

Mountain State Sierran

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Legislature Passes Weak Marcellus Shale Bill in Special Session

Donald S. Garvin, Jr.

Legislative Coordinator, WV Environmental Coalition

After more than three years of false starts, the West Virginia Legislature finally passed a bill regulating the drilling of Marcellus shale gas wells in West Virginia.

The final version of the legislation — HB 401 — virtually assures that streams will be muddied, and private water wells and springs that provide drinking water in rural areas will be contaminated by horizontal drilling operations.

HB 401 was passed on Dec 14, 2011, and signed by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin on Dec 22, 2011, following a four-day “Extraordinary” Session called by the Governor.

The Governor “called” the special session after the Legislature’s Select Committee on Marcellus Shale Drilling reported out a bill at the end of the November Legislative Interim meetings.

The bill considered by the Legislature in the special session was a version of the Select Committee bill that was “tweaked” by the Governor to remove some of the industry’s objections to the bill. The Governor then lobbied leadership in both the House and Senate to accept his version of the bill.

While the final bill approved by the Legislature was weaker in several important ways from the Select Committee bill, it also contains some minimum provisions that will help protect the environment and surface owners from horizontal drilling operations.

So, what’s in the bill finally passed by the Legislature? Here’s a partial summary:

◆ **Inspectors** — The only sections of the new legislation that apply to the drilling of all oil and gas wells are the sections on DEP oil and gas inspectors. The Oil and Gas Inspector’s Examining Board (which was virtually controlled by the industry) is eliminated, and replaced with a system of civil service employees, similar to how other DEP inspectors are hired.

New inspectors must still have at least two years’ work experience in the oil and gas industry, provided that one year of the experience requirement may be satisfied by a relevant college degree or actual relevant environmental experience. This keeps the fox in charge of the hen house.

Salary levels for oil and gas inspectors are set at not less than \$35,000 per year, and not less than \$40,000 per year for supervising oil and gas inspectors.

The new permit fees for drilling horizontal wells will enable the Office of Oil and Gas to hire approximately 17 additional employees, including 9 new inspectors, basically doubling the current staff size.

◆ **New Article §22-6A: Natural Gas Horizontal Well Control Act** — The bill establishes a new code section that applies “to any natural gas well ... drilled using a horizontal drilling method, and which disturbs three acres or more of surface, **excluding pipelines, gathering lines and roads**, or utilizes more than two hundred ten thousand gallons of water in any thirty day period.”

The bill grandfathers in existing or pending horizontal well drilling permits. It does not apply to horizontal wells that disturb less acreage or use less water. It also does not apply to **vertical** Marcellus shale gas wells that might disturb three acres or more of surface or utilize more than two hundred ten thousand gallons of water.

◆ **Legislative Findings** — The “legislative findings” section of the new Act sets the tone for the **permissive nature** of the new legislation. For example, it states that the DEP Secretary “should have broad authority to condition” drilling permits in order to protect the safety of persons, prevent damage to publicly owned lands or resources, and to otherwise protect the environment. But it also states that the Secretary “**should also have broad authority to waive certain minimum requirements**” of the bill. The bill provides that the Secretary must submit annually a written report to the Legislature detailing the number of waivers granted. Similar permissive language exists throughout the bill, saying the “**the Secretary may**”, instead of “**the Secretary shall.**”

◆ **Authority to Regulate and Propose Rules** — The bill gives the DEP authority to propose necessary legislative rules to implement the provisions of the bill, and states that the Secretary “**has sole and exclusive authority to regulate the permitting, location, spacing, drilling, fracturing, stimulation, well completion activities, operation, any and all other drilling and production processes, plugging and reclamation of oil and gas wells and production operations within the state.**” This language is obviously aimed at preventing local authorities from attempting to regulate drilling operations. The bill also requires the Secretary to make a monthly written report to the Governor on how long it takes to issue drilling permits (an obvious industry provision).

◆ **Drilling Permit Applications** — Among other things, the bill requires every permit application to include: an erosion and sediment control plan certified by a registered professional engineer; a site construction plan certified by a registered professional engineer; and a well site safety plan (with a copy provided to the emergency planning district in which the well work will occur at least seven days before commencement of well work).

