

# Mountain State Sierran

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January/February 2011

## Sierra Club Fights Dangerous Coal Ash

*Jim Kotcon WVSC Energy Committee*

For many years, coal ash was considered relatively benign, and few paid attention to its disposal. But a spill from an impoundment in Tennessee in December 2008 drew attention to the risks, just as new science documented serious hazards.

Ground water contamination beneath some impoundments creates a cancer risk that is hundreds of times EPA's Safe Drinking Water standards. Heavy metals, including arsenic, lead, selenium, chromium, and others contaminate streams. High levels of dissolved solids, alkaline discharges, and even radioactive contamination are found.

### Federal Rules Proposed

EPA is considering more stringent rules to regulate impoundments and coal ash landfills. Many from the West Virginia Chapter have filed comments, spoken at public hearings, and written letters and e-mails calling for strong federal enforcement. One of the weakest aspects of the rules is that they exempt disposal on surface mines and other so-called "beneficial uses." While there are appropriate uses for coal ash, too many utilities are claiming that this loophole exempts them from any regulation over disposal of toxic ash. In West Virginia, almost half of all coal ash from power plants is disposed of under the "beneficial use" exemption, threatening our streams, nearby residents, and downstream drinking water sources.

In addition, EPA has also proposed specific Guidance that would limit mining impacts, including high levels of Total Dissolved Solids from surface mines. A comment period on this Guidance ended December 1, and if adopted, these rules would greatly limit the pollution from surface mines.

### New Hill West Mine Permit Appealed

Just north of Morgantown, Patriot Mining is proposing an expansion of their surface mine by adding over 200 acres.



*Chapter Chair, Jim Sconyers, ordains local activist Petra Wood a charter member of the Order of Ash Kickers at the Mon Group's December Potluck.*

To neutralize the acid mine drainage from the site, the permit authorizes disposal of as much as 10,000 tons of coal wastes per acre. The residual limestone and alkaline materials would help prevent acid mine drainage, but they have a significant potential to leach heavy metals and contaminate nearby streams and surface waters.

Local members like John and Petra Wood, with the help of the Sierra Club, have held out against the threat to their homes. An appeal of the water pollution permit was filed on September 3, 2010, claiming that the permit violates the Clean Water Act by failing to set limits for discharges of heavy metals, by allowing excessive discharges of Total

Dissolved Solids, and by failing to set limits for Whole Effluent Toxicity.

On November 18, a "stay" was granted to prohibit mining until the WV Environmental Quality Board hears the evidence. A full hearing is scheduled for December 14-17, 2010, with a decision expected in early 2011. This is good news for nearby residents, as Patriot was expected to start blasting on the site in November.

If we prevail in this appeal of the water pollution permit, many of the pollutants that now are allowed to run into our streams would be regulated at this site for the first time. Stringent pollution controls and more extensive monitoring of the mine and its ash disposal would be required. While we expect that limits on pollution discharges may make the mining more expensive, it is unlikely that we can stop the mining. But we can make sure that any mining operation protects our water and does not expose nearby communities to toxic coal ash.

### Do We Need Legislation in West Virginia?

Dumping ash on surface mines under the "beneficial use" exemption means that toxic ash will be released without adequate liners, leachate collection systems, or groundwater monitoring. The West Virginia Environmental Council will be seeking legislation to repeal the current exemption and to make sure that ash disposal sites are properly regulated and monitored. In addition, better testing of coal ash for toxicity is needed, as WV-DEP is still using out-dated and ineffective testing methods.

We recognize that coal ash has to go somewhere, and modern landfills with liners and leachate collection systems can protect communities from many of the hazards. We also know that there can be beneficial uses, and that recycling the ash can create jobs and reduce disposal costs. But adding arsenic to our drinking water should not qualify as "beneficial."

## Chapter Launches Marcellus Shale Campaign

*Clean water is West Virginia's most precious natural resource*

*Beth Little WVSC Marcellus Shale Committee*

Protecting our water is the basis of the campaign the Chapter has launched to deal with the gaping holes in regulation on Marcellus shale deep gas wells. In addition, issues of clean air, road traffic and safety, NORMS (naturally occurring radioactive materials), and other threats have become apparent as this industrial development expands in West Virginia. Our purpose is to supply West Virginia's landowners with the tools to protect them from the vast potential dangers of Marcellus shale drilling, ranging from waterways being sucked dry to first responders being poisoned by unknown chemicals. Our website at [www.frackcheckwv.net](http://www.frackcheckwv.net) provides more detailed information.

Regulations enforceable by law are either directly entered in the WV Code through legislation passed by the state Legislature or through Rules drawn up by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and approved by the Legislature. Either way, our state Senators and

Representatives are the ones responsible for the laws that protect our water, air and health.

