

# M Mountain State Sierran

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Spring 2020

## New Report Highlights Impact and Potential of West Virginia's Growing Clean Energy Economy

On January 28, at E-Day in Charleston, West Virginia, the Sierra Club released a report which found that clean energy companies have successfully developed numerous projects in West Virginia and that small businesses, school districts, and residents could save millions with additional clean energy projects if the Mountain State's policies improved. The report, titled "Clean Energy Works in West Virginia," found that West Virginia is not taking full advantage of its clean energy economy and recommended steps to expand the sector's growth and reach.

"West Virginia's clean energy economy is growing, but it could be thriving, and that needs to change," said Mary Anne Hitt, West Virginia resident and Senior Director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign. "With the coal industry in a free fall and increased pressure from electricity customers for clean, cheap energy for their homes and businesses, we must do more to make West Virginia a destination for solar and wind energy development."

The report found that implementing key policies, like passing the Modern Energy Jobs (MOJO) Act and establishing Power Purchase Agreement policies, would allow West Virginia to generate millions of extra dollars in energy cost savings and tax revenue, and create thousands of new clean energy jobs revitalizing the state's manufacturing industry. Communities in neighboring Appalachian states that have already adopted similar policy recommendations have been found to have large renewable energy projects proposed and installed.

"This report shows that clean energy resources like solar and wind energy can thrive in West Virginia, and attract new talent and investments to our state," said Bill Price, a Charleston resident and Organizing Manager for the Sierra Club. "Clean energy resources like solar, wind, and battery storage can bring thousands of jobs to West Virginia and kick start important industries that will provide for families for decades to come. We just need our leaders to jump on board."

The "Clean Energy Works in West Virginia" report was developed with Vandalia Energy Services.

## WEST VIRGINIA Environmental Lobby Day 2020



On January 28 environmentalists from all over West Virginia gathered in the Senate Rotunda at the Capitol in Charleston. Over 20 groups attended this event, coordinated by the WV Environmental Council (WVEC). Sierra Club was well represented, with tables staffed by volunteers from the state chapter, the WVU Sierra Student Coalition, and the Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club (EPSC).

Many participants traveled three to five hours to get to Charleston. EPSC coordinated transportation with three other organizations from the far eastern end of the state. This crowd of about 15 met with WVEC's president and its two professional lobbyists, who provided invaluable information about the legislation currently before the legislature. Unfortunately, at present, most legislation favors the gas industry, coal operators, and chemical manufacturers, so there was plenty of work to be done.

Jim Kotcon, Conservation Chair of the WV Sierra Club, spent most of the day reaching out to legislators with concerns about many of the bills. He provided excellent mentorship for the students and for members of the Eastern Panhandle Group, many of whom were new to lobbying.

Throughout the day, volunteers distributed literature and spoke with legislators and representatives from fossil fuel industries who visited our display tables. Others attended committee meetings to get informed about the current status of bills. Two groups met with representatives of the WV Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP), discussing concerns with permitting and inspection practices. Some attendees browsed through WVDEP's display in the House Rotunda.



Above: Citizen lobbyists for the Eastern Panhandle. Photo by Catherine Jozwik.

Left: Lobbyists for a good cause at E-Day at the Capitol (L to R) Karan Ireland (WVEC), Amanda Pitzer (Friends of Cheat), Kayla Young (WVEC). Photo by Regina Hendrix.

The Senate Rotunda, a huge space with marble walls and high ceilings, took on a festive air as groups chatted about their work. A huge Tyrannosaurus Rex (courtesy of Grant Prillaman) wandered around, explaining that fossil fuels are older than he is, and they should remain in the ground.

Participants enjoyed getting to know the many dedicated environmental activists from around the state. We email these folks all the time, and we talk on the phone with them, but this is the one time of year that we all gather in one place. Environmental action in West Virginia can be a discouraging job. Attendees took advantage of the chance to share experiences, knowledge and the occasional success story. In the evening, WVEC hosted a party at a popular local hangout, and energy ran high as people reconnected with allies and formed new connections.

West Virginia's legislative session lasts just 60 days. This annual event is a great way to get to know your government. Watch for the 2021 E-Day, save the date, make appointments with your legislators, and come on down to Charleston.

—by Aileen Curfman



### NEXT EXCOM MEETING:

March 28, 10 AM to 3 PM

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charleston  
520 Kanawha Boulevard W., Charleston, WV 25302

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



## Editor's Note

Hello, fellow Mountain State Sierrans! I am pleased to be the new managing editor of your State newsletter. I hope you find this issue interesting and inspiring to get involved in your Club and Chapter. As an introduction, I have been a Sierra Club member since the early 1980s and am proud to be one of the founders of the Eastern Panhandle Group. My prior editing experience includes long terms as editors of the *Capital Sierran* in Washington, DC and the *Bedpost*, the newsletter of the WV Bed and Breakfast Association.

