU. This being said, when Professor Jim Kotcon, Environmental Scientist and Sierra Student Coalition advisor, briefly mentioned a lobbying opportunity, I jumped on the bandwagon as fast as I could.

During my time at the Capitol, I made new friends and connections, met one of my political role models, Delegate Evan Hansen, as well as Senate President Mitch Carmichael, and sat in on the House Energy Committee meeting and the Senate Finance Committee meeting. Dr. Kotcon's and my main focus was on Senate Bill 163 dealing with water quality standards, and House Bill 2589, proposed by Hansen, to provide incentives for solar energy at mountain-top removal sites and bring jobs back to West Virginia. Within this bill, solar panels and renewable energy development will revitalize previously abandoned areas, after miners extracted all useable minerals. One could say our agenda fit perfectly, because it

also happened to be Environmental Day, or E-Day, at the Capitol.

One of the most eye-opening revelations for me was realizing the people elected into office are normal human beings, just like you and me. These members were elected by us, to represent the public's best interest. My nerves quickly subsided after one of my first exchanges with House of Delegates member John Doyle. He later even joined us for lunch. Throughout the day, I started to realize how much one person's interactions can make a difference to pass certain bills. These elected officials will never be able to read our minds; if we want something changed, we must speak up. I learned more about the bill process itself, how amendments work, and how Senate members vote on bills.

I am very grateful for this experience. The night ended with the Environmental Council celebrating at a local bar and Evan Hansen saying a few words on behalf of all the "rogue environmentalists." Shirts were sold light-heartedly, addressing and embracing the term coined by one conservative industry representative who dismissed environmental advocates as being "rogue" prior to the day's events. I can confidently say this experience solidified the political course of action I would like to take in setting sustainable baselines within the fashion-textile community, and I am enthusiastic to see where my political career can take me!

View from the Chairs

— Natalie Thiele & Aileen Curfman

Member Growth & Support is Encouraging

Happy springtime, Mountain State Sierrans! As you may have already read elsewhere, our Chapter has new co-chairs — Aileen Curfman and Natalie Thiele. Aileen joins us from the newly formed Eastern Panhandle (EP) Group, and Natalie has served on the Chapter ExCom (and as Gas Committee Chair) for the past year. We are excited by the positive growth happening in the Chapter and so thankful for the steady support of our members.

The new Eastern Panhandle Group is looking forward to finalizing the group's bylaws in February. With an active outings program, the group has attracted a growing number of residents. Others have come to Sierra Club because the EP is transforming from a bucolic, historic area to a gritty industrial hub.

Residents who are used to having organic farmers and beekeepers as neighbors are now discovering their new neighbors are factories with smokestacks. The Rockwool insulation factory, which will have two large smokestacks spewing particulates and organic chemicals into a valley where several schools are located, has acquired a large and vocal group of opponents. So has the Eastern Panhandle Pipeline, which is being built to supply this factory and others that appear to be in the works. Grassroots groups are working with Sierra Club in their fight against this onslaught of heavy industry.

To date, Eastern Panhandle residents have been spared the horrific devastation being brought to the southern and western parts of the state by huge pipelines and ethane cracker facilities. The new EP group is bringing more Sierrans to stand together against this blatant disregard for clean air and clean water.

The new year presents exciting opportunities to get involved with the Chapter in new ways. For 2019, your

Chapter leaders would like to show our dedication to the values expressed within the Jemez Principles of Democratic Organizing — Be inclusive, emphasize bottom-up organizing, let people speak for themselves, work together in solidarity and mutuality, and build just relationships among ourselves — by introducing our new guidance policy for issue campaigns. For the Chapter to agree to work on a conservation or justice issue, the group or member bringing the issue before us should have a team of at least five people, including individuals directly impacted by the issue; decision-making authority on the team must be invested in individuals directly impacted by the issue. See box below for the full text of our new policy. We believe this policy will help us respond thoughtfully to environmental and justice issues in our state, guided by our members, allies, and neighbors.

If you (and your team) are looking for ways to grow your grassroots campaign, we encourage you to take advantage of the free resources our Chapter can provide, like planning and strategy sessions, organizing workshops, and leadership training. We'd also like to recommend that issues teams plan to apply for a Grassroots Network Grant for the year 2020. In past years, these grants have provided funding of up to \$12,000 to issues teams so they could "engage new people, build new leaders, and win conservation victories."