Our legislators are heavily lobbied by industry — the gas industry currently employs at least 22 lobbyists, not counting those for coal and chemical companies, who have similar interests. It takes a massive public effort to get our lawmakers to pay attention to the people instead of industry lobbyists. Since we can't afford to hire an army of highly paid lobbyists, our best tool is to educate voters who can influence elections.

*continued p. 2 – Marcellus*



### CALENDAR

- Jan 10 Return Mon Ballots
- Jan 13 Mon Group Meeting
- Jan 18 Return Chapter Ballots
- Jan 22 Chapter ExComm in Morgantown
- Feb 3 Newsletter Deadline
- Feb 9 E-Day at the Capitol
- Feb 10 Mon Group Meeting

*It's Not Just The Water*

## Marcellus Air Pollution in Wetzel County

**Bill Hughes**

Marcellus gas drilling has created many problems — illegally filled streams, crumbling roads, and more.

Now we find that the development of Marcellus gas fields is polluting the air, as well as the water and land. And like other dimensions of the Marcellus gas rush, the air pollution is going completely unregulated and has the potential to become a major, irreversible hazard to our health.

The problem is that the air pollution is sometimes hard to see, difficult to measure, drifts with the wind and comes in parts — some here, some there — rather than from one easy to target source. There are pollutants being emitted from wells, during fracking and during completions when a lot of raw gas is released to the atmosphere before and after *flaring*. Compressor stations and dehydration units also release harmful emissions.

Each one by itself is insufficient to trigger enforcement and is usually considered a minor source. However, federal law — the Clean Air Act — requires that interconnected and interdependent sources should be considered together, or aggregated, to determine whether the Act is being violated.

In Wetzel County, concerned citizens are insisting on that aggregation. They want to have the emissions at all gas wells and all compressor stations be combined together as one source. They have challenged recent permits for gas compressor stations. The WV Department of Environmental Protection Division of Air Quality has refused to address the issue, saying they do not ever regulate air pollution from any gas or oil field development. So local citizens have filed an appeal, attempting to force the WVDEP to face up to its responsibility. In the aggregate, the Wetzel air pollution is more than enough to cross the Clean Air Act threshold and require pollution control measures.



photos by Ed Wade, Jr.



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### Marcellus — from p. 1

Last year, a couple of bills were introduced to correct some of the shortfalls in gas drilling regulations. One bill, introduced by Delegate Tim Manchin, was passed with only eight dissenting votes in the House but was weakened in the Senate and died in conference (the process of reconciling House and Senate versions). The others didn't make it out of committee. The WV Environmental Council lobbyists (all four of them) devoted energy to these bills, along with working on a host of other legislative issues, but there was not enough public input to demonstrate strong support.

This year, we have hired an outreach organizer, Chuck Wyrostok — [wyro@appalight.com](mailto:wyro@appalight.com) — to help get the message out and offer assistance to those already concerned with what/when/how they can help. We are collaborating with other groups, sharing our concerns, and making presentations to interested groups. Our legislative agenda can be found on our website, [www.frackcheckwv.net](http://www.frackcheckwv.net), which also provides a way to contact your legislators directly (see "this simple form" under [Take Action](#)).

The idea is to build a block of voters who will press their county commissioners, their legislators and the WV DEP to enact sensible regulation on the water, land and air issues caused by Marcellus drilling. No one should feel alone or powerless, or unduly pressured by drillers. We need to educate ourselves and our neighbors and turn that knowledge to power.

Many of us have lived on our land for decades, using water wells for drinking, washing, cooking ... life's essentials. Yes, we need jobs and prosperity, but without clean water, we can't live here.

There is much you can do. Talk to your neighbors and County Commissioners. Call your legislators toll-free (877-565-3447). Learn your rights at [www.wvsoro.org](http://www.wvsoro.org). Go to our website at [www.frackcheckwv.net](http://www.frackcheckwv.net) or reach us toll-free at 877-252-0257.

There are already a couple of bills in draft mode — one from the DEP and another from a subcommittee of the Joint House and Senate Judiciary. The bills are long and we are still studying them; plus, they will probably be amended during the legislative process. And, there will be other bills. We will attempt to keep you updated with alerts and postings on

our website so you will know when your call, letter, or email is needed. There will also be public hearings: good attendance is invaluable for demonstrating public concern. Hearings are scheduled on short notice, but if you can come to Charleston, your presence would be extremely helpful.

**If you can do nothing else, try to come to the Capitol for E-Day on February 9.** We will have an orientation program and guides to help you find your legislators.