Putting out a chapter newsletter as a volunteer is a big effort, and I'm glad to have lots of help. Jen Rolston and her company Eden Design does the design and layout, and prior editor Candice Elliott continues to provide lots of support and guidance. Our volunteer leaders never fail to come through with articles, photos, and ideas. Most importantly, I'd love to see this as a newsletter that involves our members. If you would like to submit letters, reviews, photos, or other items, please contact me! Your work can help make this newsletter a resource that will inspire West Virginians to join us in working for a cleaner, greener, and more active State. —Chris Craig • 304-433-1260 • [ccraig@laurellodge.com](mailto:ccraig@laurellodge.com)



On the final day of Olde Tyme Christmas in Harpers Ferry, thirteen Sierrans hiked some of the Park and town. Shortly before the hike's end, the group gathered for a picture with a view of Maryland Heights in the background. Photo by Chris Craig.

## New members elected to Chapter ExCom get down to business

Five well-qualified candidates agreed to run for three vacancies on the WV Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) this past December. Ballots were printed in the Winter issue of the *Mountain State Sierran*, which was mailed to all 2179 member households. Also, for the first time, our Chapter made online voting available to members who opt to receive emails. Despite these efforts, only 4.3% of members took the time to vote, a lower percentage than in past years.

While member response was somewhat disappointing, the results of the valid election returned **Eric Engle** to the ExCom for a second term and brought newcomers **Selah Raines** and **Neal LaFerriere** on board to join the four continuing ExCom members: **Aileen Curfman**, **Kevin Campbell**, **Ciera Pennington** and **Dan Taylor**. At January's ExCom meeting in Morgantown, Eric Engle and Neil LaFerriere were nominated and agreed to act as co-chairs for the Chapter. Other committee appointments may be found in the Chapter Directory elsewhere in this newsletter.

All of these dedicated volunteers freely offer their time and energy to represent environmental interests here in our state. They are eager to work with others to increase the protection of and provide opportunities to enjoy our wild, wonderful West Virginia. Contact any of them if you'd like to help. —by Candice Elliott

Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates. Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to the Editor at: [ccraig@laurellodge.com](mailto:ccraig@laurellodge.com)

Deadline for the 2020 Summer issue  
**May 2**

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. \$1 of each member's annual dues helps offset the cost of producing this newsletter.

## Passing the Torch

2019, it seems, went entirely too fast, yet the bad news dragged on and on. Our nation, our state, and many local governments seem determined to continue use of fossil fuels, no matter the cost.

Industry and State officials are trying to reinvigorate a flagging fracked gas industry by creating a wasteland of cracker plants along the Ohio River. The network of pipelines continues to grow in central West Virginia, and uninspected construction sites pour sediment into our beautiful streams with every rain. In the Northern Panhandle longwall mines are drilled under old pipelines, and the WV Department of Environmental Protection treats concerned citizens like naive and uninformed worry warts. But we do have plenty to worry about!



Photo by Colin Moldenhauer.

- Journalist **Justin Nobel** has recently written in Rolling Stone about the dangers of radioactivity associated with gas and oil development. He reports on the now-shuttered Antero frack dump, sited upstream from the public drinking water intake for several Ritchie County communities. Radioactive matter has been discovered in the dust clinging to tank trucks and water haulers' clothing, as well as downstream from those municipal water plants. Industrial workers and their loved ones have suffered painful and devastating illnesses. So we can now add radioactivity to the previously known threats of fracking: increased plastic waste, climate crisis, and chemical contamination of our water and soil.
- In **Minden** this past summer, community members and allies marched along the same route as folks 30 years ago, commemorating lives lost in the PCB crisis and demanding the justice that Minden has been awaiting for decades. Among those demands: relocation for those who seek it, lifelong healthcare for current and past residents suffering from PCB exposure, and cleanup and remediation to make the community safe for those who wish to remain. Although Minden has been added to the Superfund list, it is appalling that so little has been done to address these issues.
- The more pristine **Eastern Panhandle** is slated to become a new heavy industry center, with smokestacks pouring particulates and poisons into our air.
- A bill introduced in the **WV House of Delegates** contains wording that brings back the specter of logging in state parks.
- Our **2014 water regulations**, up for renewal in 2017, are still stalled in a battle between the WV Manufacturers Association and citizens who just want clean water to drink, bathe in, or fish in.
- **Miners** who haven't been able to work for years fought to keep their black lung benefits, while their children continued to move out of state to find work.

Amidst this gloom, a message of hope arrived in 2019 with **Greta Thunberg**, **Autumn Peltier**, and other youth climate and water protectors, shaming those who created these messes and giving encouragement to young people worried about their future.

Several bills introduced in the WV Legislature would give environmental justice a foothold in West Virginia. One of these is the **Modern Jobs Act, HB 2589**, which was introduced in 2019 and is in committee at the time of this writing. This bill would provide for new solar farms to be located on abandoned mountaintop removal sites. Another, HB 3072, is also in committee. It would allow customers and developers to enter into solar power purchase agreements, helping this burgeoning industry get established in our state.

Another encouraging 2019 initiative is **House Resolution 25**, West Virginia's Green Amendment, which would add to our state constitution the right to clean air, pure water, and the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment.