In addition, “if the drilling, fracturing or stimulating of the horizontal well requires the use of water obtained by withdrawals from waters of this state in amounts that exceed two hundred ten thousand gallons during any thirty day period,” the permit application must include a **water management plan**. The water management plan provisions are basically the same as those spelled out in DEP’s Emergency Rule. The provisions in the bill do **NOT** require an operator to obtain an actual water withdrawal permit.

◆ **Ability to Deny or Condition Permits** — The bill says, “the permit **may** not be issued, or **may** be conditioned” if the Secretary determines that: the proposed well work will constitute a hazard to the safety of persons; the plan for soil erosion and sediment control is not adequate; **damage would occur to publicly owned lands or resources**; or the proposed well work fails to protect fresh water sources or supplies.

◆ **Public Notice and Comment Period** — The bill provides for public notice and a 30-day public comment period for each horizontal well drilling permit application. The Governor had removed this provision from the bill, but it was restored by a Senate amendment. However, the provision in the Select Committee bill to allow the Secretary of DEP to hold a public hearing on permit applications was removed from the bill. The bill also requires the DEP to develop a public web site containing detailed information on horizontal well drilling permits.

◆ **Drilling Permit Fees** — The bill sets drilling application permit fees at \$10,000 for the initial horizontal well drilled at a location and \$5,000 for each additional horizontal well drilled on a single well pad at the same location.

◆ **Performance Bonds** — The bill establishes a \$50,000 individual well bond to accompany the drilling permit. Unfortunately, it still provides for a \$250,000 “blanket” bond to cover a producer’s wells, which is totally inadequate to provide for reclamation of all those wells in the event a producer abandons its operations.

continued on p. 2 — Special Session

Sierran Going Electronic see page 3



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Special Session — *continued from p. 1*

◆ **Drill Cuttings and Drilling Pits**— For horizontal wells, drill cuttings, drilling mud, and drilling pits must be disposed of in an approved solid waste facility and can no longer be buried on site without the landowner's permission. This does not apply to conventional shallow wells, and does not address the legacy pollution problems caused by leaking pits that are allowed to be buried on site.

◆ **Well Location Restrictions** — Horizontal wells may not be drilled within **two hundred fifty feet** from any existing water well or developed spring used for human or domestic animal consumption. The center of well pads may not be located within **six hundred twenty-five feet** of an occupied dwelling or a building two thousand five hundred square feet or larger used to house or shelter dairy cattle or poultry husbandry. These limitations may be waived by written consent of the surface owner, and the Secretary may grant the operator a variance to these provisions. No well pad may be prepared or well drilled within **one hundred feet** measured horizontally from any perennial stream, natural or artificial lake, pond or reservoir, or a wetland, or within **three hundred feet** of a naturally reproducing trout stream. No well pad may be located within **one thousand feet** of a surface or ground water intake of a public water supply.

Almost all of the distance restrictions provided in this bill are weaker than those provided in the Select Committee bill. Because the distances are weakened and exclude pipelines and well roads from these setbacks, the bill virtually assures that streams will be muddied and private water wells and springs that provide drinking water in rural areas will be contaminated by horizontal drilling operations.

The bill removed an entire amendment from the Select Committee bill that provided the Secretary the additional authority to deny or condition drilling permits based on a variety of other circumstances.

• **Noise, Light, Dust and Volatile Organic Compounds Amendment:** The bill includes a House amendment requiring DEP to study the impacts of noise, light, dust and volatile organic compounds generated by the drilling of horizontal wells as they relate to the well location restrictions from occupied houses, and gives DEP the to propose additional legislative rules based on the study.

• **Casing and Cement Standards:** While the bill contains some minimum casing and cementing standards, it removes more than 20 pages of standards included in the Select Committee bill, and authorizes DEP to promulgate additional standards by rule.

• **Drilling in Karst:** The bill provides that the Secretary “**may require** additional safeguards to protect” karst geological formations and the groundwater in those formations.