If you think you might like to learn more about the Sierra Club's Grassroots Network, or would like to begin planning your own grant proposal, go to <https://content.sierraclub.org/grassrootsnetwork> for more information. Also, feel free to reach out to Chapter co-Chairs, Natalie Thiele (natalie.a.a.thiele@gmail.com) and Aileen Curfman (acurfman@gmail.com), or Member Engagement Chair, Justin Raines (justinraineswv@gmail.com), for help navigating the process.

WV Chapter Policy Guidance for Issue Campaigns

Before the Chapter will agree to work on a conservation and/or justice issue, the following requirements must be met by the member or group bringing the issue before the Chapter:

1. The issue must already have a team of at least five people willing to work on the issue.
2. The team working on the issue must include individuals directly impacted by the issue.

3. The final decision-making authority of the team working on the issue must be invested in individuals directly impacted by the issue.

4. The issue must fit within the conservation and justice policies and principles of the Sierra Club.

5. If the person bringing the issue to the Chapter does not have a five-person team willing to work on it, the Chapter may, at its discretion, help guide that person in the effort of forming such a team for a 30-day period.

Maggie Louden

The Eastern Panhandle (EP) Group, a regional subgroup of the WV Chapter of Sierra Club, continues to create a meaningful presence in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. We will continue to “explore, enjoy and protect the planet” in 2019.

Conservation Meetings

At our **Feb. 19** Conservation meeting, hosted by Regina Hendrix in Charles Town, we worked on our Bylaws, bringing us one step closer to achieving official group status. Future conservation meetings:

April 23, hosted by Gail Kohlhorst

June 25, hosted by Aileen Curfman.

Program Meetings

We continue to present relevant topics at our bi-monthly public programs, held on fourth Tuesdays, at St. John's Lutheran Church, Martinsburg (St. John's is not affiliated with the Sierra Club). Programs begin at 6:30 pm and last two hours. We do not hold programs during July and August. In December, the EP Group sent out a letter to Sierrans who live in the Eastern Panhandle to inform them of the group forming and to invite them to participate.

On **Jan. 22**, Christian Thomas, from SkyTruth, gave an inspiring and enlightening presentation. We learned how SkyTruth uses satellite technology to identify and monitor threats to the planet's natural resources, such as offshore drilling and oil spills, urban sprawl, fracking, mountaintop removal mining, and overfishing of the oceans. Their motto is: “If you can see it, you can change it” and their work uses views from space to motivate people to protect our environment. A link to his presentation is available here.

Upcoming meetings

March 26, Diana Pavlik, of the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA), Berkeley County Chapter, will give the presentation. The Berkeley County IWLA is committed to the conservation of Martinsburg's natural resources and promotes outdoor recreational activities.

May 28, Clint Hogbin, of the Berkeley County Solid Waste Authority (BCSWA), will be the presenter. The BCSWA has created a series of education, enforcement, and solid waste collection programs. Their primary objective is to prioritize source reduction, reuse, recycling, and recovery in the management of solid waste, instead of committing refuse to landfills.

Outings

The Outings program of the EP Group now has two certified Outings Leaders: Chris Craig and Aileen Curfman. See pictures below and on facing page for a record of some of Chris's recent outings. Check the Outings Calendar on p. 7 and on the Chapter website for future outings. Also see ([meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Eastern-Panhandle](https://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Eastern-Panhandle)) for outings and program notices.

