

Mountain State Sierran

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Club Joins Settlement for Harrison Power Plant Transfer

Jim Kotcon

After months of organizing, public comment letters, technical reports, expert witness testimony, and legal arguments, the WV Public Service Commission approved a Settlement Agreement on a split vote issued Oct. 7.

First Energy proposed transferring the ownership of the Harrison power plant near Clarksburg, WV, from an Ohio affiliate (Allegheny Energy Supply) to its West Virginia affiliates Monongahela Power and Potomac Edison (MP/PE) in November, 2012. Although they claimed that this was in the customers' interest and would assure "stable" electric rates, consumers and environmentalists showed that the plan would lock in high rates, the \$1.1 billion price tag was inflated, and that the transfer would make West Virginians even more dependent on coal-fired electricity while discouraging energy efficiency. In addition, the West Virginia Coal Association argued that over 400 existing mining jobs were at risk and that the transfer would help keep mining jobs in West Virginia.

Sierra Club launched a major public comment campaign to generate letters of protest over this plan. Members filed over 1300 letters and postcards, and produced numerous letters to the editor to raise awareness among the public. Several local governments, including the Jefferson County Commission and the city of Lewisburg also filed protests.

At evidentiary hearings this summer, the Sierra Club experts, as well as experts from the Consumer Advocate Division, EEWV, and others, demonstrated that energy efficiency would meet much of the need for electricity, and would create many new jobs. PSC Commissioners repeatedly asked the parties to reach a settlement in this complex case. A settlement between First Energy and several parties was announced in late August, and the Sierra Club signed on in early September.

What's in the Settlement?

The Settlement Agreement requires First Energy to:

- Double its current Energy Efficiency targets, to achieve a 1 % reduction by 2018
- Seek EE proposals as an alternative to future generation acquisitions
- Invest \$500,000 over five years on home weatherization for customers
- Invest \$500,000 for EE in WV schools
- Establish 50 new jobs in West Virginia, and
- Retire \$100,000 of renewable energy credits.
- First Energy also agreed to reduce the cost of the Harrison plant to be recovered from ratepayers to \$858 million, a savings of over \$240 million, and to a reduced rate for return on equity.



PSC Order and Dissent

Several issues continued to cause concern for the PSC. The generation capacity of Harrison is substantially larger than needed by MP/PE customers. First Energy argued that this excess capacity could be sold on the grid, but because of low demand and cheaper gas-fired generation, sales from the Harrison plant dropped significantly in 2012.

In addition, the price for the plant appears to be substantially greater than the fair market value, which in effect means that MP/PE customers would be subsidizing First Energy's Ohio affiliate. Commissioners McKinney and Albert voted to approve the settlement, but added several additional conditions, which were accepted by First Energy. First Energy must make equity investments in MP/PE. If the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission determines that the price for the plant exceeds "Fair Market Value", First Energy must return the excess costs to MP/PE. Sales of excess power must be used to support a portion of the costs.

In spite of these conditions, PSC Commissioner Ryan took the unusual step of filing a written dissent. Ryan argued that the cost was still too high, that the transfer threatened the credit rating for MP/PE, and left the utility overly dependent on coal, at a time when most utilities were diversifying their generation sources. Another party, WV Citizen Action Group, also objected and plans to file a legal appeal of the decision.

Why did the Sierra Club sign on to the settlement?

This settlement certainly is not perfect. Many have argued that we should not have signed the deal, that the transfer keeps West Virginia dependent on coal, was too costly, and that the benefits agreed to by First Energy did not outweigh the costs to ratepayers and the environment.

Although the energy efficiency requirements in the settlement fall far short of what is available in other states, it is a very significant increase over the minimal EE programs that First Energy now offers in West Virginia. It is unlikely that those EE programs would have been required by the PSC without an agreed to settlement.

In addition, the settlement requires First Energy to issue a "Request For Proposals" and include energy efficiency as a resource to be considered. The PSC had serious reservations about requiring an RFP process, even though energy efficiency is cheaper, faster, safer and cleaner than new generation sources, and creates many more local jobs than new generation.

Ultimately, the process demonstrated the power of citizen involvement in PSC cases. There is little doubt that citizen comments helped raise awareness of issues and educated the Commissioners on the potential of energy efficiency to meet electricity demand. For the first time, commissioners are questioning whether exclusive reliance on dirty energy sources is appropriate, even in West Virginia.

What's next?

Appalachian Power proposed a similar case involving the transfer of parts of the Mitchell and John Amos plants from an Ohio affiliate. Although the case is still being reviewed by the PSC, the Virginia State Corporations Commission has rejected the Mitchell transfer as not in the customers' interest, making it unlikely that the Mitchell transfer can be approved.