Times such as these call for visionary leadership and decisive action. The environmentalist movement in West Virginia has grown from a tiny spark to a small but steady flame. We have nurtured this flame, struggling to maintain its glow as we battled on many fronts. We are now passing the torch on to new visionary and decisive leaders. We welcome **Neal LaFerriere** and **Eric Engle** as Co-chairs of WV Sierra Club. Neal, an organic farmer, has been active in the Vioblitz campaign, a citizen initiative that reports environmental violations along pipelines in West Virginia. Eric works on many fronts for environmental and economic justice for West Virginia's people. We will continue to support their work and hope you will, too. —by Aileen Curfman and Natalie Thiele



# View from the Chairs

Before I begin talking about my view, I want to take a moment to tell you how I got here. My path to the Sierra Club Executive Committee and then to the Co-Chair started with my family's struggle with Mountain Valley Pipeline on our organic farm in Summers County. It was through this struggle that I met April Pierson-Keating. April's dedication and commitment to helping her community and all West Virginians was a very large inspiration for me to get involved. I was humbled by April, who gave every breath she had to ensuring that we would have a better future—up until she lost her battle with cancer! I had no excuses. I was compelled to get involved! That brings me to the view from here.

At our annual planning meeting we set a theory of change for our WV Chapter this year. Our theme is "helping those who are most affected by the projects that are harming our environment." I am really excited about this and the opportunities that this theory of change give us! For me personally, if we can't help those who are in harm's way, we are not doing enough. My goal this year is to help put our efforts and resources into providing help to those in need.

A plea for help: More than anything else, I want to know if you are as compelled as I am to make differences. As a state chapter, we have close to 2600 members and 3500 supporters. That can be a significant voice in our small state! Our meetings and activities average 15 to 20 people who actively participate. But we know you care. We need you. Our neighborhoods, our communities, our families need you. We need you to stand with us and help those in need who are being run over by corporate greed and government agencies who put corporate profits before people. We need you to stand up with us.

Take a moment to envision what 2600-3500 voices in the Capitol might accomplish!



Neal LaFerriere and his child Cody at Mollohan Mill – Hackers Valley, WV. Photo by MJ Clark.

Take a moment to envision what 2600-3500 folks willing to pitch in and clean up our watersheds might look like. What would it look like to a community if 2600-3500 folks were committed to helping survive a corporate giant like Rockwool? With the state of our climate and our state's reluctance to acknowledge it, we no longer have the time for what if's. We need to take action. So the question is, who is ready for action? We will be reaching out to you, asking for your help, and asking what we can do to help you in your communities.

I would like to hear from you! Please email me at Neal.LaFerriere.S.C@gmail.com to let me know how Sierra Club can help you and how you see yourself fitting in as we move forward together. — by Neal LaFerriere, Co-chair

## My Vision for West Virginia: A Climate Activist's Perspective



I was recently re-elected to the WV Sierra Club's Executive Committee (ExCom) and given the opportunity to become a Co-Chair of the Chapter. I excitedly took this opportunity to share duties with Neal LaFerriere, and I look forward to serving the chapter to the very best of my ability. Anyone given a leadership position should have a vision. What follows is mine.

As a resident of Parkersburg, I have been front and center in the C8 debacle. For those who might not know, C8 is a PFOA (Perfluorooctanoic acid) in the PFAS (Perfluoroalkyl Substance) family, and it was revealed in a health study of 70,000 persons that exposure to C8 is linked to six serious diseases in humans: testicular cancer, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, kidney cancer, pre-eclampsia, and high cholesterol. Our exposure to C8 from DuPont's Teflon product came via our community water sources. I've lived along the Ohio River all my life, and I have always heard how the Ohio is the most, or one of the most, contaminated rivers in the country—this despite the fact that since 1948 the Ohio River Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) has existed to keep it clean along its entire route. I've also dealt with the serious air pollution in the valley from plastics and petrochemical plants and other sources of air contamination. As an asthmatic child this was especially grueling.

West Virginia has throughout its history been a resource extraction colony—a sacrifice zone—for an industrialized and increasingly disposable economy that has become global. Timber, red salt, coal, natural gas and oil have all been found here, yet we have been left a poor state that ranks near last in every metric of well-being. This must stop. We can and must do better.

My vision is of a West Virginia that promotes sustainable agriculture and development, energy efficiency and renewable energy; where the benefits of these economic renovations remain in our state predominately for our people, and what goes out of state still leads to shared prosperity for all West Virginians. I want to help lead this state to a brighter future through political activism, non-violent direct action, coalition-building, and localized, community-focused outreach to help those most in need.

We must oppose the Appalachian Storage Hub and associated development, Rockwool, continued coal extraction (especially mountaintop removal mining and thermal coal recovery for energy production), and continued shale gas & oil development (especially hydraulic fracturing, or fracking). Solar, wind, geothermal, hemp (especially as a polymers replacement for fossil fuels-based plastics), cannabis more broadly, nature recreation and rebuilding our infrastructure using more sustainable materials and methods—these are just some examples of what will move us forward. I hope you'll join me and the WV Sierra Club in creating a cleaner, healthier future for our state! — by Eric Engle, Co-chair



Laura Miller presenting The Founders Award to Doug Wood at Kanawha State Forest in January. Doug is a former DNR employee who has dedicated his life to protecting the environment and educating the public through hikes, tours and historical interpretations. He was unable to attend our award ceremony at SierraFest 2019. (See Winter Issue of the Sierran for details.) Photo by Laura Yokochi.