Here is a brief summary of the main issues that need to be addressed:

### Water withdrawals

Currently there is nothing stopping a company from draining our streams dry, and it *is* happening. The current voluntary program would not be effective even if followed. The gauges showing stream flow are too far downstream to provide guidance about headwater streams, and nothing tells a driller how many other drillers are also withdrawing.

We need a mandatory permit process for industrial water withdrawals in small streams and headwaters. Draining our streams, particularly during traditionally dry seasons, is bad for citizens, tourism, recreation, fishing, aquatic life and the overall health of our waterways.

### Water Quality Standards

WV has no standard for Total Dissolved Solids (TDS), which are mineral salts. They make the water taste bad and cause both home and industrial equipment to collect deposits and malfunction. High TDS were implicated in the Dunkard Creek golden algae bloom that killed everything — fish and mussels — for 30 miles. DEP is proposing a state-wide water quality standard for TDS of 500mg/l measured in-stream. This is stronger than Pennsylvania's standard of 500mg/l measured only at public water supply in-takes. However, it is still twice as high as the 250mg/l that EPA recommends as the Human Health Standard for total dissolved solids. In addition, DEP fails to propose in this rule an aquatic life standard for conductivity, with which TDS levels are closely associated.

DEP should adopt the federal standard for human health of 250mg/l, and DEP should adopt an aquatic life criterion for TDS and conductivity as proposed by EPA.

### Drilling wastes

There are three kinds of wastewater from drilling, in addition to the solids (mud and cuttings from the earth and rock). They are drilling brine; fracking fluids — used under high pressure to crack open the shale, and exempt from regulation by the EPA under the Clean Water Act; and produced water — largely made up of fracking fluids at first but continuing to flow during gas production.

Wastewater contaminants include toxins from the earth, such as NORMs (naturally occurring radioactive materials), and chemicals in the fracking fluids, such as benzene, toluene and barium, all of which cause cancer, birth defects, and other health problems. Fracking fluids can be treated and reused to minimize water withdrawals, but eventually disposal of all these forms of wastewater, and the solids that settle out, must occur. Current legal practices of spraying on the land and burying pits on site are a danger to our streams and groundwater.

We need regulations that require a closed loop (tank to well to tank) for fracking fluids and removal of all wastewater and solid residue, including pit liners, to authorized hazardous waste facilities.

### Accidents

Inevitably, there will be spills, leaks and explosions. We need all gas wells to have an emergency plan that includes immediate notification of emergency services, the health department, downstream water supply facilities and residents, in addition to the oil and gas inspectors.

We also need public disclosure prior to drilling, not after the accident, of all chemicals being used, so that medical and other emergency first responders know how to treat the injured and handle the cleanup.

### Enforcement

There are more than 45,000 active gas wells in West Virginia. The number of well work-permits issued varies from 900 to 3,000 each year (which is projected to increase dramatically with Marcellus shale drilling).

The drilling of new wells requires several visits by an inspector, and each active well should be inspected at least once annually. Yet, WV has a total of only 17 inspectors. New inspectors must be approved by an examination board of industry representatives and must have at least six years experience in the gas industry.

The DEP needs a hiring process free from conflicts of interest and the funding to hire more inspectors.

## 2011 Legislative Session Features New (Acting?) Governor

With the election of Joe Manchin to fill the unexpired term of Senator Byrd, the WV Governor's Office will be filled by State Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin. At this time, it is unclear whether a special election will be held in 2011, or whether Tomblin would serve until the end of 2012.

But environmental legislation will be considered, regardless of who sits in the Governor's Mansion. Legislation to regulate drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale will likely be a top priority. The Sierra Club wants better regulation of drilling, tighter water quality standards, and tougher enforcement.

### Other legislative priorities include:

- Green Buildings Act – to mandate that all new government buildings be built to energy-efficient standards (LEED Silver).
- Energy Efficiency Act – to require utilities to implement energy efficiency programs for consumers, saving money and energy while protecting the environment.
- Water Quality Standards – to adopt a standard for Total Dissolved Solids, to prevent future fish kills such as occurred in Dunkard Creek of Monongalia County in 2009.
- Sludge Safety – to prohibit discharge of coal slurry and sludge from coal washing into deep mines and to regulate existing surface impoundments.
- Incentives for Renewables – to promote development of renewable energy in West Virginia, especially for home owners and small businesses.
- Repeal "Beneficial Use" exemptions and regulate disposal of Coal Ash.

### What You Can Do!

1) Contact the West Virginia Environmental Council and get signed on to the WVEC Action Alerts. This will give you up-to-the-minute reports of what is happening to our favorite bills, when hearings and meetings are scheduled, and who to call. Subscribe on-line at: [www.wvecouncil.org/take\\_action/index.html](http://www.wvecouncil.org/take_action/index.html)

2) Plan to attend the WVEC E-Day, February 9, 2011. This is our annual Environment Lobby Day, so plan to come to Charleston and meet with your legislators. Call 304-594-3322 for more information.