Meanwhile, First Energy must develop a plan to expand energy efficiency offerings in West Virginia. The PSC has required a stakeholder input process, and the Sierra Club will be asking for your help to get even more energy efficiency mandates approved in that process.

And we don't have to wait for the PSC to act. Local groups are forming across West Virginia to advocate for energy efficiency programs in county and municipal governments, local school boards, and local businesses. Success stories are available to provide examples of how it can be done. Getting more efficient light bulbs and better heating and cooling systems into public buildings is a no-brainer. It helps the environment, conserves resources, creates local jobs, AND SAVES TAXPAYER MONEY!

To get the tool kit to organize for energy efficiency in your neighborhood, contact the Chapter Energy Efficiency Campaign Team at 304-594-3322, or jkotcon@gmail.com



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Blackwater Canyon

Neglected and Threatened, Again/Still

Jim Sconyers

The Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail, like many West Virginia trails, was a tangled unholy mess after the 2012 derecho and Superstorm Sandy. But unlike many of our trails, there was and is little prospect of complete clearance and restoration. Why is that?

The Trail, until recent years one of the most outstanding trails in West Virginia for scenic and natural values and recreational opportunities, has fallen into neglect. Not the benign kind — rather, the harmful and destructive kind of neglect. Any trail needs periodic maintenance. It's only natural that there will be blow downs, washouts, etc. These can be remedied easily if addressed in a timely manner.

But not only has the Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail been neglected, it has been formally abandoned. The downward spiral for the Trail began in the middle 1990s, with the acquisition of the Blackwater Canyon "inholding" acreage — a couple of thousand acres of the most awesome landscape in West Virginia — by John Crites's Allegheny Wood Products. Ever since that time, the threat level has waxed and waned. Now they are about to log in the Canyon. Now that's over. Now they're talking about condo development in the Canyon. Now that's over. Now there's new talk of logging plus houses or condos — and that's today's news.

Some Perspective

Blackwater Canyon begins, basically, at Blackwater Falls in Tucker County. The Canyon and the Blackwater River plunge dramatically for 10 miles, to the Blackwater's confluence with Dry Fork and, ultimately, the Cheat River. The Canyon is steep, deep, and forested with maturing hardwood forest. The vistas and landscapes are truly awesome, and include some of the most photographed natural scenes in West Virginia.

A 19th-century railroad ran along the southern side of the canyon from Thomas to Hendricks. In the twentieth century the railroad was abandoned, and it became the Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail. The Trail was — and is — extremely popular with recreationists. Ten miles of gentle downhill grades are ideal for hikers, mountain bikers, cross-country skiers, and more. Incredibly, some of the hardest and most skilled kayakers run both the North Fork and the main stem Blackwater at high water!

And then there are the Canyon's biological treasures. It's home to the threatened and endangered Cheat Mountain salamander and the Virginia northern flying squirrel, and habitat for the Indiana and Virginia big-eared bats.

Blackwater Canyon nestles among thousands of acres of public land. These are comprised of the Monongahela National Forest, for most of the Canyon, and Blackwater Falls State Park. The Mon and Blackwater Falls provide exactly the kind of protection that would preserve and protect the Canyon's natural and recreational values.



Tubb Run, where stream passes under rail trail through a historic aqueduct.

Enter The Spoiler

And then along came Allegheny Wood Products (AWP). In the mid-1990s a strip of about 2000 acres on both sides of the river came up for sale. This land is an "inholding," a parcel of private property surrounded by the massive public acreage of the Mon and Blackwater Falls. Inholdings are often the result of some forgotten historic transaction — but they are privately owned.

Common sense as well as logic clearly indicated that the best outcome for this inholding would be for it to become part of the Mon or Blackwater Falls. Look at a map, and the parcel is the very heart of the Canyon. But this was not the actual outcome. As often happens in rural West Virginia, the land was bought lock, stock and barrel before ordinary citizens — and public agencies — even knew it was for sale or could try to do anything about it.

True to its name, AWP has been pushing to make money from the Canyon property ever since. In the late 1990s they did some limited logging, including helicopter logging, near the confluence of the Blackwater and the North Fork. They announced condo proposals that were later abandoned. They continued to seek approval to harm endangered species and their habitat.

Bringing Us to Today

AWP just won't quit. They currently have a proposal to log and build condos or second homes (we're not privy to the complete details) in the Canyon. They anticipate having their "habitat conservation plan" approved, allowing them to go ahead with their destruction of the scenic and wild splendor of the Canyon.