The bill requires the Secretary, in consultation with the state geologist, to propose **emergency and legislative rules** to establish designated geographic regions of the state that include “naturally occurring karst terrain” and to establish standards for drilling horizontal wells in those regions. The bill requires that such rules require “at a minimum” that operators perform pre-drilling testing “to identify the location of caves and other voids, faults and relevant features in the strata and the location of surface features prevalent in naturally occurring karst terrain such as sink holes”, and “**may** include baseline water testing within an established distance from a drilling site.” The bill’s language specifically states that nothing in the bill “**allows the department to prevent drilling in naturally occurring karst terrain.**”

• **Air Quality Regulation:** The bill removed the provisions in the Select Committee bill requiring DEP to regulate air emissions at drilling sites and other natural gas operations. Instead, the bill requires DEP to study air quality issues, including possible health impacts, and to promulgate legislative rules if “necessary.”

• **Impoundment and Pit Study:** The bill requires DEP to conduct a study of impoundment and pit safety, including the presence of radioactivity from naturally occurring radioactive materials, and to promulgate legislative rules if “necessary.”

There are many other provisions of this complex legislation, including important provisions for surface owners, which I have not detailed here. There were also many provisions that WVEC and our expanded coalition of organizations concerned about Marcellus shale drilling felt should be included in the bill, but were not.

Lawmakers in both the House and Senate called the bill “a good first step,” but acknowledged that there is more work to do.

Whether or not legislators will “have the stomach” to revisit the bill in the upcoming legislative session is, of course, the big question.

Surface Owner Symposium in Bruceton Mills on March 4

Chuck Wyrstok
Sierra Club Outreach Organizer

West Virginia Surface Owners' Rights Organization (SORO), Friends of Deckers Creek, Friends of the Cheat, and Preston CARES (Citizens' Alliance for Resources and Environmental Safety) are hosting a Marcellus Shale community symposium focused on landowners' rights. Other topics to be addressed include leasing issues and volunteer water monitoring programs.

The symposium will be held on Sunday, March 4, 3–4:30PM at the Bruceton United Methodist Church in Bruceton Mills, WV, and is open to the public.

Julie Archer from the West Virginia Surface Owners' Rights Organization (WVSORO) will present “The Top 10 Tips for Surface Owners Before/When the Oil and Gas Driller Shows Up.” Morgantown attorney Jay Leon who specializes in energy, oil, and gas law will address leasing issues such as lease holding and renewal. Friends of Deckers Creek and Friends of the Cheat will briefly discuss their citizen scientist monitoring programs. There will also be ample time for questions and discussion.

This will be a great opportunity for residents to learn more about the potential environmental impacts from Marcellus Shale drilling, landowners' rights, and to get involved with monitoring efforts.

We hope to see you there!

WVU Sierra Student Coalition News

Hannah Spencer

With the beginning of a new semester, we have seen an increase in new faces at recent meetings (held weekly at 7 PM on Tuesdays in the Blackwater Room of the Mountainlair). We are always excited to have new people join in on the fun!

This semester promises to be grand, complete with three major events set up by our members. Two events, an Earth Week Symposium and a Sustainable Fashion Show, will take place around Earth Week. The other event is our annual Sierra Swing held at 123 Pleasant Street and features various local bands. The SSC receives a percentage of the earnings for the night, and I hear it is always a good time. Stop by and visit for a while! Although the date has not yet been confirmed, you may contact me later in March for more details, or watch WVU's *Daily Athenaeum* for an announcement.

The two Earth Week events mentioned are new projects. The Earth Week Symposium will span Earth Week and will feature documentaries on **April 17 and 18** with

a friendly discussion about the topic after each film. We wanted to educate students about environmental topics such as Mountaintop Removal Mining as well as show them how to express concerns to our elected officials. With this in mind, we will be holding a town hall forum in the Mountainlair on campus to show students different ways to approach activism. I have been in contact with various environmental groups around Appalachia and have asked if anyone would like to speak to students about Mountaintop Removal Mining's effects on health, wildlife, and the environment. If anyone has any suggestions or would like to show off his or her expertise on the subject, shoot me an email at hspencer22@gmail.com. I am always open for new ideas.

Brianna Horton will be heading the planning for the Sustainable Fashion Show, which will feature garments and accessories that incorporate recycled materials. We are collaborating with the students in Fashion Design and are hoping this event will be a huge success. The idea be-

hind this event is to spread awareness about various ways to recycle and to point out the abundance of litter around the Morgantown area. The date and location have not yet been determined but, again, you may contact me later or check the *Daily Athenaeum* for an announcement nearer Earth Week. If anyone has ideas or would like to contribute articles of homemade clothing or jewelry, feel free to contact Brianna at bhorton3@mix.wvu.edu.