Activity Updates

Gas Pipeline Extension

The EP Group has been working with the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club, the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Eastern Panhandle Protectors, Potomac RiverKeeper Network, and many area citizens to prevent TransCanada/Columbia Gas and Mountaineer Gas from building an extension pipeline to carry fracked gas from Pennsylvania into the Eastern Panhandle. Members opposing the extension pipeline and assisted by the Chapter's Gas Committee

- attended and testified at meetings of city councils in Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson counties,
- wrote to the West Virginia Public Service commission expressing concerns about constructing a pipeline in karst topography,
- supported the families whose lands were impacted by construction,
- monitored water ways for stream damage due to construction,
- spoke on local radio shows and wrote many letters-to-the-editor in local newspapers,
- created petitions and got thousands of signatures on them,
- demonstrated in Annapolis, and
- demonstrated outside the office of C&O Canal Superintendent of the National Park Service Kevin Brandt, giving him petitions with thousands of signatures,
- with the help of Tracy Cannon, collected and delivered supplies for tree sitters opposing the Mountain Valley Pipeline in Montgomery County, VA,
- are selling t-shirts with a design created by Mary Matitage that says, “Pipelines Blow,” and
- celebrated the decision of Maryland Board of Public Works that denied pipeline companies access through Maryland and under the Potomac.

Sadly, West Virginia officials were mostly unresponsive to the concerns of their citizens, but members of the Maryland Board of Public Works, made up of Comptroller Peter Franchot, Governor Larry Hogan, and Treasurer Nancy Kopp, voted unanimously against an easement for TransCanada's/Columbia Gas' pipeline. This effectively blocked it from crossing Maryland and going under the Potomac River. The National Park Service has delayed dealing with the permit to tunnel under the C&O Canal.

Rockwool Plant

The other campaign that the EP Group has been working on is prevention of Rockwool from building a factory in Jefferson County. Rockwool is an international manufacturing company headquartered in Denmark that produces Rockwool, a fire-resistant and highly efficient insulating material used in construction. While there are a few studies that call for more investigation into the carcinogenic effects of this product, the majority of evaluations of the product so far are that it is a safe and efficient insulating material. However, the process by which it is manufactured is not safe.

On Nov. 30, 2018, Mike Brittingham from Charles Town Council sent a fact summary concerning Rockwool to the citizens of Charles Town, WV. He characterized the manufacturing process as “extremely dirty, emits millions of pounds of pollutants every year, requires a massive amount of water to create, and spews hundreds of tons of “Particulate Matter” into the air every year, which amongst other health and environmental problems contributes to premature death, heart attacks, and decreased lung function.”

Local EP Group member Regina Hendrix was quoted by Morgan County USA as saying that “the air pollution permit for Rockwool is alarming and the site location is absurd. ... Giant smokestacks that will emit huge amounts of hazardous air pollution adjacent to our schools — what is Jefferson County thinking?”

Although Rockwool continues to construct its plant, there are still legal steps that can be taken to stop Rockwool. To track how Rockwool came to build in Jefferson County and to unearth the devious ways in which Rockwool was invited and guaranteed tax-related benefits, many citizens are requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIAs). Members of the EP Group will continue working with others in Jefferson County to prevent Rockwool.



Chris Craig

In spite of a chilly day and slush-covered trails, six Sierrans enjoyed a November hike on the Appalachian Trail, north from the 1827 Washington Monument near Boonsboro, MD. The hike was shortened from the planned 12 miles to an 8-mile out-and-back. The Pine Knob Shelter provided a nice site for lunch, though the group opted not to use the ice-covered picnic table. Watch the WV Chapter calendar for additional hikes in this series of the entire Maryland AT.



Ed Wheelless

Ten Sierrans did not let subfreezing temperatures stop their Jan. 19 hike or their celebration of the reopening of the National Park Service after the government shutdown. They walked from Weverton, MD, on the Appalachian Trail/C&O Canal Towpath into Harpers Ferry, where they warmed up over chili and burgers at one of the downtown eateries.

A record 47 folks rang in 2019 in outdoor fashion, on a WV Sierra Club hike along the C&O Canal Towpath near Shepherdstown. The group walked from the antebellum plantation house of Ferry Hill to Killiansburg Cave.

Chris Craig



Chris Craig

Killiansburg Cave was a hiding-hole for citizens of Sharpsburg, MD, during the 1862 Battle of Antietam.

Good news, bad news regarding EP gas pipeline

Tracy Cannon

On Jan. 2, the Maryland Board of Public Works voted to deny Columbia Gas Company an easement for the Eastern Panhandle Expansion Pipeline through the Western Maryland Rail Trail. The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club worked with Maryland Delegate David Moon to get 63 Maryland lawmakers to sign on to a letter asking the Board to reject the easement.