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**Sierra Club Water Sentinels are the first line of defense of America's waters. We live on the water planet. However, water is a finite resource with only about 1 % of the world's water actually being available for human consumption. Water pollution & over-use are threatening both the quality & quantity of our water resources at an alarming rate.**

**Keep our water safe. Join Sierra Club.**

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

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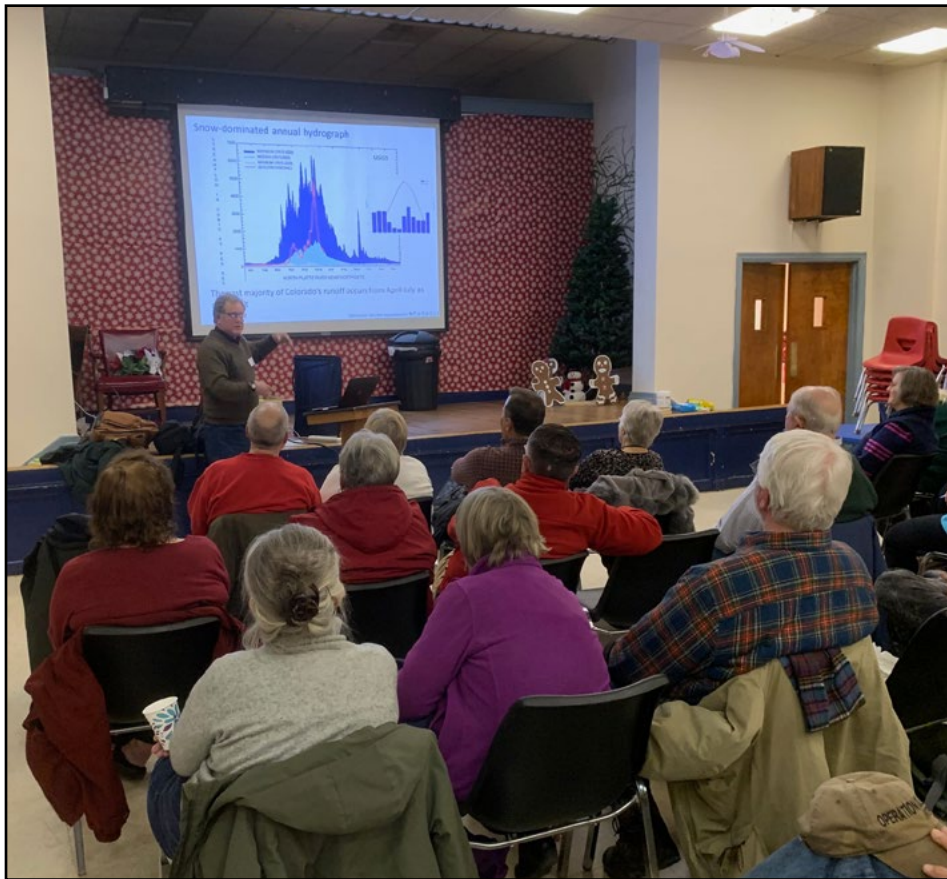
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At the January EPSC program in Martinsburg, naturalist Jim Cummins presented the natural history of the Potomac River watershed. Photo by Chris Craig.

## Eastern Panhandle Sierrans Keep Busy with Activism & Education

The Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club (EPSC) held its first election in late fall 2019. Thanks goes out to Gerry Hatcher, Mandy Staffa, and Ed Wheelless for organizing the election from start to finish, and to all those who voted. The new executive committee of seven took charge in a January meeting. Gail Kohlhorst was elected as group chair, and Regina Hendrix as conservation chair. For other officers, see the directory in this newsletter.

Twelve members of EPSC, the Eastern Panhandle Green Coalition (EPGC), and the Jefferson County Foundation traveled to Charleston January 27-29 to participate in WV E-Day at the Capitol. The goal of the trip was to educate and lobby legislators on the pressing environmental issues facing our state. EPSC volunteers especially wanted to present information concerning local opposition to the proposed Rockwool plant in Jefferson County.

During the day the volunteers interacted with statewide environmental groups present and with citizens visiting the Capitol. Members visited with legislators, including Majority Whip Paul Espinosa, observed committee meetings discussing environmental topics, and met with the Environmental Protection Advocate of the WV Department of Environmental Protection, Ed Maguire. At a presentation to the House of Delegates, Del. John Doyle (D-Jefferson 67) introduced speaker Tracy Danzey, who walked 70 miles across Denmark to protest and educate Danes on opposition to the Danish company Rockwool in the Eastern Panhandle. One of Danzey's legs had to be amputated years ago after contracting a rare form of bone cancer, which she believes was caused by pollution from heavy industry in her former home of Parkersburg.

Over the past few months EPSC has hosted well-attended programs in Martinsburg. In November, Alex Cole of the Ohio Valley Environmental Council spoke on the Appalachian Storage Hub planned in the Ohio Valley. Retired fishery expert Jim Cummins presented a program on the natural history of the Potomac River in January. Local outings leader Chris Craig continues to organize monthly hikes around the Panhandle and beyond. (See photos elsewhere in this newsletter.)

EPSC plans for 2020 include more Martinsburg programs, a summer tour of Entsorga, the first waste resource recovery facility in West Virginia, and a late summer picnic at the Poor House Farm in Berkeley County. A February Round Table gathering of public officials, citizens, and individuals concerned about Rockwool is planned. Funded by a grant from the Sierra Club, speakers will be Brent Walls of Riverkeepers and Mary Ann Hitt from the Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign.