Last but not least, I would like to include some updates from our colleagues at Friends of Deckers Creek. We have been working closely with this nonprofit organization since December and it has been a blast! The SSC first got involved by volunteering during one of their water monitoring days to test conditions of 13 sites along the Deckers Creek watershed for the Clean Creek Project. We plan to continue this volunteer work by helping to monitor chemical parameters, measure water flow, and collect water samples at all 13 sites. Along with water monitoring, Friends of Deckers Creek is also holding an Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup Day on **Sunday, March 25**, from 1 to 4 PM. If you would like to learn more about the efforts of this organization, contact Pamela Englemann at Pamela@deckerscreek.org. The SSC will attend this event and would love to see other Sierrans there as well.

Well, that's all folks. Remember to e-mail me or check the *Daily Athenaeum* for the specific dates of the Fashion Show and the Sierra Swing. Spread the word about these events; we would love to see all of your smiling faces!

SSC member Emily Eddy helps with water monitoring during the Friends of Deckers Creek Clean Creek Project work day.



View from the Chair — Jim Sconyers

Sierra Club-Chesapeake Controversy

Many of you will have heard about this, but in case you haven't, here is the short version. For the long version go to Club Executive Director Mike Brune's discussion at: <http://sierraclub.typepad.com/michaelbrune/>

In the early 2000s Sierra Club was making great progress with its Beyond Coal campaign, including shutting down many coal-fired power plants. At that time the Club viewed natural gas as a "bridge fuel" between dirty coal-fired plants and the clean energy future we all aspire to.

In line with the shibboleth that "any enemy of my enemy is my friend," which we now know is false, the Club accepted \$26 million from Chesapeake Energy for our Beyond Coal campaign. The money was well spent, and we achieved the closure or prevention of over 100 coal-fired power plants.

But as the Marcellus gas tidal wave began to break over Pennsylvania and West Virginia, many members became alarmed about the threats and risks posed by this new development. West Virginia Chapter leaders were among the first to raise our concerns. We pushed national over calling gas a bridge fuel. Result: After listening to members and further study, documenting groundwater pollution and the emerging science highlighting gas's huge air pollution threat, Sierra Club revised its position and dropped any talk of natural gas as a "bridge fuel."

About this time the Club changed Executive Directors. Carl Pope resigned, and we were indeed fortunate to sign Mike Brune on as the new Executive Director. Mike discovered the secret arrangements that had been made with Chesapeake and immediately moved to terminate them. In fact, Mike was instrumental in rejecting an additional \$30 million that Chesapeake had offered the Club.

That is the background of the story that broke in the media in February. Sierra Club was out front to come clean, confirm that we had indeed taken money from Chesapeake, and that we would not in the future take money from Chesapeake or other dirty energy corporations.

The past is history — now it's time to look to the future.



New WVU SSC President Joseph James with Larry Gibson of the Keepers of the Mountain Foundation

Environmental Concerns Go Unanswered at WVU

Joseph P. James
WVU Sierra Student Coalition

I am an environmentally concerned student at WVU who has recently received an increasing number of questions from my peers concerning the water quality issues that accompany the hydraulic fracturing process used to harvest shale gas. As a voice for these students, I took their questions and concerns to the Student Government Association (SGA) this past semester. I asked the SGA to seek a statement from WVU on where the university stands on drilling for shale gas on university property and on safety precautions that the university will take to protect Morgantown, and the state, from water contamination.

I was told by the SGA that it is not their place to ask the administration about this "complex" and "layered" issue. I received an email from SGA president, Jason Bailey, stating "he would look into the issue and he appreciated my comments." I was frustrated that my own student government would not take my questions and concerns to the administration and that these very serious issues had only

milked generic responses.

Water quality is a large issue that has the potential to build up and break down metropolitan populations. WVU, as a public institution, has the obligation to supply the student body, as well as the employees, with clean and adequate water on campus. Recently, high levels of bromide were found in the Monongahela, and it is thought to be possibly caused by Marcellus shale drilling. Bromide when mixed with water-treatment additives becomes brominated trihalomethanes, which have been linked to severe birth defects and even cancer. Everyone on campus should be concerned, including student government and the administration.