As the ads said long ago, to paraphrase, "It's enough to make you sick. Isn't it enough to make them quit?"

It's high time that we gave all of Blackwater Canyon the protection it so richly deserves. It's time we stopped living in fear of when the other shoe is going to drop. It's time that the state and federal public land folks stepped up and said, "This is it. We are ready to take action. We will purchase this prime resource for the people of West Virginia and the United States and keep it pristine forever."

Divide and Neglect

Back to the Trail itself for a few notes: Bizarrely, the property boundary between AWP and Mon Forest ownership runs right down the middle of the Trail. The result? Neither side accepts responsibility for maintaining the Trail. They can't reach a simple cooperative agreement. In fact, the Forest Service has formally abandoned it. Now we have sinkholes developing in the middle of the trail, blow downs, blockages, with nobody officially committed to caring for or maintaining or improving the Trail. Take a hike and the upshot is predictable and obvious — it's a mess.

On my last hike there with two friends, we carried light hand tools — loppers, pruners, bow saws — and did what we could to clear what these tools could handle. Along the way we met a fellow with a small chainsaw, who was clearing what it could handle. He'd packed his chainsaw a couple of miles down the trail out of the goodness of his heart.

It's both heartwarming and pitiful that this Trail, once one of our premier multi-use recreational resources, should be reduced to dependence on the kindness of the occasional volunteer.

Again, the solution is obvious. The National Forest or the State Park should buy the Canyon inholding once and for all. Then it could be brought back to the appropriate standard for everyone to enjoy.

Who Has What Is Needed? What You Can Do

In previous years state officials expressed an interest in acquiring the Canyon inholding. AWP has said it is willing to sell. The Governor's office would be a good place to restart negotiations. Governor Tomblin was not active on Blackwater Canyon at the time. A call, email, or letter would be an effective way to bring him into the picture. Let him know what a priceless treasure Blackwater Canyon is, how its natural, scenic, and recreation values are being degraded, and that you want him to step up and take the lead on extending it permanent protection.

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Office Telephone
(304) 558-2000 or 1-888-438-2731

www.governor.wv.gov/Pages/SubmitaCommenttotheGovernor.aspx



Fed Court Orders EPA to Move Forward on Coal Ash Regulations

Jim Kotcon, Energy Chair

A federal judge agreed with environmental and public health groups that the Environmental Protection Agency needs to set federal regulations for the safe and proper disposal of toxic coal ash. The judge's order is at: earthjustice.org/sites/default/files/files/RCRA_NOI_Order.pdf

The groups filed the lawsuit in April 2012 challenging the EPA's lack of federal regulations for America's second largest industrial waste stream.

Coal ash has already contaminated more than 200 rivers, lakes, streams and aquifers with toxic pollutants like arsenic, lead, selenium and mercury. In 2008, a spill at the TVA Kingston Fossil Plant in Harriman, Tennessee, dumped one billion gallons of coal ash over 300 acres, destroying homes and poisoning rivers. That spill led to the EPA proposing in May 2010 the first federal regulations for coal ash disposal. The agency never finalized that rulemaking, leaving open the opportunity for the power generating industry and some members of Congress to push for legislation that would prevent the EPA from ever setting federal regulations.

Here in West Virginia, the absence of strong federally enforceable rules has allowed unlined coal ash dumps like those at Albright, Harrison, and others to discharge toxins into West Virginia's ground and surface waters. The largest ash dump east of the Mississippi River is First Energy's misnamed "Little Blue" impoundment, straddling the border between PA and WV's northern panhandle. Despite an agreement to close the facility, First Energy's plans remain "deficient" according to the PA-DEP, and local citizens suffering from contaminated discharges in their back yard filed suit over damages to their property in October. The citizen lawsuit claims that contaminated water will continue to damage their property, even after the impoundment is closed in 2015. These on-going struggles illustrate why stronger federal rules are needed. Meanwhile, WV Senator Joe Manchin and First District Representative David McKinley push legislation to pre-empt federal rules for coal ash disposal.

What You Can Do

Contact Rep. McKinley and Sen. Manchin, and ask them to re-consider their legislation and to support EPA rules that will protect West Virginia citizens from coal ash hazards.

View from the Chair

Jim Sconyers

Continuity, Maturity, Humility and our “Bench”

I recently had a lesson about how an organization like the West Virginia Chapter sails right along despite one of its key leaders being temporarily sidelined. And how, regardless of what we may think, no one is indispensable.