## View from the Chair

### Gas Drilling in the State Parks — *Jim Sconyers*

The West Virginia Supreme Court recently ruled that gas drilling can go ahead in Chief Logan State Park — yes, I said "state park." We all know, or thought we knew, what our parks are for — recreation, scenic beauty, wildlife, etc. — and who they are for — we the people. Now we know better.

If you have been around any of the gas extraction development that is happening all over West Virginia, you may have some inkling of the impact Cabot Gas is about to have on this popular park. Recreation and scenic beauty and wildlife and the like — it's not going to be pretty.

To add a little perspective, let's say Chief Logan is not your favorite park. Maybe yours is Blackwater Falls (mine), or Holly River, or Twin Falls — all parks where the gas rights are owned privately and not by the state or park. This puts those parks at risk, it would seem, for the same defacement and damage now facing Chief Logan.

Here is a list of the West Virginia State Parks where there is significant private ownership of the gas and oil rights. Find your favorite, and enjoy it while you can.

Audra, Babcock, Berkeley Springs, Blackwater Falls, Blennerhassett Island, Cass Scenic Railroad, Cedar Creek, Chief Logan, Hawk's Nest, Holly River, North Bend, Pipestem, Tomlinson Run, Twin Falls, Tygart Lake, Valley Falls, Watoga, and Watters Smith

Is there hope for the preservation and protection of our crown jewels, the state parks? Or do they become one more sacrifice zone, a memory we can share with our children? "... I remember Holly River; it was so wild and beautiful..."

## Staff Ask PSC To Dismiss PATH Transmission Line

On May 15, 2009, a consortium of American Electric Power and Allegheny Energy filed an application with the WV Public Service Commission for approval to build the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH), a 230-mile long, high-voltage (765-kV) transmission line from John Amos power plant in Putnam County, across central and eastern West Virginia and northern Virginia, to a new substation south of Frederick, Maryland.

The Sierra Club is opposed to this line because of the adverse impacts to the land along the route (PATH crosses the Monongahela National Forest, Harpers Ferry National Park, the Appalachian Trail, and the C&O Canal), and because it would serve to expand transmission of coal-fired electricity, increasing the amount of air pollution and undercutting cleaner energy sources elsewhere. Due to unexpectedly low electricity demand and problems with the proceedings in Virginia and Maryland, the application has been delayed repeatedly.

On Dec. 10, 2010, the Staff for the PSC asked that the application be dismissed because better alternatives were available and because the PATH application did not include needed information.

In particular, an upgrade of an existing line by Dominion Energy (Mt Storm to Doubs) would largely relieve the need for PATH, without requiring a new transmission corridor. It would be considerably shorter, cost only \$300 million, compared to \$2 billion for PATH, and would not require any new land for transmission corridors.

The Sierra Club recognizes that reliability of the transmission grid is important, but there does not appear to be any legitimate need to spend \$2 billion for PATH, when existing lines can serve our needs.

### What You Can Do!

1) Write to the WV Public Service Commission, PO Box 812, Charleston, WV 25323 and ask them to reject the PATH application.

2) Express your opposition with Sierra Club bumper stickers and yard signs (Call 304-594-3322).

3) Write or call your legislators and ask them to amend the PSC statutes to require that any new application for transmission lines consider indirect impacts of the line on surrounding lands, air quality, and scenic locations. Current law allows the PSC to ignore these adverse environmental impacts, and legislation to change that is needed in 2011.

## Impasse Over Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail?

### *Allegheny Wood Products Holds the Key*

The Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail is one of the state's premier trails, popular with hikers, bikers, and skiers. Because of bizarre ownership issues, nobody is able to take responsibility for the Trail and its maintenance. In a nutshell, Allegheny Wood Products owns half of the trail, and the U.S. Forest Service owns the other half. Presently, numerous hikers and other recreational users — all of them, actually — probably trespass on private property when they use the Trail.

The Forest Service recently offered a solution to the problem. Allegheny would be granted the right to upgrade key historic portions to allow for possible future emergency access. In return the Forest Service would be granted the right to undertake simple and

basic trail maintenance, and the public would obtain access — legal access — to the whole trail.

At this time, the "olive branch" is out. The Forest Service has offered a fair deal that in effect would finally resolve the decades-long murkiness over ownership and public access. But also at this time, Allegheny has not picked up the olive branch. They have yet to reach agreement on the Forest Service offer.