This semester, WVU's Sierra Student Coalition (SSC) will begin its campaign to have people's questions and concerns answered. We plan to do so by working closely with the office of sustainability and hosting speakers on campus to bring to light issues that the university typically overlooks. Positive changes begin through education, and this semester the SSC is going to work to bring about those changes.

Chapter / Group ExCom Election Results

Chapter ExCom Results

In the recent Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) election, 240 ballots were returned from a total of 1820 mailed, about a 13 percent return. Jim Sconyers and Jim Kotcon received the most votes and have begun serving their two-year terms, while Gary Nelson, Gwen Jones, and Frank Young continue their terms. Jim Sconyers was re-elected by the ExCom to continue as Chapter Chair.

Mon Group Results

With 79 ballots returned (16%), three new members were elected to the five-person board of the Monongahela Group Executive Committee. While Rodger Dotson and Gwen Jones continue their two-year terms, Steve Runfola, Nicole Good, and Carol Nix are newly elected. Rodger will serve as Chair, Steve as Vice-chair, and Carol as secretary. Nicole agreed to be the group's representative to the Chapter Executive Committee.

Sierran to go Electronic

At the January ExCom meeting it was decided that we would begin sending the Mountain State Sierran electronically to all members for whom we have valid e-mail addresses.

Beginning with the **Jul-Aug 2012** issue of the Sierran, we will discontinue sending the paper version to members with e-mail unless they opt to continue receiving it. Until then, we will send both an electronic reminder and the hard copy to allow members to get used to the change.

Members with e-mail addresses who prefer to continue receiving the paper copy will be able to indicate that preference by replying to any of the e-mail reminders they receive. Members without e-mail will see no change and will continue to receive their regular paper copies as before.

The Chapter anticipates an annual savings of at least \$3000 by implementing this change. That is money we can use for our effective lobbying campaigns and for more educational opportunities for members.

Advantages of receiving the newsletter electronically include getting your news faster, viewing the content in color, saving resources, and saving the Chapter printing and mailing costs.

Nevertheless, we realize that there are also advantages to having a hard copy for reference, so anyone who still wishes to be on the "slow" mailing list need only send the editor a request to that effect.

Questions, comments, or concerns about this change? Please contact the Editor at:

celliot2@comcast.net



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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 Events

Sun, Mar 11

Captain Tim Terman has inspired many of us as he tries to remove a century of trash from our Monongahela River. He's known for diligently and tirelessly organizing clean-ups, trying to engage as many young people as possible. This year, he welcomes the involvement of the Sierra Club in his efforts.

Tim says, "a litter cleanup is being planned for early March along roads near the tributaries of the Monongahela to reduce litter washed in by the spring rains. The idea is that litter along the roads eventually washes into creeks and then into the river. We will probably be about a mile from the river. Areas being targeted are near Indian Creek, Flagg Meadow Run near National, Booth, and Everettville in Monongalia County."

If you'd like to get outside and get some exercise after a long winter, consider joining us. Captain Tim is especially interested in volunteers who live in the target areas, but all are welcome to help, and young people are especially encouraged. It's a chance to see the Mon River from its less-visited Western side and give the spring wildflowers a prettier place to bloom. We may even get to listen to some first-rate storytelling from Captain Tim. Group leaders are Gwen Jones and Aaron Vedock. Mark the date on your calendar or punch it in your smart phone. Please contact Carol Nix, almostnixie@cs.com or **304-864-6411** for details and carpooling, or Tim Terman at tterman@mail.wvu.edu.

Sat, Apr 28

The Mon Group of Sierra Club will participate in Impact EARTH on **April 28**. This annual event, held in celebration of Earth Day, is held at the Waterfront Park in Morgantown. The event offers electronics recycling, area trash cleanups, 5-K and 10-K footraces, and several booths offering information to increase awareness of a multitude of local and global environmental challenges. For more information, contact Sarah Smith at wvusmitty@gmail.com or **304-685-1120**.

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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414 Tyrone Avery Rd.
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**Deadline for
May/June issue
April 5**

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.