The decision is a significant road block to the pipeline, slated to run from Fulton County, PA, to Jefferson County, WV. The Maryland portion of the pipeline would have supplied gas to the WV portion of the pipeline, from an existing fracked gas pipeline in Pennsylvania called the TC1804.

Environmental groups in Maryland and West Virginia celebrated Maryland's decision, which represents the only victory our groups have had over the pipeline since the gas company abandoned its goal of getting fracked gas to the Eastern Panhandle (EP) towns of Shepherdstown, Middleway and Charles Town last summer.

Pipeline proponents, and those depending on the proposed pipeline for their industrial expansion plans in the EP, have stated in the media that they are confident that Mountaineer Gas will be able to supply the fracked gas it has promised them, regardless of the Maryland roadblock.

We have since learned that Columbia Gas and Mountaineer Gas, the two companies involved in the project, do have plans to work around the possibility that the pipeline may not be permitted to go through Maryland. We need to stop these dangerous plans in their tracks, for the safety of our region, and to preserve the water and air quality for the EP, Maryland, and northern Virginia. The fracked gas would fuel an industrial buildout that would permanently degrade our quality of life in the EP.

In a letter to Mountaineer Gas, the Morgan County (WV) Commission asked the gas company what its plans were in the event that the Maryland connection were never built. The gas company replied that they were considering a gas "storage system" as one of its options to provide gas to the many highly polluting industries planned for the area.

The supposed need for more fracked gas in the EP has come about since Danish multi-national Rockwool



The only gas source in the Eastern Panhandle at this time is the 6-inch Washington Gas Light line in Clearbrook, VA, a pipeline that is about 60 years old and already running at its maximum allowable pressure. The dollar bill hanging above the pipeline establishes scale.

decided to build an insulation plant in Jefferson County. This manufacturer would use 1.61 million cubic feet of gas per day. In addition to Rockwool, there are several large parcels of land adjacent to the planned factory that are also zoned for heavy industry.

The Proctor and Gamble plant, recently built in Martinsburg, is already straining the capacity of the single existing pipeline into the panhandle, which originates in Clearbrook, VA. The Italian-owned cement manufacturer Argos, located in Martinsburg, is interested in hooking up the promised fracked gas line as well. US Silica, the Berkeley Springs sand mine that melts sand down into glass, wants gas for its process, too.

Experts at the state level have informed our group that Mountaineer Gas is considering three options to supply gas for the planned industrial build out. One would be to use a process called "propane air injection" to add gas to the pipeline during peak periods, namely in the winter, when some of the gas is being used by Martinsburg residents to heat their homes. Another option would be to bring in gas from an underground storage facility owned by Columbia Gas in Hardy County.

The third, possibly most hazardous, option would be to build a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility in the Eastern Panhandle. The LNG option and the Hardy County option both involve bringing more fracked gas into the EP by means of the pipeline that originates in Clearbrook, VA. This 6-inch pipeline was built in the early '60s, when pipelines were not coated to prevent rust. The line is already being operated at its maximum allowable pressure of 425 psi. Adding more gas to this pipeline to supply new industry is just asking for disaster.

Fracked gas would be pumped to the LNG facility during non-peak periods and chilled to minus 260 degrees Fahrenheit to turn the gas into a liquid so it could be stored in tanks. The main hazard of an LNG facility is a spill of liquid methane, which would cause a series of events that would result in a fire or explosion. The spilled liquefied gas, which is heavier than air, would form a cloud near the ground. If the cloud comes into contact with an ignition source, a huge fire or explosion would result.

Explosions at LNG facilities have occurred since the first facility in the U.S. started operating in 1941, in Cleveland, Ohio. This facility, run by Cleveland East Ohio Gas, exploded three years later, killing 130 residents. Another such plant, in Staten Island, NY, blew up on Feb. 10, 1973, killing 40 workers. More recently, a Plymouth, Wash., LNG plant exploded on March 31, 2014, injuring five workers.

Although our sources say the Eastern Panhandle facility would be a "small scale" LNG facility, we should not accept this hazard in our region. The factories it would serve degrade our environment too much already. We need to fight Mountaineer Gas to keep this unwanted, unnecessary and unsafe infrastructure out of our area.