I've been Chapter Chair for several years. Chapter Chair is something like CEO or President. The buck stops here and all that. In practice, as Chair I got used to being personally involved in much or nearly all of the Chapter's activities, programs, projects, campaigns, and so on. I developed the programs for SierraFest, Executive Committee meetings, the Chapter Retreat, etc. I was a very active participant in our ongoing Marcellus Gas and Energy Efficiency campaigns, an outing leader, a citizen lobbyist in Charleston, and the drafter of our annual budgets. I was the go-to guy on many or most chapter decisions.

Then I got sick — quite sick — and everything changed.

I became, simply, unable to fulfill commitments I had made earlier. I love the West Virginia Chapter, and I was suddenly about to abdicate my responsibilities and commitments. “Oh, no!” was my reaction. “Everything's going to fall apart - we're done for!”

Right — that's where the humility and maturity enter the picture. Humility, as I realize with delight that, no, you are not indispensable.

Can't go to the annual Club meeting in San Francisco? Not a problem. Vice-

chair and Council delegate Gary Nelson represented us very competently.

Did the Marcellus Gas campaign falter? Not a bit. The ambitious campaign moved ahead with new components and goals under the direction of campaign chair David Sturm and organizer Chuck Wrostok and with key volunteers more active than ever.

And our Energy Efficiency campaign — seamlessly advancing and expanding its activities under campaign chair Jim Kotcon and staffer Danny Chiotos, as they shepherded First Energy and Appalachian Power through complex negotiations to final resolution.

Maturity — we have a chapter with the volunteer and leadership resources to assure that the work — sometimes battles — go on, independent of any one individual. In sports terms, we have a good “bench” when we need one.

Don't get the wrong idea: We are always in need of new volunteers to help, at any level, with our work. That can be anything from bringing cookies to a meeting, to making flyers, to testifying at a hearing, or using other skills, or learning new ones. We need you.

Let me know if you would like to learn more about volunteering with the Chapter. Contact me at jimscon@gmail.com or 304-698-9628

PS: I'm recovering nicely, and feeling much better.

Book Review

DESERT SOLITAIRE

by Edward Abbey

Richard Mier, Martinsburg

Desert Solitaire, Edward Abbey's (1927-1989) masterpiece of aloneness is part of the high canon of wilderness writing. Published in 1968, it is an account of his time as a seasonal park ranger at Arches National Monument (now a national park), near Moab, Utah in 1956 and 1957. It is full of rapturous, wonderful writing like this: “I wait. Now the night flows back, the mighty stillness embraces and includes me; I can see the stars again and the world of starlight. I am twenty miles or more from the nearest fellow human, but instead of loneliness I feel loveliness. Loveliness and a quiet exultation.”

It is also full of unidentified quotes from Walt Whitman, William Blake, Thoreau, a cowboy song by Don Edwards, and obscure but interesting words like pismires, demense, usufructuary, alluvium, anabasis. There is nothing treacly here: “Whether we live or die is a matter of absolutely no concern whatsoever to the desert.” His writing will simply stop you in your tracks. He is both iconic and iconoclastic. He doesn't much like people, including in particular, that subspecies of humanity, the tourists (“the indolent millions born on wheels and suckled on gasoline”). He doesn't like roads either, which bring in the tourists. He wants to make it difficult for you to get to Arches. He wants you to get out of your car. As he writes in the Introduction: “This is not a travel guide but an elegy. A memorial. You're holding a tombstone in your hands. A bloody rock. Don't drop it on your foot—throw it at something big and glassy. What do you have to lose?”

He lies in the sand to look up at the penstemon and sunflowers. He wonders about things, like frogs: “Why do they sing? What do they sing about?...Has joy any survival value in the operations of evolution?” He speaks with authority regarding nature's things, citing genus and species. In October, leaving Arches, he writes of “the immanence of snow.”

There is little modern, 21st-century, sensibility here. He is sometimes raffish, occasionally boorish. He believes that wilderness should be preserved as a “...refuge from authoritarian government, from political oppression.” He gives the impression that he is opposed to gun control.

He expects a lot of us and recruits us, his readers, as co-conspirators. He expects us to put up with his provocations, so we can read things like this: “In deep stillness, in a somber solemn light, these beings stand, these fins of sandstone hollowed out by time, the juniper trees so shaggy, tough and beautiful, the dead or dying pinyon pines, the little shrubs of rabbitbrush and black brush, the dried-up stalks of asters and sunflowers gone to seed, the black-rooted silver-blue sage. How difficult to imagine this place without a human presence; how necessary.”