Perspectives on Outings

Giving Something Back — *Dan Soeder Outings Chair*

We have several service outings on the calendar for this spring. We are co-sponsoring a Monongahela River cleanup effort on March 11, and there is an adopt-a-trail cleanup at Coopers Rock State Forest on April 7. These outings are a wonderful opportunity to give something back to the community, the land, the rivers, and the parks.

Often when we do things outdoors, we only think about the recreational aspects. But trail maintenance takes time and effort. You only have to hike a non-maintained trail once to appreciate the amount of work that goes into keeping it both passable and safe. No matter how well constructed a trail might be, things happen to it out in the woods. Trees fall across the path and have to be removed. Footbridges rot and require rebuilding. Trail markings and blazes fade and have to be re-done periodically. Runoff erodes parts of the trail surface, creating gullies or wet spots. The government agencies that are responsible for the parks, forests and recreation areas don't usually have the personnel or budgets to do all the required trail maintenance themselves. Volunteer help, like the regular Adopt-A-Trail maintenance work that Ann Devine-King leads at Coopers Rock, is invaluable to the agencies. It also shows that Sierra Club members are willing to do more than just talk about the underfunded state parks and national forests. Members who participate on service outings show that they are actually willing to get out there and do something about it. These activities make a real difference.

I'd like to see the service outings program expand. There is much more that can be done. The Maryland Chapter next door has a busy invasive plant removal program, led by Marc Imlay, a retired botany professor. We are planning to contact the park superintendent at Valley Falls State Park, which has some of the worst-marked trails I have ever seen, and offer to re-blaze them this summer. Sally Wilts' husband Duane, who is a carpenter by trade, lent his expertise to rebuilding footbridges at Coopers Rock. He commonly takes a saw and pruning shears along on hikes and does impromptu trail maintenance as he goes. The list of what can be done is virtually endless. Anyone with ideas for service outings is encouraged to bring them forward. If it is worth doing and merits the support of the Sierra Club, we'll get it on the calendar.

On another subject, I got an announcement from the national outings leadership in San Francisco that the Sierra Club is planning some big events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act in 2014. We need to start planning something for West Virginia. Most of the designated wilderness is out west, in places like Nevada and Utah. However, West Virginia is one of the few eastern states with significant tracts of wilderness, like Dolly Sods, Cranberry, and Otter Creek. These areas are worth honoring and celebrating in 2014. If anyone has ideas for events or presentations, please let me know. It is early enough that we might be able to do something official with the state government, or maybe even someone from the U.S. Department of the Interior.

See you outside!

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, Mar 10

Valley Falls Day Hike

rated moderate — This hike loops about 5 miles through the park, with stops at waterfalls along the trail. There are a few steep/rocky sections that can be a bit tricky. Bring snacks and water; trekking poles can be helpful. Group will meet at 10 AM at the park gate entrance, near the park office.

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

Nearest town: Grafton, WV

Web info: www.valleyfallsstatepark.com

Sun, Mar 11

Monongahela River Cleanup

not rated — Join Captain Tim of the Monongahela Monitor for the Monongahela River Revival cleanup. Sierra Club is a co-sponsor of this event, and we expect to be joined by WVU students and community members. Despite the name, there will be no work near water. The idea is to get the litter picked up along roads near tributaries before the spring rains wash it into the streams and then the river. Contact the outing leaders if interested to receive details about a staging area and the logistics of this event. There will be road hazards and participants are required to wear bright safety vests (supplied). Captain Tim: 304-276-8306, Tim.Terman@mail.wvu.edu

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

Co-Leader: Gwen Jones, gwenjones23@yahoo.com

Sat, Mar 24

Gambrill State Park, Frederick Cnty, MD

rated easy to moderate — This is a 5.5 mile, two-hour wooded hike with a couple of good views of Frederick and Middletown Valleys. The walk is moderately easy with a few short uphill sections. Please pre-register with leader; outing will begin at 10 AM.