Rare species of the Southern Mon National Forest: A series

Matt Kearns & Tom Kloehn

The wild mountains, hollows, rivers, and bogs of the southern Monongahela National Forest hold a rare and valuable treasure: some of the last populations of the Eastern United States' most at-risk species. These small amphibians, mammals, plants, and fish often go unseen, but they are a vital part of the varied ecosystems that would be protected by the proposed Birthplace of Rivers national monument.

The survival and recovery of these species is important for the scientific community, outdoor enthusiasts, and anyone who wants to see these plants and animals continue to be part of the landscape of the Mountain State, as they have been since the ecosystem came into being.

This is the third in a series of quick looks at the endangered and threatened species in the southern part of the Mon National Forest and areas downstream. These species are either known or very likely to be found in the region known as the Birthplace of Rivers.

No. 3: WV Northern Flying Squirrel

West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus fuscus*): These small mammals are a subspecies of the flying squirrels that have been gliding through North American forests since the last Ice Age. When the old-growth spruce forests that once defined West Virginia's highlands were logged around the beginning of the 20th century, the flying squirrels were almost entirely pushed out of the region. Despite this, a few populations have hung on, living in small groups, sharing communal nests, and communicating with each other in high-pitched chirps. Steady restoration of forests has helped the flying squirrels recover just enough for the USFWS to remove their endangered status, but the threat of habitat loss still looms over these small creatures. The squirrels, which use their large eyes to navigate the nocturnal world, are tough to spot, but for now we can be assured that they are still floating through the Birthplace of Rivers.



Perspectives on Outings — Laura Miller, Outings Chair

Connect with Nature to Better Protect It

We generally tend to have a great appreciation for renowned natural lands, like the Grand Canyon or the Great Smokey Mountains, or here in our beloved West Virginia mountains, Blackwater Falls or Canaan Valley. It's understandable that they have our attention, and they deserve protection, for those are spectacular places.

However, as we explore other not-so-well known or less striking places, I have found that many of them, large or small, can be quite special, too, when we make the connection with nature.

I do a great deal of field work for my job as an entomologist and I'm constantly amazed by the number of interesting areas I run into, from the biological stand point to the simple beauty or uniqueness of the landscape. Sometimes, all I need is to step a few yards away from my vehicle to find something that catches my attention.

With time and experience, one can develop ample awareness and sensitivity toward nature just by being curious and taking the time to observe. Some areas may seem irrelevant upon arrival, but as we

walk along with our senses open, we can build up an appreciation and turn them into places worthy of our attention. Many sites I have visited hold something special that brings me back to them.

Nature is magnificent in every aspect. If we learn more about its intricacies, we not only become better connected and enjoy it more profoundly, but we can also protect it better. Don't take anything for granted. So many natural areas, including public lands, are being threatened and destroyed at a faster rate nowadays by the selfish interests of corporations, trying to make huge profits that don't even benefit our economies, just themselves.

I'd like to invite you to explore those less-known places in West Virginia and beyond with an open mind to learn about their natural habitats and biology, so you can become better connected and help protect them when they become threatened.

"In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught" — Baba Dioum

Monongahela Spring Activities

Sat, April 6, 9am-noon

West Virginia "Make It Shine" Statewide Cleanup, Decker's Creek

The Mon Group will join with Friends of Decker's Creek for the annual DEP Make It-Shine program, picking up trash along the trail and creek. Meet at the Outdoor Learning Park (OLP) behind and to the left of the Sabraton Kroger (1851 Earl L. Core Rd, Morgantown) to receive supplies, directions, and safety tips. Trash bags and gloves will be provided. Wear sturdy boots and clothes that can get dirty.

Sat, April 27, 1-5pm

Earth Day Celebration, Morgantown Farmers Market Pavilion

The Mon Group will host this year's Earth Day celebration at the Farmers Market Pavilion (400 Spruce St, Morgantown). There will be local environmental groups, children's activities, music, and vendors. Volunteers needed.