Why does it matter? Because the condition of the Trail has deteriorated for years now. Blow downs are not cleared. Huge sinkholes have appeared in the trail. Without an agreement that includes maintenance, this will only get worse. A top quality premier trail will inexorably go downhill without basic maintenance.

### What You Can Do!

Let John Crites, President of Allegheny Wood Products, know that you want to see the Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail cared for ... for the outstanding recreational opportunities it provides to thousands of West Virginia citizens. Contact him at:

[info@alleghenywood.com](mailto:info@alleghenywood.com)

You might also ask why the company website has a Chinese flag side by side with the Stars-and-Stripes!?!

*<-- Uncleared blowdown totally blocks the Trail*

## Paper or electronic?

### Save resources and costs

If you have an e-mail address, would you consider receiving your Mountain State Sierran electronically rather than by U.S. mail?

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## Political Committee

*Joe Carney PAC Treasurer*

The Political Committee received \$2,245 in donations from 59 Sierra Club members for the 2010 election. The donations ranged from \$10 to \$200. The Political Committee made campaign contributions of \$2,625 to 27 candidates (some funds remained from late contributions and unclaimed fundraiser expenses in the 2008 election). We have received Thank You notes from many candidates, who sincerely appreciate our support. Thanks to all our members who took the time and expense to get involved this year.



*The windmill can be lowered for easy maintenance. Solar array and house are in background.*

## Mon Group

*January Meeting*

*Coopers Rock State Forest Management Controversies*

**Thur, Jan 13, 7 p.m.**

*Public Safety Building, downtown Morgantown*

This will be a joint meeting of the Coopers Rock Foundation (CRF) and the Monongahela Group of the Sierra Club. What changes would we like to see in future management of this resource? Would restriction of logging be possible, or desirable? Can we persuade legislators to protect our public lands from Marcellus drilling? Join CRF board members as they discuss recreational users' survey results and discuss possible initiatives for CRSF management.

*February Meeting*

*Environmental Justice*

**Thur, Feb 10, tentative**

*Details TBD*

Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates.

Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to:

**celliot2@comcast.net**  
414 Tyrone Avery Rd.  
Morgantown, WV 26508

**Deadline for  
Mar/Apr issue  
February 3**

Opinions expressed in the **Mountain State Sierran** are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Sierra Club. This newsletter is published bimonthly by the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club and distributed to all paid members.

## Off the Grid in Preston County

*Jim Sconyers Chapter Chair*

It has been two years since I started living "off the grid." I thought I'd share some of that experience with my fellow West Virginia Sierrans.

### A Little Background

We bought land in Preston County in 1973 at an affordable \$200 per acre. After several twists and turns in life, in 2007 I decided it was time to build. I was lucky to find both an affordable home builder and a competent energy designer. My builder was a local, very experienced guy with a catalog of plans to choose from, some of which he had created himself. I found an energy company called Bergey on the Internet and was surprised to find a certified dealer in, of all places, Thomas, WV, in Tucker County. This company, named PIMBY (for power in my back yard), is owned by Matt Sherald, who is knowledgeable, committed to energy innovation, and easy to work with. I asked PIMBY to design a system to supply 2000 kwh per year, about what I used at my old house.

### The Electric System

Matt set to work and came up with a combined wind-solar system. The wind generator is rated 1 kilowatt, and the 6 solar panels total 1.2 kilowatts. This hybrid system works best because the wind is strongest during the winter, and the sun is strongest in the summer. A shed houses the high tech controls for the electrical system, as well as a bank of 16 batteries for "bad energy" times.

### The Experience...So Far

With a living space of about 1000 sq. ft., I don't "do without" any of the basics of modern life. Washer (cold water always), dryer (propane, but I only use it to "air fluff"), well and pump (required a transformer to boost it), hot water (propane), oven/range (propane). Propane use has been about 300 gallons a year. Other differences compared to grid living: for telephone I'm all cell, but this is not very unusual today. And for Internet I had to install a satellite dish.

For fun, Matt installed an electric meter. I've been a little surprised to find that my annual usage of electricity runs about 1000 kwh. So the system as designed is more than adequate. Recently the battery system dropped to 60% over a 4-day run of bad energy. When the sun came out again it was back to 100% within about 3 hours. The system can be charged using a gas-powered generator, but I hope never to need one.

### Sustainable Energy

For me, electricity is a renewable resource, so I use electrical devices more than you might. For example, I cook with my microwave whenever I can. And I heat primarily with the woodburner, partly because it reduces my carbon footprint, and also because I have my own wood to cut. A guesstimate is 2 cords more or less a year.

### Cost

The whole project — from grading raw land, putting in a long lane, all the construction, septic system, water well, kitchen appliances, steel roof, central heat, and of course the electric system — cost less than \$200,000 in 2007. (Note that this does not include the cost of the land.)