For the latest information on EPSC events, go to [www.easternpanhandlewvsierraclub.org](http://www.easternpanhandlewvsierraclub.org) or the WV Chapter webpage. —by Maggie Loudon

## WV Gas Activists & Monitors Needed



Salutations, Sierrans! My name is Selah Raines, and I am pleased to be a new member of your Executive Committee and the new Gas Committee Chair. As a landowner living in the blast zone of a fracked gas pipeline, I am keenly aware of the impacts our communities endure from fracked gas development. I grew up in coal country; some of you may have met me in my younger years when I was on the road doing outreach to end mountaintop removal. I've lived in Braxton County for nearly a quarter-century, and in that time, our landscape has suffered drastic changes from fracked gas expansion.

I first became aware of the inherent dangers of fracked gas thanks to April Pierson-Keating. I am honored to carry on her work both in WV Sierra Club and as Director of the Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance. I wear many hats, all devoted to the betterment of Appalachia and West Virginia.

I know sometimes our obstacles to community health and safety can seem overwhelming, but I also know that with determination, we can turn things around. And the more of us there are putting our shoulders to the wheel, the more momentum we will have. To that end, I am putting out a call for additional members on the Gas Committee—I want to hear from you! I'd love for us to have representation from affected communities across the state. I want to know what positive changes you'd like to see happen in fracked gas infrastructure.

In light of recent revelations of radioactivity and the hazards we already knew existed around fracking, I am also asking for volunteers to monitor their localities. We can provide you with tools, training, and support. In an effort to improve safety in my own community, I have served as a volunteer monitor since last summer. The WV DEP has only one inspector assigned to 200 miles of the Mountain Valley Pipeline in our state—it's up to the rest of us to say something when we see something. Factor in that there are many more fracked gas pipelines crisscrossing our region, and it quickly becomes apparent that monitoring our safety is up to us.

Sometimes folks feel like there's nothing they can do to help—but engagement can happen at any level, whether it's talking to your family and neighbors, writing a letter to the editor, or showing up to a county commission meeting. As a disabled person with multiple chronic conditions, I know what it is like to have to preserve your energy. We can find a way for you to help, and we welcome all kinds of volunteers! Please email me at [selahraines@emergingappalachia.com](mailto:selahraines@emergingappalachia.com) and let me know how we can help you and your community advocate for healthier outcomes. I look forward to hearing from you—together we can make a difference. —Selah Raines, Gas Committee Chair

## WV Chapter Archivist Needs Your Help Preserving Our Story

Your WV Chapter archivist/historian is still out here wanting materials to archive! As one of the chapter founders, I'd like to help ensure that future WV Sierrans will be able to learn about our chapter, how and why the chapter was founded, what we did in the early years, and what we've been doing lately. Conservation in West Virginia is important, and learning about past conservation activities will help us in the future. I'd like both the serious stuff and the fun stuff: newspaper articles and photographs from chapter activities like picnics, outings, mailing parties, workshops, galas, Excom meetings, etc. Materials can be digital or paper, and they can be from last year or many years ago! (There are many years when I have essentially nothing about the chapter. Perhaps you can help.) If you send photographs, digital or otherwise, please be sure to identify the event and people. Thanks a big bunch!

Please send things to me at [gregg@wwc.edu](mailto:gregg@wwc.edu) or to my address, 23 Meade Street, Buckhannon, WV 26201. — by Kathy Gregg



Kathy Gregg, shown here in WV Wesleyan College's herbarium, wants your photos and records of recent and past WV Sierra Club events.



# Fully Funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund

On September 3, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF), which authorized funding from offshore energy development royalties to acquire private lands for priority public uses. After much delay and controversy, the act was reauthorized in March 2019.

Permanent reauthorization was a gratifying victory—but a partial one only: it may do little practical good since Congress can still withhold a significant portion of the annual authorized amount of \$900 million via the appropriations process. Over the history of the fund, just under half the full amount has been appropriated.

To assure use of the full authorized amount each year, bills in the current Congress would mandate full funding for the LWCF. Only by securing full funding can the Fund finally live up to its true potential of providing local parks and other outdoor recreation facilities for communities around the nation—more places where families can go for a walk, or just enjoy nature close to home.

The Fund also enables federal land agencies to acquire, from willing sellers, private inholdings that too often complicate and add costs to management of wilderness and of other federal conservation lands.

## You can help bring the passage of the LWCF Full Funding Bill.

Please contact WV Senator Shelley Moore Capito by calling 202-224-6472 and asking her to sponsor the bill (S 1081).

For more information on LWCF and the Full Funding Bill, contact:

Vicky Hoover • [vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org](mailto:vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org).

Find a listing for all LWCF-funded projects nationwide at:

[lwcfcollation.com/map-of-lwcf](http://lwcfcollation.com/map-of-lwcf)

## Current Full-Funding Campaign:

Senator Joe Manchin, D-WV, ranking member of the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee, introduced S 1081, the LWCF Permanent Funding Act in April 2019. By the end of 2019 the bill had 50 bipartisan Senate cosponsors. In the House of Representatives, freshman representative Jeff Van Drew, D-New Jersey, introduced an identical bill, which ended 2019 with 232 bipartisan cosponsors—well over half the House.