Sat, May 18, 11am-3pm

Hike and Picnic, Valley Falls State Park

Join others from the Mon Group for lunch and a hike at Valley Falls State Park (720 Valley Falls Rd., Fairmont). Bring a picnic lunch and plan to spend some time exploring this beautiful area. <https://wvstateparks.com/park/valley-falls-state-park/>

For more information about any of these activities, contact John Bird: 412-805-9624, johnbird@frontier.com.

HELP WANTED

Chapter Treasurer

We are looking for a volunteer willing to become the Chapter's new treasurer. Some experience with bookkeeping would be valuable, or an accounting background would be even better. Because we are part of national Sierra Club, all of our bookkeeping is tied to their system by online QuickBooks. We receive monthly online account reports and prepare an annual financial report. All income and expenses are handled by the Chapter Treasurer, so familiarity with the membership database is required. Training for the position is available. For further information or to express interest in the position, contact Sally Wilts, Chapter Treasurer, sallywilts@yahoo.com, 304-379-7567.

Newsletter Editor (or Editorial Team)

The current Newsletter Editor is looking to "retire" from this volunteer position. The work requires command of English spelling and grammar rules, attention to detail, and familiarity with desktop-publishing software and design principles. We publish four issues per year; each issue taking up to about 20 hours of labor. The work could easily be divided between two people, with one doing most of the copyediting and another completing the layout.

If interested, or to find out more about what is involved, contact Candice Elliott, celliot2@comcast.net, 304-594-3322.

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

celliot2@comcast.net

Deadline for submissions to the
2019 Summer issue
May 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 quarterly by the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club and distributed to all paid members.

SPRING OUTINGS

For additional details about any outing, or to RSVP your intent to participate, please contact the designated leader ahead of time. To view Sierra Club's Liability Policy for Outings, go to sierraclub.org/west-virginia under Events.

Sat, March 23

Day Hike: Schoolhouse Ridge South, Harpers Ferry NHP

Distance/Difficulty: 3.5 miles, EASY
Duration: 2.5 hours

Description: Schoolhouse Ridge was the site of Stonewall Jackson's Line in the dramatic Confederate invasion of Harpers Ferry in September 1862. This hike, therefore, contains plenty of history, but also a lovely walk through meadow and woods that's short and easy enough for the novice hiker. The trails are smooth and the terrain is gently rolling. The hike is open to any adult, or child accompanied by an adult, of adequate fitness for an unpaved trail on rolling terrain. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. Bring along water and a snack, and dress appropriately for an early spring day. We will carry on in light rain or snow but cancel in ice or heavy precipitation.

Meet: 10 am, at Schoolhouse Ridge South Parking lot, 2083 Millville Rd, Harpers Ferry. Millville Road branches south off US 340, just west of Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, WV. (39.3077421, -77.7797649)
Bring: Water and a snack.

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurellodge.com, 304-433-1260

Nearest Town: Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, WV

Additional Info: This hike is free, but admission to Harpers Ferry NHP trails requires park passes or admission (\$10/car or \$5/person).

Sun, April 7

Day Hike: Kanawha State Forest

Distance/Difficulty: 2.5-3 miles, MODERATE
Duration: about 2 hours

Description: Enjoy this vast and beautiful deciduous/conifer mix forest, the natural treasure of the State's Capital. We will go up Polly Trail to Wildcat Ridge and complete our loop following Wildcat Ridge trail down to the starting point. The trail has a series of switchbacks and interesting rock outcrops and overhangs. We'll spend some time along the trail observing Spring unfold, as well as pointing out some old-growth trees along the way. Bring your nature guides if you wish. We'll stop at the ridge for a break and snack. There is some tricky footage in spots, particularly when wet, so bring footwear with adequate tread for hiking. Number of participants limited to 15; please contact leader to sign up.

Meet: 1 pm. Contact leader to RSVP and for meeting location details.

Bring: Water and snack. Wear hiking boots or sturdy shoes with good tread. Hiking poles or hiking stick recommended. Nature guides if desired. Binoculars if you have them.

Leader: Laura Miller, aepicysta@gmail.com, 304-776-4677

Nearest Town: Charleston, WV

Additional information: Number of participants limited to 15, please contact leader to sign up.

Cancellation policy: We will continue in light drizzly precipitation; rain will cancel the outing.