I would be the first to agree that it's not for everyone — but for me it has been fascinating!

## WV Student Attends International Climate Conference in Mexico

*Joe Gorman WVU SSC*

Dec 10, PUERTO MORELOS, MEXICO — Hola from Mexico. For the past two weeks, UN delegates have been meeting near Cancun for the 16th Conference of Parties (COP16). With little chance of moving forward on climate, the only policy on the table was REDD+.

REDD+ stands for "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation." On the surface, the measure would provide financial incentives for preserving forests. But REDD+ would block indigenous people's access to the forests they've managed for millennia, displacing 60 million people according to the Indigenous Environmental Network.

Simultaneously, REDD+ sanctions clearcutting rainforests for palm oil plantations and other monocultures, and sets the stage for mass privatization of land, and huge corporate profits.

All of which is why, on Tuesday, December 7, a mass mobilization was organized to stop REDD+. In the morning, several protesters (including myself) got past police lines to hold "NO REDD" signs and banners directly outside closed-door meetings, where they were seen by dozens of buses full of negotiators. Thousands (including many from La Via Campesina, which represents four million traditional farmers worldwide) marched down the main road from Cancun, stopping traffic in both directions, before being halted by police barricades. Over 300 actions were held in solidarity worldwide.

Our voice was heard, and the UN talks disbanded without adopting REDD+. Now it's time to begin organizing in support of a strong, binding and equitable climate agreement in 2011 — the COP17 summit will be held in Durban, South Africa.

## Perspectives on Outings

*My Sierra Hero — Dan Soeder Outings Chair*

It has been two years now since my brother Jim died from a brain tumor. It progressed frighteningly fast; slightly more than 6 months from the onset of symptoms until he was gone. We barely had time to say good-bye. He was just 52.

Jim was more active in the Sierra Club than I am, and on a more grassroots level. He was a popular leader in the Cleveland Inner City Outings program, and he and I scouted many trails and parks during my visits home to Ohio that he later used for ICO excursions. He also participated on a number of national-level service trips for Sierra Club, working on projects like trail repair in Idaho, exotic plant removal in Hawaii, and the dismantling of an old hunting lodge in an Alaska wilderness area.

Jim was one of my favorite hiking companions. He was a minimalist, bringing along the least amount of gear needed for survival. There were never any frills or luxuries in his pack — he didn't see any need to carry stuff he wasn't going to use. Jim was proud of his thriftiness, and got most of his gear at secondhand stores, yard sales, and discount shops. This didn't make him a poor outdoorsman; in fact, just the opposite. He relied on instinct, intelligence, and reason to avoid trouble, not his gear. He often expressed the opinion that fancy, expensive gear does not necessarily impart any wilderness wisdom to the buyer.

Jim worked for the local school board and got the whole summer off, which he spent traveling and hiking, a lot of the time solo. He made it to all 50 states, including four separate driving trips to Alaska (which I found out later is 4000 miles from Cleveland, one way!). He had a few misadventures, but nothing serious. The last big hike he and I did together was Mount Washington in New Hampshire a few years ago. We stayed at the AMC lodge in Pinkham Notch and went to the peak and back on a day hike. It was fun, even though it took a little longer than expected to get down, and we nearly missed dinner. Several people on the summit were amazed that we had actually hiked up. One well-meaning lady gave us brochures for the auto road and the cog railroad, and told us there wasn't really any need to walk. Jim and I just looked at each other and tried not to laugh out loud.

My brother was a good guy who enjoyed life. He was late for the family Thanksgiving dinner every year because he volunteered down at the Salvation Army, serving up turkey to those who had nothing. Jim was a member of the Sierra Club for many years before I joined, and he convinced me that the environment and the outdoors that we both loved needed protecting. I joined up eleven years ago and got active in the national outings program, as well as chapter outings, and I think he was proud of that. In memory of Jim, I will be leading a spring bicycling outing in Cuyahoga Valley National Park, one of his favorite places, and a fabulous environmental success story. I hope some of you will come along.

See you outside.

# Upcoming Outings — Winter / Spring

**Sun, Dec 26**

## Deckers Creek Trail

*rated moderate* — Walk off that Christmas goose on the Deckers Creek Trail. Meet at Ruby McQuain Park in downtown Morgantown at noon for an uphill out and downhill return hike of about six miles. Show and go. Dress for the weather, bring water and snacks. Optional pub stop afterward for a hot toddy to warm up.