Wounded Warriors, Fly-Fishing and the Importance of Protected Public Lands

Paul Wilson, Sierra Club volunteer and Vietnam veteran

Outdoor recreation has been found to be a heart-warming method to heal the physical and psychological wounds of war for America's newest generation of veterans and wounded warriors. Many programs, such as Sierra Club's Military Families and Veterans Initiatives Program, the Wounded Warrior Project and Project Healing Waters fly-fishing, have been developed due to the generosity of funders and volunteer instructors.

I started the Project Healing Waters fly-fishing program at my local Veterans Administration Medical Center last year when I noticed the program was already available at many Virginia and West Virginia VA facilities. Working with our Trout Unlimited chapter in Winchester, Va., I was able to recruit over 15 volunteers, receive a donation of 10 Temple Fork fly-rods and reels from the Sierra Club's Water Sentinels Program and get assistance from a local fly-fishing shop, Kelly's Whitefly, in Shepherdstown. Fly-tying equipment and supplies were donated by Project Healing Waters fly-fishing in La Plata, Md.

One week a month we have fly-casting and fly-tying classes for the vets at my VA hospital with the goal that they will go fly-fishing with the flies they have tied. At a local pond or river, the vets will hopefully catch a fish on “their” flies, and thus make

the connection between tying a fly, learning about what fish eat and the natural cycle of insect “hatches.”

Another connection that I have a personal interest in making to new fly-fishers, is the habitat those fish live in and what the future has in store for that habitat. This is an especially important connection for our cold-water species in Appalachia like the native brook trout, which is the prized quarry of many a fly-fisher.

Brook trout are very sensitive to changes in water temperature and quality, so having landscapes that provide cold, clean, fast-running water is important to maintaining trout populations. The proposed Birthplace of Rivers National Monument would provide additional protections for the headwaters of six important trout rivers in West Virginia while still allowing for state management of fish and wildlife game species, restoration of the Red Spruce forest, and allowing age-old Appalachian activities like harvesting ginger, morals mushrooms and other native forest products.

The meditative and spiritual nature of fly-fishing, along with the camaraderie of their fellow veterans and fly-fishers makes for a relaxing and enjoyable outdoor experience for our veterans. But it is also an opportunity to learn about the importance of protecting our public lands, the intricacies of the web of nature, and the threats from climate change, extractive industries, and bad development decisions.



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Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

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

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MON GROUP

Fri, Nov 1, 8:30–11 p.m.

(Rain date: Nov 2)

Saw-whet owl banding with Joey Herron

Valley Falls Superintendent's Office
(top of hill)

Discussion at 8:30 p.m. followed by (hopefully) netting and banding these interesting creatures as they migrate. Bring folding chairs (you will be outside), WARM clothing, a flashlight, your camera, and maybe a hot drink for a night you won't forget. We should finish by 11 p.m. Contact David Sturm with questions: 304-363-7160, davidsturm@gmail.com

Tues, Nov 12, 8:15–10 p.m.

Movie: *The Last Mountain* Mon Art Center (MAC)

107 High St, Morgantown

Shown after the Monongahela Arts Center "ART21" series, which will screen the film *Boundaries* at 7 p.m.

All events at the MAC are free and open to the public. Donations appreciated.

Mon, Dec 16, 6–9 p.m.

Holiday Social & Potluck Candice & Jim Kotcon's house

414 Tyrone Avery Rd, Morgantown

All are welcome to the annual social gathering where we celebrate the past year's triumphs and look ahead to next year's challenges.

Bring a dish to share, bring a friend, bring your kids. There will be stimulating conversation and maybe some group games just to get to know each other better.

Good food, good people, good times! Contact Candice for info or directions: 304-319-2245; celliot2@comcast.net

Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates.

Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to the Editor at:

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Morgantown, WV 26508

**Deadline for
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December 5**

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Perspectives on Outings

— Russ Flowers, Outings Chair

The Mountains are Calling, so I Must Go!

This summer, my wife, Sue, and I visited our daughter, Kate, in Colorado for two weeks. During our time, we toured the Central Rockies in the High Country of the state and hiked many trails. The mountains in Colorado are significantly larger than the present day Appalachian Mountains. For example the highest point in WV is Spruce Knob at 4,862 ft. Where my daughter lives, it is 9,075 ft. and the mountains surrounding her are in excess of 14,000 feet. They call these mountains 14er's. Sue and I had hiked trails in the ten to twelve thousand feet range. At this elevation it is extremely hard to breathe due to the thinner atmosphere and less amounts of oxygen that we are used to here in West Virginia.