Sat, April 27

Day Hike: Appalachian Trail, Keys Gap to Harpers Ferry

Distance/Difficulty: 6.5 miles, MODERATE
Duration: 3.5 hours, including shuttle*

Description: Our series of hikes on the famed Appalachian Trail (AT) continues into Northern Virginia. This one is in conjunction with the Harpers Ferry Flip Flop Festival, and we will end at the festival, where you can enjoy the food, music, workshops and fun activities as long as you wish. The hike from Keys Gap is relatively easy and sure-footed until the fairly steep descent from Loudoun Heights to the Shenandoah River. There, we will cross the US 340 bridge on the sidewalk before ascending into town. Along the way, there's the chance to see Civil War fortifications and remains of hearths from the pre-war charcoal industry. We will shuttle* by cars from Bolivar to begin the hike, so drivers should allow extra time at the end to be returned to their cars. The hike is open to any adult (or minor accompanied by an adult) fit for the distance and substantial elevation changes. The hike is free, though donations are welcome. Learn more about the Flip Flop Festival at www.flipflopfestival.org.

Meet: 9 am, at Harpers Ferry Middle School, 1710 W. Washington Street, Harpers Ferry (Bolivar), WV. Gather near the main school entrance near Polk Street. (Note there will be a regular van shuttle between the school and festival sites.)

Bring: Plenty of water and a substantial snack. Wear sturdy shoes or boots (despite the festival's name, no flip-flops allowed!). Hiking poles or sticks are recommended.

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurellodge.com, 304-433-1260

Nearest Town: Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, WV

Additional Info: Number of participants is limited, NPS regulations restrict our group size to 25. Please contact leader in advance to reserve your space.

Cancellation Policy: We will carry on in light rain but cancel in a downpour.

*Please be advised that Sierra Club assumes no responsibility for shuttle/carpooling. Carpooling is at the sole risk of the participants.

Sat, May 11

Day Hike: Appalachian Trail, Reno Monument Road to Washington Monument SP

Distance/Difficulty: 3 miles, EASY
Duration: 3.5 hours, including shuttle*

Description: Curious about the Appalachian Trail? We will shuttle* to our trailhead on Reno Monument Road for an easy hike. Our route will take us through a hardwood forest to Dahlgren Backpackers' Campsite. After a short break, we will continue to our cars. This hike is suitable for anyone who is able to walk 3 miles on an unpaved trail. The trail may be muddy or contain minimal obstacles like tree roots and rocks. There are a few gentle to moderate hills. Children are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult. Because we will need to carpool, we are requesting that you leave your dogs at home. Hikers will need to sign a liability waiver. There is no charge for this hike.

Meet: 9:30 am, at the lower parking lot at Washington Monument State Park. This parking area serves Appalachian Trail hikers and is outside the fee area at the park. From the traffic light in Boonsboro, MD, follow Alt US 40 2.4 miles to Washington Monument Road across from The Old South Mountain Inn. The parking lot will be on your left about 200 feet up the hill. We will need 4-5 volunteers for the carpool. Carpooling is at participants' own risk.*

Bring: Water, snack, light jacket appropriate for the weather, and perhaps a walking stick.

Leader: Aileen Curfman, acurfman@gmail.com, 304-433-5321

Nearest Town: Boonsboro, MD.

Additional information: Number of participants is limited to 15. Please contact leader to RSVP. There is no restroom at the hikers' parking lot or at the trailhead on Reno Monument Road. Near the end of the hike, the restroom at Dahlgren Backpackers' Campsite will be available.

Cancellation Policy: We will carry on in light rain but cancel if there is heavy precipitation.

*Please be advised that Sierra Club assumes no responsibility for shuttle/carpooling. Carpooling is at the sole risk of the participants.