While the House is poised to pass this bill, additional Senate cosponsors are needed to impress upon Senate leadership the strength of support for the LWCF, so they will agree to bring the bill to a vote.

A sample of LWCF-funded projects in West Virginia includes the following:

- Cabell County – Harris Park
- Harrison County – Charles Pointe Park
- Jefferson County – Evitts Run Park and Moulton Park
- Kanawha County – Charleston Gateway Park and City Park
- Marshall County – Grand Vue Park and McMechen Park
- Ohio County – Miracle Field and Wheeling Skatepark
- Putnam County – Hurricane City Park
- Wood County – Johnson I. Janes Park and Little Kanawha River Park



Clockwise: Tracy Danzey speaks at the Capitol on E-Day. Danzey lost a leg to cancer, which she attributes to swimming in a polluted Ohio River. She recently walked across Denmark, protesting Rockwool's move to West Virginia. Photo by Susan Brookreson. // Artwork by Mandy Staffa, Shepherdstown, grabbed attention at E-Day Tables at the Capitol. Photo by Regina Hendrix. // Delegate John Doyle (D – Jefferson 67) singing an Irish Ballad at the Green Jam, Empty Glass Tavern in Charleston. Photo by Catherine Jozwik. // This fossil fuel-protesting Dinosaur (aka Grant Prillaman) caused quite a stir at the Capitol. Photo by Catherine Jozwik.



## What Can One Person Do? Plant a Pollinator Garden!



Photo by Mamun Srizon.

"I'm not watching any more news," announced Rachel. "It's all bad. The city's drinking water is still testing positive for chemicals. The state legislature is considering a bill that will allow the electric company to burn low quality coal. And the federal government just announced that they are going to allow more oil drilling on our public lands. I'm getting a migraine just thinking about all the letters I should be writing to legislators."

"At least you can write letters," sighed Ellen. "If my boss saw my signature on even one of those letters, I'd be out of a job before you could say 'blacklisted.'"

"Girls, this is our day off," Marie reminded them. "Let's take a glass of wine out back

and sit in the shade."

From the brick patio of Marie's new townhouse, the three friends watched bees visiting her herb bed, buzzing from one flower to the next, their fuzzy bodies dusty with pollen. Butterflies congregated on a damp spot of soil, and hummingbirds battled over scarlet runner blossoms. "I can't believe it!" Ellen exclaimed. "All this from a few seed packets, some potting soil, and a little elbow grease. We haven't stopped Big Oil from doing its dirty deeds, but this yard is amazing! It's nothing like the bare lot I saw last fall when I helped Marie move in."

"I love helping the bugs and bees," Marie explained. "So many of our bees are dying off, and even this wine wouldn't taste so good without bees. They pollinate the cover crops that help the vineyards stay healthy."

Whether you are inclined to activism or not, there are plenty of things you can do to help our environment. One of the most rewarding is to plant a pollinator garden. Even if your garden is just a few flower pots on your front stoop, you can create a haven for living creatures. Your flowers can become a refreshing oasis in a landscape of concrete parking lots and lawns full of pesticides. With similar plantings nearby, pollinators in your neighborhood can thrive.

In West Virginia, pollinators include hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, bees,

beetles, and even flies. As they feed on nectar, they transport pollen between flowers, playing a crucial role in the production of seeds that will bring a new generation of flowers.

When you garden for pollinators, your challenge is to find plants that attract them. Native plants are an obvious choice, since these plants evolved alongside our native insects. A few examples are purple coneflower, butterfly milkweed, and black-eyed Susan. The West Virginia Beekeepers Association offers an excellent mix in packets that will plant a 10x25 foot garden.

Native plants can take time to establish. If you want a less challenging project, try highly scented herbs, like basil, lavender, anise hyssop, and sage. These may be available at your local garden center as seedlings ready to transplant into a garden or flower pot.

Don't forget that insects and birds benefit from plants that we think of as weeds. Early spring days bring out both dandelions and bees. If you kill the dandelions, the bees may starve. Many people don't consider milkweed attractive, but the monarch butterflies that depend on it are beautiful.

Pollinator gardening is one form of environmental action that makes a delightful hobby. —by *Aileen Curfman*



Photo by William Warby.

If you want to delve more deeply into this activity, here are a few online resources:

- [opnseed.com](http://opnseed.com) (search for West Virginia Beekeepers Association seed packets)
- [extension.wvu.edu](http://extension.wvu.edu) (search for pollinator haven)
- [xerces.org](http://xerces.org)
- [ediblemarinandwinecountry.ediblecommunities.com](http://ediblemarinandwinecountry.ediblecommunities.com) (search for vineyard bees)

## Earth Day 2020 - 50th Anniversary!

In 1962, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* warned of the dangers of pesticides, but seven years later two man-made disasters made it clear that we could not continue to pollute the earth without consequences. In January 1969 a Union Oil well exploded, spilling more than three million gallons of oil off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, coating the beaches black, killing over 10,000 sea creatures, and creating enough outrage to start an environmental movement. In June that year, a fire fueled by industrial waste on the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio caught national attention when a picture of the burning river appeared in Time Magazine.

Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin organized an environmental teach-in on April 22, 1970 and is now credited with the founding of Earth Day; however, the first Earth Day was celebrated on March 21, 1970 in California. John McConnell, a pacifist and environmental activist, proposed the global holiday at a UNESCO conference in San Francisco in 1969. He believed that the Vernal Equinox, when day and night are equal, would be the best day to celebrate the beauty of nature's balance and peace among nations. McConnell also wrote the Earth Day Proclamation in June 1970 and designed the Earth Day flag.

In spite of the Equinox symbolism, April 22 became the preferred day to celebrate, perhaps for the same reasons that Nelson scheduled the first teach-in. He wanted the energy of college students in the movement, and April 22 is between spring break and final exams. The twenty million people who participated in the first Earth Day inspired the Clean Air, Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts and the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

In 50 years, what have we accomplished? The Cuyahoga River no longer burns, but we still have oil spills, mountaintop removal, gas explosions, nuclear disasters, deforestation, and an awareness that we are changing the climate. This year, 2020, is the year to take action! —by *Laura Yokochi*



### What can you do to continue the Earth Day legacy?

- Boycott companies that pollute the environment.
- Avoid using fossil fuels: Take action at home or in your neighborhood.
- Take part in a Spring Clean-up or organize your own.

Attend an event, learn something, and meet fellow activists:

- In Morgantown, the Mon Group is sponsoring an Earth Day 50th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday, April 18th (see Monongahela Group Spring Events).
- Also in the Morgantown area, the WV Center on Climate Change is sponsoring two events at the WVU College of Law: Saturday, April 18, 6:30-8:30 pm, "Who Speaks for the Trees?—How West Virginia's Forests Can Save the Planet" and Saturday, April 25, 1:00-5:00 pm: "Bipartisan Climate Solutions and a Fair Energy Transition." See <https://saveblackwater.org/west-virginia-center-on-climate-change> for details and registration information.
- In the Mid-Ohio Valley Eric Engle says that several major events are planned to coincide with the Sunrise Movement and 350.org, including youth-focused demonstrations, Green New Deal awareness and support events, and voter registration drives. See the Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action website or Facebook page for details. (<http://main.movclimateaction.org>)
- In Charleston the WV Department of Environmental Protection will sponsor its annual Earth Day Celebration on April 22 at the Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences of West Virginia. Hands-on activities for school children will be part of the event.



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

## Monongahela Group Spring Activities

The Mon Group includes Harrison, Taylor, Marion, Preston, and Monongalia Counties. Most of our activities have been in the Morgantown area because that's where more members are concentrated, but we would love to expand. If you would like to have more events near you, let one of our Mon Group Ex-Comm members know, and we will work with you to make it happen. —by *Laura Yokochi*

Watch your monthly emails for updates, and if you have any questions contact:

Adrienne Epley Brown (702) 465-9119 <a href="mailto:adrienne_epley@yahoo.com">adrienne_epley@yahoo.com</a>	Laura Yokochi 304) 695-1523 <a href="mailto:lyokochi@aol.com">lyokochi@aol.com</a>
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### Saturday, March 28, 2020 Rail Trail Walk and Talk

1 pm: Meet at the parking area for the Core Arboretum, Monongahela Blvd, Morgantown. We will walk toward the Edith Barill Riverfront Park.

*Rain Date: Sunday, March 29.*

### Saturday, April 18, 2020 Earth Day 50th Anniversary Celebration

10 am - 3 pm: Farmers Market Pavilion, 400 Spruce St, Morgantown. Displays, activities, food, discussion, music, and more. We have a variety of community groups participating, but we have room for more. If you would like to have an educational or sales table at this event, contact John Bird, (412) 805-9624 or [johnbird@frontier.com](mailto:johnbird@frontier.com).



## Outings

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

### Saturday, March 28, 2020

**Day Hike:** Murphy Farm, Trail to Lower Town, Harpers Ferry NHP

**Description:**

The Murphy Farm is a branch of Harpers Ferry NHP where many stories intersect: Civil War invasion, Union fortifications, John Brown. Plus, it boasts one of the prettiest Shenandoah views anywhere. Our walk will take us from the Park visitor center, around the farm meadow, followed by a hike to Lower Town Harpers Ferry through Virginius Island, once home to mills and factories powered by water. Hikers may return to the visitor center via the Park shuttle.\* Those wanting a short, easy hike may join us for only the Murphy Farm section. The walk will be along a gravel road, earthen trails, and grassy meadow. Terrain is flat to rolling hills. The hike is open to any adult or child accompanied by adult prepared for such walking. There is no charge for this hike, but Park admission or permit is required.

**Distance/ Difficulty:** 3.5 miles (with a shorter 1.5mi option) /MODERATELY EASY

**Duration:** 2.5 hours (Total hike. Shorter option approx. 1 hr.)

**Bring:** Water, and a snack.

**Meet:** 10 am, in front of Visitor Center, Harpers Ferry, NHP, 171 Shoreline Dr., Harpers Ferry (Just off US340, opposite the towns of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar)

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
[ccraig@laurelodge.com](mailto:ccraig@laurelodge.com)  
304-433-1260

**Nearest towns:** Bolivar and Harpers Ferry, WV

**Cancellation policy:** We will carry on in light rain but cancel in a downpour

**Additional information:** Park admission or permit is required.



29 Sierrans brought in New Year 2020 with a hike on the C&O Canal towpath from Antietam Aqueduct to Pack Horse Ford (near Shepherdstown). Photo by Michael Zagarella.