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

Nearest town: Frederick, MD

Web info: www.dnr.state.md/us (click on parks and choose Gambrill from the drop down menu)

Sat, Apr 7

Adopt-a-Trail Clean-up at Coopers Rock

not rated — The WV Sierra Club will be leading a spring clean-up on the Intermediate Cross Country Ski Trail at Coopers Rock State Forest. Volunteers seeking community service are encouraged to participate. Much of the work will be cleaning out and restoring drainage ditches and culverts clogged from the winter's processes as well as general trail clearing. The work is meant to be rewarding and at a pace to enjoy each other's company; however, some moderate intensity work will be necessary, using shovels, rakes, pruners, and moving reasonably sized rocks. Volunteers should wear sturdy boots, and carry work gloves, water, and snacks. Adults and adolescents are invited 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: www.coopersrockstateforest.com and <http://coopersrock.org>

Sat, Apr 14

Coopers Rock Day Hike

rated moderate — Start by taking in the view at the Overlook Area, and then do a loop through the forest of about 6.5 miles. Bring snack/water, trekking poles can be helpful. We'll meet at 10 AM, at the park gate entrance.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: www.coopersrockstateforest.com and <http://coopersrock.org>

Upcoming Outings — Spring / Summer

Sat, Apr 14

Cacapon State Park

rated strenuous — Located just south of Berkeley Springs, WV, this park boasts a 6- to 7-mile, very strenuous loop hike with a 500-foot elevation climb to the top of Cacapon Mountain, the highest mountain in the eastern panhandle of WV. The trail to the top is a very tight series of steep switchbacks, and the activity is intended only for experienced hikers in good physical shape. Contact the leader for details and to register. Meet in the lodge at 10 AM, for this 2.5-hour hike.

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

Nearest town: Berkeley Springs, WV

Web info: www.cacaponresort.com

Sun, Apr 15

Western Maryland Rail-Trail

rated moderate to strenuous — Bring your bike to Big Pool, Maryland, just off I-70 near Hancock to work off the frustrations of Tax Day. Meet at the trailhead of the Western Maryland Rail Trail at 10 AM. This fully paved bicycle trail follows the old Baltimore & Ohio railroad grade along the Potomac River and through the town of Hancock, where the tracks were a favorite target for Confederate artillery across the river. The trail continues west of town with some great views of the river. We'll ride a round trip distance of about 20 miles. Optional stop for lunch in Hancock at Weaver's. All participants on Sierra Club bicycle outings must wear a helmet. Heavy or steady rain cancels.

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

Nearest town: Hancock, MD

Web info: www.hancockmd.com/WMRT/info.html

Sat, Apr 21

Laurel Fork Special Management Area

rated easy to moderate — Six-mile-loop day hike on trails following old railroad grades along two mountain streams with mini waterfalls and cascades. Most of the trail is easy, with an elevation change of about 700 feet, a few small creek crossings, some rocky areas of the trail, and one short switchback elevation drop. This is a great hike for beginners, but there is a limit of 10 participants. The hike will start at 10 AM in the Locust Springs Picnic Area off Rt. 28 at the Pocahontas/Pendleton County lines. Contact leader for details.

Leader: Brent Carminati, 304-567-2865, brentcar1@frontiernet.net

Nearest town: Thornwood, WV

Web info: www.patc.us/hiking/destinations/va_laurlf.html

Sun, Apr 22

Snake Hill Wildlife Management Area

rated moderate — Acquired in 1996 by the State of West Virginia, the SHWMA is across the Cheat River from Coopers Rock State Forest. This 6-7 mile loop trail hike with moderate elevation changes will connect with several scenic views, including Table Rock and Cheat View, and also several lesser known views along Snake Hill's canyon rim. Trail conditions will vary from poorly established with vegetation overgrowth, rocky under footing and blow downs, to clearly established paths and gas well roads. Overall, this is a moderately challenging, exploratory hike with rewarding, little known views of the Cheat River Gorge. Please pre-register with the leader.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: www.coopersrock.org and www.coopersrockstateforest.com

Sun, Apr 29

West Virginia Wildlife Center

not rated — The West Virginia State Wildlife Center on French Creek near Buckhannon is a modern zoological facility displaying native and introduced state wildlife. Operated by the Wildlife Resources Section of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, the Wildlife Center is dedicated to presenting visitors a realistic and factual

understanding of our state's wildlife. Woodland wildlife can be viewed along a wheelchair-accessible interpretative trail 1.25 mile through a mature hardwood forest. The spacious enclosures allow the animals to interact with their environment and they therefore exhibit more natural behavior patterns. Interpretive signs help the visitor to learn more about each animal's life history, biology and its relationship with humans. Animals exhibited range from groundhog (think French Creek Freddie) to otters to elk and bison. Join us for an enjoyable and educational family-friendly outing. We meet at the Center at 10 AM. Admission is \$3 adult, \$1.50 child.