Sue and I have only been at 14,000 ft. a few times for activities such as a train ride to Pikes Peak and scenic drives, but we never hiked to that elevation. While on our trip, I kept joking with Kate that we need to hike a 14er. As our vacation was winding down, I joked a final time and my daughter called my bluff. So she and I began planning right away. I was really excited to set a goal to challenge myself and try a new outdoor adventure.

As we started planning our hike, Kate picked a 14er relatively close to her apartment and one that the trailhead would be relatively easy to reach and not too laden with tourists. She chose Grays Peak at an elevation of 14,300 ft. I researched all I could find about the mountain and trail to the summit. The trail is approximately 8 miles round trip and it was recommended to start by 5:00 am to summit and descend the mountain before afternoon thunderstorms move in. After all the planning and packing of our gear was completed, we set out early on a Friday morning. We arrived at the trailhead around 5:00 a.m. and I was hit with a bit of a shock. Mind you, it was mid-July, and the temperature was 37 degrees. My summertime hiking gear doesn't usually consist of gloves and a toboggan, but it

sure did on this day. The trailhead elevation was around 11,000 feet, also known as tree line there, the elevation where trees stop growing.

At the trailhead, we crossed a bridge that spanned a rushing stream that is fed by snowmelt. The trail meandered through brush thickets with loads of bird activity. A mile or so up the trail, the brush gave way to a large valley filled with red, yellow, and purple wildflowers in full bloom. The high alpine wildflowers are very different from the ones at our home elevation, but are equally beautiful. After another mile, the trail veered to the right, and the Grays Peak was visible.

What a sight it was to see! There were large snow packs on the massive rocky slopes. I had to remind myself it was July with all the snow. As the elevation increased, the meadow of wildflowers became fields of boulders. Marmots, which are similar to our groundhogs, were playing all around, spinning their tails, and sunning themselves. At that point we had surpassed 12,500 ft. The trail got steeper and breathing was much more difficult. Kate was great at setting the pace and stopping for water breaks at timed intervals. During these breaks, I would look down over the valley floor below in amazement.

As we continued the climb, the breaks became more frequent, and vertigo started setting in. The trail became even more steep with loose rocks (talus) all around. My steps got smaller, and I became slightly dizzy with a slight headache. Altitude sickness had started to set in. At this point, we were at 13,800 ft. and Kate could recognize that I was about at my limit. We sat down and had a small chat. She told me that we only had ½ mile to go to get to the summit of Grays Peak with a 500-foot gain in elevation. I could see the top, but there were 5 more switchbacks to go.

The lack of oxygen made breathing difficult, but I felt I could try to push myself a bit more. However, I had to think about

my health and the safety of both of us. Kate said she was proud of me that I had made it as far as I had, and there was no shame at stopping at that point. She was very encouraging and told me that what we had done was a great accomplishment. Also, I had to realize that if something happened to me, I would be a liability to Kate being 4 miles to the trailhead. She also reminded me with my slower pace, we were at risk of getting caught in an afternoon thunderstorm. After our discussion and taking some pictures, we decided to descend.

It was amazing! As soon as we started to descend, my breathing became easier, which was a great feeling and a big relief. Kate explained that the pressure was off my lungs, which made breathing easier. This also made the descent easier. Our pace was a bit faster, but we still enjoyed the scenery and periodically looked back to admire the furthest point on the mountain that I had reached. When we were about 1 mile from the car, we started to hear thunder in the distance. Our pace increased and we made it to the car just in time before the deluge started. We reflected on the hike during the car ride back to her apartment.

Looking back on this experience, it gives me such a sense of pride that not only did I get to accomplish a personal victory for myself, but I was afforded the opportunity of getting to spend time and to share it with my daughter, Kate. I was proud of her in the way she led the hike, giving me inspiration, encouragement, and good advice. It was also gratifying to try a new outdoor adventure. Even though I fell just short of the summit I had hoped to reach, I did hike further in elevation than I ever have before. This taught me that I do have limitations, and I need to be conscious of them. Just because we didn't make our goal of reaching the summit, we did accomplish a lot and created a life-long family memory.

Take to the Outdoors!

Chapter Members Attend Green Festival in D.C.

The Ninth Annual Green Festival returned to the nation's capital September 21-22 this year. Thousands of people visited the Washington Convention Center for two days to learn about solutions available in their communities that can lead to a healthier and more sustainable way of life.

Mark and Bonnie Branciaroli, WV Chapter members from Elkins, volunteered to work the show and represent West Virginia at the Sierra Club Green Cinema. The Branciarolis were joined by members from the Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., chapters. Members worked the weekend to introduce the Sierra Club to people who were not familiar with the organization and to answer questions.