Sun, May 26

Day Hike, with drive in middle: WV High Points — Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks Nat. Rec. Area

Distance/Difficulty: Hike 1/ 5 miles, MODERATE; Hike 2/ 3.2 miles, MODERATE

Description: Spruce Knob is the highest point in West Virginia, at 4,863 feet. Seneca Rocks is one of the most famous scenic landmarks in the state, popular with rock climbers and rich in history. This excursion will give us a chance to explore both sights on Memorial Day weekend, with moderate and scenic hikes at each. We will meet at the Spruce Knob Summit parking lot, walking the short distance to the observation tower before hiking out and back on the Huckleberry Trail. The hike will take us through canopies of spruce and open meadows, with some promising picnic spots on the return to the top. Once back to the parking area, we will drive* to Seneca Rocks Visitor Center and hike 1.5 miles up (800 feet) to the observation platform and back. This moderate hike includes interpretive signs about the area's geology and the significance of the formation. The hikes are open to any adult, or minor accompanied by an adult, fit for rugged trails and significant elevation changes. Hikes are free, but donations to Sierra Club are welcome.

Meet: 10 am, at Spruce Knob Summit parking area (38.7376096,-79.4439293), Western, WV. (From US 33 near Judy Gap and Riverton, take Briery Gap Rd. (WV33/4) 2.4 miles and continue onto Forest Road 112 for 7.4 miles before turning right onto Forest Road 104; it's then 1.4 miles to the summit.)

Bring: Plenty of water and lunch/snack.

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurellodge.com, 304-433-1260

Nearest Town: Riverton (Pendleton County), WV

Additional Info: Attendance will be restricted to 15 participants; please reserve early and notify the leader if you must cancel. Hikers may opt to join only the first hike if they wish. It being Memorial Day weekend, participants may wish to stay overnight in the area on Saturday and/or Sunday but should reserve early. Primitive camping is available on the Huckleberry Trail. For information on other camping in the National Forest, forestcamping.com/dow/eastern/monocmp.htm. For information on area lodging, pendletoncountywv.com/lodging/.

*Participants are responsible for securing their own transportation to and between the hikes. Please be advised that Sierra Club assumes no responsibility for shuttle/carpooling. Carpooling is at the sole risk of the participants.

Sat-Sun, June 29-30

Harpers Ferry NHP 75th anniversary

Day Hikes: Maryland Heights/Stone Fort Loop, Harpers Ferry NHP. The same hike route is offered both days.

Distance/Difficulty: The hike is divided into two sections for those who don't want to hike the whole route. First section, or Overlook hike only, is 3.5 miles. Total hike, Overlook hike plus Stone Fort Loop hike, is 6.5 miles. Both hikes are MODERATELY DIFFICULT.

Duration: 2.5 hours for Overlook hike section only; 3.5 hours for Overlook plus Stone Fort Loop hike, including shuttle time.

Description: The same hike takes place both Saturday and Sunday. These hikes are in partnership with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park (NHP) and are in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Park. The hikes will include historical interpretation of Harpers Ferry and the formation of the Park. After the group visits the overlook, hikers may return to the Lower Town directly or continue on the Stone Fort Loop. Both hikes feature wonderful views and Civil War fortifications, but the long route is especially rich in history. Both the short and long hikes are on steep and sometimes rugged trails, and the full hike includes 1,400 feet of elevation gain. We will meet at the Harpers Ferry NHP Visitor Center and take the Park shuttle* to begin the hike in Lower Town Harpers Ferry. The hike is open to all adults, and minors accompanied by adults, who are fit for a challenging, multi-hour hike at a moderate pace. Hikers must pay Park admission, but there is no extra charge for the hike, though donations to the Harpers Ferry Park Association are welcome.

Meet: 8:30 am, Harpers Ferry NHP Visitor Center, 171 Shoreline Drive, Harpers Ferry (off US340, opposite the towns). We will depart on bus* at 8:45; it is recommended that you arrive at the Park between 8 and 8:15.

Bring: You must carry water with you; snacks are recommended. Boots or hiking shoes fit for the trail are required, and you must dress appropriately for the weather and sun expected that day. Hiking poles or a walking stick may be helpful.

Leader: Chris Craig, ccraig@laurellodge.com, 304-433-1260.

Nearest Town: Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, WV

Additional Info: Attendance each day is limited to 25 individuals, and reservations are required. We ask those who cancel their reservation to let us know to allow others to take their places. Hikers must pay Park admission. The 75th anniversary celebration will have lots of fun and educational events. For more information, go to www.harpersferryhistory.org.

*Please be advised that Sierra Club assumes no responsibility for shuttle/carpooling. Carpooling is at the sole risk of the participants.



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Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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Spring 2019



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