**Leader:** Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164  
**Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org**

## 2011

**Sat, Jan 22**

## Capon State Park

*rated strenuous* — Enjoy a vigorous outing with a new leader. Although this hike covers a distance of only about 6 to 7 miles, it involves a 1.5-mile, very steep climb for an elevation gain of 1450 feet. Hiking time is about 3.5 hours plus an hour for lunch and breaks. Contact leader for details if you are unsure of your stamina. Dress for the weather, and bring plenty of water, lunch and snacks. Meet in the lodge parking lot at Capon State Park for an 11:00 AM start (there is no admission charge to enter the park). Severe weather cancels; check with leader.

**Leader:** Pam Peitz, 240-818-6554  
**pampeitz@comcast.net**

**Co-leader:** Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164  
**Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org**

**Sat, Jan 29**

## Culture Center Museum Charleston, WV

*rated easy* — Join us at 10:00 AM for a tour of the Museum of West Virginia History in Charleston. There will be a hike afterward at Kanawha State Forest for those who are

interested. We will meet at the entrance to the Culture Center.

**Leader:** Mike Price, 304-779-2861  
**mikeprice54@suddenlink.net**

**Sat, Feb 5**

## Blackwater Canyon Cross-country Ski Trip

*rated moderate* — Cross-country ski this very scenic canyon in all its winter finery. Some skiing experience is needed for this 8- to 10-mile outing; however, the trail is mostly level and fairly wide. You will need to wear appropriate layered clothing and provide your own skis for this outing. We will meet and depart early morning from Morgantown and spend most of the day in the canyon. Bring water, snacks and a lunch. We also plan to eat afterwards at the Purple Fiddle. For additional details and carpooling opportunities please contact the trip leader.

**Leader:** Gwen Jones, 304-599-5815  
**gwenjones23@yahoo.com**

**Sat, Feb 5**

## Carnifax Ferry

*rated easy* — This is an easy, two-mile hike on the Patterson Trail, with a tour of the battlefield. Dress for the weather, bring water and snacks. Meet in the picnic parking area at 10:00 AM.

**Leader:** Mike Price, 304-779-2861  
**mikeprice54@suddenlink.net**

**Sun, Feb 6**

## Summersville Lake

*rated easy* — Make a weekend of it, following up the Patterson Trail with a three-mile hike on Battle Run Trail and great views of the lake. Dress for the weather, bring water and snacks. Meet at the Battle Run parking area gate at 10:00 AM.

**Leader:** Mike Price, 304-779-2861  
**mikeprice54@suddenlink.net**

**Sat, Feb 12**

## New River Gorge

*rated moderate* — Hike along the gorge rim for a distance of about 4 miles. Dress for the weather, bring water and snacks. Meet at the New River Gorge Bridge Visitor's Center (off Route 19 on the north side of the big bridge) at 10:00 AM.

**Leader:** Mike Price, 304-779-2861  
**mikeprice54@suddenlink.net**

**Sat, Feb 19**

## Snowshoe at Blackwater Canyon SP

*rated easy* — Level trails will take us to some spectacular scenes of the Blackwater Canyon in its winter finery. We'll snowshoe the Pase Point Trail to a little-visited but very scenic overlook just above the confluence of the North Fork and the main stem of the Blackwater River. Easy distance and virtually no elevation change. Appropriate for all levels including novice. We'll wrap up with a short walk to Blackwater Falls itself and warm up at a local bistro. Outing is weather dependent: enough snow to snowshoe, not too much to get there. This outing is snowshoe-only. Contact leader for details and meeting place.

**Leader:** Jim Sconyers, 304-698-9628  
**jim\_scon@yahoo.com**

**Sat, Mar 26**

## Cuyahoga Valley National Park

*rated moderate* — Bring your bicycle to exotic Cleveland for a ride on the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail from the industrial heart of town into Cuyahoga Valley National Park. See how the "burning river" of the 1960's has been restored to a National Park quality stream (due in no small part to effec-

tive storm water management and giant wastewater treatment plants). We will depart at noon from the Cleveland Canalway Center at the Ohio & Erie Canal Reservation Park on East 49<sup>th</sup> street in Cleveland, between Canal Road and Grant Avenue (just off I-77). We'll ride south to Route 82 in Brecksville, and return for a distance of about 20 miles. The first part of the trail is paved; the remainder is packed, fine gravel, suitable for street tires. In case of inclement weather, the **backup date is Sat., April 2**. Helmets are required on all Sierra Club bicycle outings.