Since high volume slickwater hydraulic fracturing is a key concern to the environment here in West Virginia, the Branciarolis distributed hundreds of our "What does FRACKING mean for YOU?" brochures and gave festival attendees the

opportunity to view the movies *Triple Divide* and *Gasland*.

"It was amazing how many people in the Potomac basin were unaware of the drilling activity," said Mark Branciaroli. "We opened a lot of folks' eyes to the effects of this industry to the quality of our water and air. We helped them realize that what happens in West Virginia and Maryland affects their water system in the D.C. area."

Green Festival® is the largest sustainability event in the world, continuing to grow each year. It is the only green event that screens exhibitors for their commitment to sustainability, ecological balance and social justice using Green America's green business standards.

The event is a project of two nationally recognized not-for-profits, Green America and Global Exchange. One of five shows held nationwide, the 2014 show in Washington, D.C., is scheduled for May 31-June 1. Save the date.

For more info: GreenFestivals.org

For partnership information:

greenfestivals.org/become-a-partner



Mark and Bonnie Branciaroli at the Washington, D.C., Green Festival in September

Outings Chair Seeks Feedback

Winding down and reflecting over my first year as the Chapter Outings Chair, I have decided to reach out to all Chapter members to request your feedback on your outings program. Are there certain outings that you wish to see more of, or at certain locations in the state? Are we doing a good job getting outings information to you via the newsletter and website? Please feel free to send any comments, questions, concerns, or suggestions to me so we can make our outings program better able to fit the needs of our members.

Thanks for your support of the WV Sierra Club Outings Program.

Take to the Outdoors!

Send comments and suggestions to:

Russ Flowers
Outings Chair, WV Sierra Club
russwvu@yahoo.com
cell: (304) 482-7919

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Sierra Club Liability Policies For Chapter Outings

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

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

Activities are normally held "rain or shine," but may be postponed at the leader's discretion for safety reasons in the event of inclement weather. Participants are reminded that all outdoor activities carry a degree of risk, and some take place in locations where professional emergency medical aid may be two or more hours away. People with health concerns should consult a physician to determine the advisability of participating in these or similar activities. The leader is responsible for the safety of all participants, and has the final authority to decide whether or not an individual may participate on a specific outing. Sierra Club safety policy requires that helmets be worn on bicycling outings, and a personal flotation device (PFD) be worn when using personal watercraft such as kayaks or canoes.

Unless noted in the announcement, Club outings are intended for adults. Children and

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

Travel to the official starting point and back, even from an advertised meeting place, is the sole responsibility of each participant. While the Club encourages car-pooling, such arrangements are strictly between the riders and the drivers, and are not a part of the outing. Participants assume full responsibility and liability for all risks associated with such travel.

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver, which can be viewed on the web at www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms or by calling **415-977-5630**.

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

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

Sat, Nov 2

Adopt-a-Trail: Coopers Rock SF

rated easy — Join the fun with the fall trail maintenance for Sierra Club's adopted Intermediate Cross Country Ski Trail at Coopers Rock South (hiking and easy to moderate work intensity). Fall clean-up emphasizes clearing fallen leaves, drainage restoration and trail clearing along a 1.25-mile loop. Volunteers should wear sturdy boots, carry work gloves, and bring water & snacks. Useful tools to bring are long-handled pruners, rakes and pointed shovels. Adults and adolescents are invited to help and those under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or a legal guardian. Volunteers will be required to sign a standard Sierra Club Liability Waiver and a DNR Volunteer Work Program Agreement. Please pre-register with the leader.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV
Web info: coopersrockstateforest.com; coopersrock.org

Sat, Nov 2

6-Mile Loop Hike: Chimney Rock

rated moderate — Join us for this 6-mile loop hike at Chimney Rock, just outside Waynesboro, PA. We will start at the picnic area and hike up the AT in Michaux State Forest and down the Tumbling Run trail, following a beautiful stream. Meet up at 10 a.m. at the Food Lion in Waynesboro. Contact leader for more details and to register.