### Saturday, April 25, 2020

**Day Hike:** on the Appalachian Trail: Keys Gap (WV/VA) to Harpers Ferry

**Description:**

Repeating last year's successful event, this hike 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 US340 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 the beginning of the hike, so drivers should allow extra time at the end to be returned to their cars. Wear sturdy shoes (Despite the festival's name, no flip flops allowed!). The hike is open to any adult or child (accompanied by an adult) fit for the distance and substantial elevation changes. NPS regulation restrict our group size to 25. Please reserve your space. The hike is free, though donations are welcome. Learn more about the festival at <http://www.flipflopfestival.org>

**Distance/ Difficulty:** 6.5 miles/ MODERATE

**Duration:** 4 hours, including car shuttle

**Meet:** 9 am. Harpers Ferry Middle School, 1710 W. Washington St., Bolivar (near east entrance, by the bus loop). There will be a regular van shuttle\* between the school and the festival site.)

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
[ccraig@laurelodge.com](mailto:ccraig@laurelodge.com)  
304-433-1260

**Nearest towns:** Bolivar and Harpers Ferry, WV, and Hillsboro, VA

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

**Additional information:** NPS regulation restrict our group size to 25. Please reserve your space with the leader. There will be a regular van shuttle\* between the school and the festival site. Wear sturdy shoes (Despite the festival's name, no flip flops allowed!).

### Saturday, May 16, 2020

**Day Hike:** Big Schloss, Great North Mountain, VA/WV

**Description:**

This springtime hike will take us through one of the loveliest areas of George Washington National Forest. We'll walk along a clear, bubbling trout stream, climb to a rocky ridge full of laurel and scrub oak, and through mature forest with dense undergrowth. One highlight will be the rocky ledge of Big Schloss, named by early German settlers for its castle-like appearance. Springtime blossoms of iris, azaleas, and orchids should be abundant. Our loop will include some level walks, but also 1800 feet of elevation gain and areas of mountain switchbacks. The hike is open to those able to maintain a moderate pace on mountain terrain for a long day's hike. There is no charge for the hike, though contributions are welcome.

**Distance/ Difficulty:** 11.8 miles/ DIFFICULT

**Duration:** 6.5 hours

**Bring:** Plenty of water, a bagged lunch, and ample snacks.

**Meet:** 9 am. NFS parking lot on FDR 92 next to Little Stony Creek crossing. From I-81 go west on VA 42 (Exit 283) 5.8 m. to Columbia Furnace and SR 675. Turn right onto SR 675, cross creek and bear left, still on SR 675 (Wolf Gap Rd.). Bear right at junction with SR 717 to remain on 675, and in 2 m. turn right onto unmarked FDR 92 (Johnstown Rd.). Continue on FDR 92 for 4 m. to parking area on right after crossing Mill Creek and just before Little Stony Creek. Or from Wardensville, take Trout Run Rd. 13.3 m. and continue onto VA Rt. 675 (Wolf Gap Rd.) 1.4 m. Turn left onto FDR 92 (Johnstown Rd.) for 4 m. to parking lot.

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
[ccraig@laurelodge.com](mailto:ccraig@laurelodge.com)  
304-433-1260

**Nearest towns:** Woodstock, VA and Wardensville, WV

**Cancellation policy:** We will cancel if weather predictions indicate likely serious precipitation.

### Saturday, June 13, 2020

**Day hike:** Loudoun Heights, Harpers Ferry NHP

**Description:**

Hiking on Loudoun Heights provides a rich history of industrial and Civil War history as well as one of the great views of Harpers Ferry and the Potomac River. Our hike will include some historical and environmental background of the area. It contains some steep ascents (inc. 1700 ft. elevation gain) and rugged trails broken up by more moderate and smooth areas. This hike is open to any adults and children (accompanied by an adult) capable of a multi-hour rugged hike. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. There is no charge for this hike, but it does require HFNHP Park admission or Park pass (a pay slot will be available early on in the hike).

**Distance/ Difficulty:** 7 miles/MODERATELY DIFFICULT

**Duration:** 3.5 hours

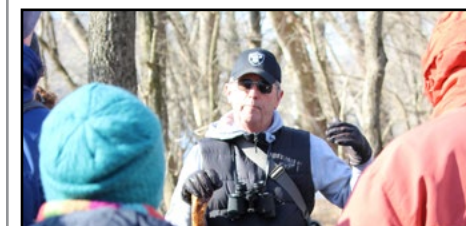
**Bring:** Water, a bagged lunch, and a snack if desired. Wear footwear and clothing appropriate to the terrain and weather.

**Meet:** 9:30 am. Old Shipley School parking lot, 850 Fillmore Street, Harpers Ferry. (Note, this is not Shipley Elementary School on US340. Instead, it is the old school building in the historical town on Camp Hill.)

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
[ccraig@laurelodge.com](mailto:ccraig@laurelodge.com)  
304-433-1260

**Nearest towns:** Harpers Ferry, WV

**Cancellation policy:** We will carry on in light rain but cancel in a downpour



New Year 2020 Hike: Historian Steve French, Kearneysville, shared some of the rich history of the area with the group. Photo by Michael Zagarella.





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**Change Service Requested**

**Spring 2020**

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*Term ends at first meeting of indicated year*

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