**Leader:** Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164  
**Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org**

**Fri, Apr 29 – Sun, May 1**

## Hike Las Vegas

*rated moderate* — Meet us in fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada. Not for the shows, the gaming (locals NEVER call it "gambling") or the buffets, but for some spectacular hikes just a short distance from Glitter Gulch. The leader is a former 8-year resident, and will be leading day hikes on easy to moderate trails at Red Rock Canyon, Spring Mountains NRA, Valley of Fire State Park, and Lake Mead NRA. Go on some or all. Trip limited to 12 participants; reserve a space by the end of March. Airfare, hotels and meals are on your own, and we will split the cost of a rental vehicle. Bargain round trip airfares from Pittsburgh range from about \$250 to \$350; and from Charleston are in the \$350 to \$400 range. Deals can be found online or through travel agents. Hotels in Las Vegas are fairly cheap, especially off the Strip (but be careful about location). Early May weather is usually dry and pleasant, but the last time I led this outing in May, it snowed in the mountains. Plan to arrive by Thursday evening and leave Sunday night or Monday. Contact the leader for details.

**Leader:** Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164  
**Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org**

**Sat, May 28**

## Paddle on Cheat Lake

*rated easy* — Bring your canoe or kayak down to Cheat Lake for an easy, flat-water paddle in several sheltered coves. The big powerboats usually stay out of these, but they are fine for paddle craft. Launch at noon from the ramp in the small park at the end of Morgan Run Road. Participants must supply their own watercraft, and PFDs (lifejackets) are required on all Sierra Club watercraft outings. Contact the leader for details.

**Leader:** Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164  
**Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org**

## 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](http://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.



## 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/calendar](http://maryland.sierraclub.org/calendar)

## 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](http://www.sierrapotomac.org)

## West Virginia Chapter Outings

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

## 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



## Sierra Club

West Virginia Chapter  
PO Box 4142  
Morgantown, WV 26504  
[www.westvirginia.sierraclub.org](http://www.westvirginia.sierraclub.org)

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## January/February 2011

### West Virginia Sierra Club Chapter Directory

#### Chapter Executive Committee

**Jim Sconyers, Chair**, 304-698-9628  
jim\_scon@yahoo.com  
**Heather Heilman**, 304-520-2807  
heatherheilman@yahoo.com  
**Karen Grubb**, 304-657-0812  
kgrubb@fairmontstate.edu  
**Bill DePaulo**, 304-342-5588  
william.depaulo@gmail.com  
**Kevin Fooce**, 304-675-6687  
fooce@hotmail.com

#### Monongahela Group ExCom

**Sally Wilts, Chair**, 304-379-7567  
sallywilts@yahoo.com  
\* **Rodger Dotson**, 304-216-1326  
bhaddaka@yahoo.com  
**Jim Kotcon**, 304-594-3322  
jkotcon@wvu.edu  
**Shirley Rosenbaum**, 304-599-2370  
shirley.rosenbaum@gmail.com  
**Mary Slabinski**, 304-296-0228  
mooshy17@yahoo.com

\* Mon Group Delegate to Chapter ExCom

#### Other Chapter Leaders

**Archives/Chapter History** Kathy Gregg  
304-473-8124, gregg@wwc.edu  
**Energy Committee** Jim Kotcon  
304-594-3322, jkotcon@wvu.edu  
**Forest Watch** Beth Little  
304-653-4277, blittle@citynet.net  
**Membership** Kevin Fooce  
304-675-6687, fooce@hotmail.com  
**Newsletter Editor** Candice Elliott  
304-594-3322, celliot2@comcast.net  
**Outings** Dan Soeder  
304-568-2164, dsoeder@yahoo.com  
**Secretary** Jonathan Rosenbaum  
304-599-2370, freesource@cheat.org  
**Sierra Student Coalition, WVU** Miranda Miller  
miranda.rae.miller@gmail.com  
**Treasurer** Sally Wilts  
304-379-7567, sallywilts@yahoo.com  
**Webmaster** Paul Wilson  
304-725-4360, pjgrunt@gmail.com  
**Wilderness** Mary Wimmer  
304-598-0136, monwimmer@gmail.com

#### WV Sierra Club Staff

**Environmental Justice** Bill Price  
304-389-8822, bill.price@sierraclub.org

#### To Contact CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATES

The Hon. John D. Rockefeller  
Joe Manchin  
US Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Phones: (202) 224-6472 (JR)  
(202) 224-3954 (JM)

Fax: (202) 224-7665 (JR)  
(202) 228-0002 (JM)

White House Comments Line:  
(202) 456-1111 Fax: (202) 456-2461  
Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121

The Hon. Alan Mollohan  
Shelley Moore Capito  
Nick J. Rahall  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Phones: (202) 225-4172 (AM)  
(202) 225-2711 (SMC)  
(202) 225-3452 (NR)

Fax: (202) 225-7564 (AM)  
(202) 225-9061 (NR)

#### To Contact the GOVERNOR

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin  
1900 Kanawha Blvd East  
Charleston, WV 25305

Phone: 304-558-2000  
Fax: 304-342-7025  
E-mail: [www.governor.wv.gov](http://www.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](http://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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