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

Nearest town: Waynesboro, PA
Web info: dcur.state.parks.pa

Sat, Nov 9

Workshop: Ferns & Nature Prints

not rated — Join WV Master Naturalists for this fun, interactive, hands-on, two part workshop on Ferns and Nature Prints at the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge. The workshops are free of charge and open to members & nonmembers. Please pre-register with the leader as seating is limited. Bring bag lunch (fridge & microwave available). Workshop is from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Meet at

Maryland Chapter Outings

Our neighboring chapter to the east has an active outings program, with many trips coming into West Virginia or western Maryland. These outings, by highly experienced leaders, range from easy to strenuous, and are open to everyone. Join an outing by checking out their calendar at

maryland.sierraclub.org

Allegheny Group Outings

Sierra Club members in the Pittsburgh area belong to the Allegheny Group. They have a moderately active outings program as well as links to other local outdoor activities. Visit their website for an outings calendar and more details at

alleghenysc.org

Potomac Region Outings (PRO)

This is an activity section of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, with an extensive outings program run by leaders who live in and around the Washington, D.C., area. A calendar of activities, information and updates can be found on their website at

www.sierrapotomac.org

West Virginia Chapter Outings

For updated listings of outings sponsored by the West Virginia Chapter, check our Chapter website at

westvirginia.sierraclub.org

Refuge Headquarters in Williamstown at 8:30 a.m. Contact leader for further directions and questions.

Leader: Russ Flowers, 304-482-7919, russwvu@yahoo.com

Nearest town: Williamstown, WV
Web info: fws.gov/northeast/ohioriverislands

Sat, Nov 9

4-mile Day Hike: Valley Falls SP

rated moderate — Join us for a moderate hike at Valley Falls State Park. We will do an out-and-back hike on the Rhododendron Trail, including a peek at the "hidden" waterfall at trail's end. This is a short hike of about 4 miles, with some steep sections. Bring your camera, as there are some great photographic opportunities. You will need to bring water, sturdy foot-wear is highly recommended, and trekking poles can be helpful. Contact leader for information on parking and start time.

Leader: Aaron Vedock, 540-805-0019, amvedock@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Fairmont, WV
Web info: valleyfallsstatepark.com

Sat, Dec 7

Bird Watch: Ohio & Muskingum Rivers

rated easy — Join us for this fun bird-watching outing along the Ohio and Muskingum Rivers. We will drive along these rivers and stop at various spots with high concentrations of birds such as: bald eagles, various hawks, numerous species of water fowl, as well as many migratory species. We will meet at the Ohio River Islands Refuge Headquarters in Williamstown, WV. Contact leader for further directions, times, and questions.

Leader: Russ Flowers, 304-482-7919, russwvu@yahoo.com

Nearest town: Williamstown, WV
Web info: fws.gov/northeast/ohioriverislands

Sat, Dec 14

7-mile Loop Hike: Cacapon SP

rated moderate to strenuous — Join us for this 7-mile loop hike with moderately strenuous ascents and descents at Cacapon State Park. Plan on 3 ½ hours for the hike. Meet up in the park lodge lobby at 10 a.m. Contact leader for more details and to register.

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

Nearest town: Berkeley Springs, WV
Web info: cacaponresort.com

Sat, Dec 14

Workshop: Nature Crafts & Preservation

not rated — Join WV Master Naturalists for this fun, interactive, hands-on, two-part workshop on Nature Crafts and Preservation at the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge. The workshops are free of charge and open to members & nonmembers. Please pre-register with the leader as seating is limited. Bring bag lunch (fridge & microwave available). Workshop is from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Meet at Refuge Headquarters in Williamstown at 8:30 a.m. Contact leader for further directions and questions.

Leader: Russ Flowers, 304-482-7919, russwvu@yahoo.com

Nearest town: Williamstown, WV
Web info: fws.gov/northeast/ohioriverislands

Abbreviations Used

AMC Appalachian Mountain Club
AT Appalachian Trail
GWNF George Washington National Forest
JNF Jefferson National Forest
MG Monongahela Group
MNF Monongahela National Forest
NPS National Park Service
NRA National Recreation Area
NWR National Wildlife Refuge
PFD Personal Flotation Device (lifejacket)
SF State Forest
SP State Park
SNP Shenandoah National Park



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West Virginia Chapter
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Dial-the-Governor:
1-888-438-2731
email: governor@wv.gov

To Contact STATE LEGISLATORS

email to WV Legislature:
cglagola@mail.wvnet.edu
(Put name of recipient under subject)

Messages for legislators can be left at:
1-877-565-3447 or 304-347-4836

Mail address:

Member, WV Senate or
House of Delegates
Bldg 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

website: www.legis.state.wv.us
has contact information for all state legislators.

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For planned giving in West Virginia, contact Paul Wilson at 304-725-4360

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Here's what YOU CAN DO	What that does for YOU	What that does for YOUR COMMUNITY	What that does for EVERYONE
replace lightbulbs	insulate walls and attic	save money every month	support clean energy economy = more jobs
seal drafty areas	unplug electronics when not in use	your house or business is more comfortable	less energy generated = less pollution
			cleaner air & water for everyone to enjoy