Leader: Jim Sconyers, 304-698-9628, jimscon@gmail.com

Nearest town: Buckhannon, WV

Web info: www.wvdnr.gov/wildlife/wildlifecenter.shtm

Sat – Sun, May 5 – 6

Cuyahoga Valley National Park

rated moderate — Alternate dates are May 19–20 in case of bad weather. Enjoy one of the newest and nearest National Parks, tucked away in the Cuyahoga (Huron Indian word for "crooked") River valley between Cleveland and Akron. Meet at the historic Stanford House hostel near the small village of Boston, OH, on May 5 at 10 AM. We will start by taking our bicycles on board the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, and ride the train south to the Northside Station in Akron (Bike Aboard cost is \$3). The bicycle ride back to Boston will be about 15 miles, with possible stops at the Mustill Store, AWPCS/KB Compost (Waste-Energy Plant), Heron Roastery, an old auto salvage yard reclaimed by beavers, and Szalays Farm Market. Once we get back to camp, we will hike the Buckeye Trail to Peninsula for dinner at the Winking Lizard Tavern, a local hot spot, and return to Boston along the Towpath Trail, about 7 miles round trip. Overnight options are to tent camp or stay in the Stanford House (www.nps.gov/cuva/planyourvisit/lodging.htm). On Sunday, we will pack up after breakfast and hike to scenic Brandywine Falls (about 2 miles roundtrip) from the campground. Paul Turner, a former WV Chapter member living in Ohio will help plan this. The park is about a 3-hour drive from Morgantown. Preregister with leader, spaces are limited.

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

Nearest town: Peninsula, Ohio

Web info: www.nps.gov/cuva/index.htm

Sat, May 12

Sugarloaf Mountain

rated moderate — Located in Comus, MD, off I-270, this will be a 7-mile loop hike with rocky outcroppings and sweeping views. The trail is mostly gently rolling with a few steep uphill climbs. The area is privately owned, so there is a nominal entrance fee. Pre-register with the leader. Meet at 10 AM; a meeting place will be determined so that we can carpool to the park.

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

Nearest town: Comus, MD

Web info: www.sugarloafmd.com

Sat, May 19

Spruce Knob/Seneca Creek Backcountry

rated moderate — Enjoy a scenic 8-9 mile loop hike atop the tallest mountain in West Virginia. The hike will start at 10 AM on the Lumberjack Trail near the crest of Spruce Knob, then take the Huckleberry Trail down to Seneca Creek Trail and return. Lumberjack and Seneca Creek trails are fairly level and easy trails; the Huckleberry section has a moderately steep downhill grade with rocky areas. Hike is okay for beginners. Participants should bring rain gear, lunch and water, and wear sturdy footwear. Camping is available nearby at Spruce Knob Lake. Please pre-register with the leader.

Leader: Brent Carminati, 304-567-2865, brentcar1@frontiernet.net

Nearest town: Whitmer, WV

Web info: Search Google for Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks to get Forest Service websites.

Sun, May 20

Valley Falls Day Hike

rated moderate — This hike loops about 7.5 miles through the park, with stops at waterfalls along the trail. There are a few steep/rocky sections that can be a bit tricky. Bring snacks and water; trekking poles can be helpful. Group will meet at noon at lot nearest the main waterfalls.

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

Nearest town: Grafton, WV

Web info: www.valleyfallsstatepark.com

Sun, May 27

Ohiopyle State Park, PA

rated moderate — Enjoy an early summer ramble on the rail-trail along the Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle, plus a loop through the park, which has a terrific campground for overnight stays. Meet at the old depot (now the visitor center) in the town of Ohiopyle at noon. Contact leader for details.

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

Nearest town: Ohiopyle, PA

Web info: www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/ohiopyle.aspx

Sun, Jun 10

Paddle on Cheat Lake, Morgantown, WV

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

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

Sat, Jun 23

Evening Bike Ride Along the Mon River

rated moderate — Join us for a bike ride along the Morgantown Waterfront. Length of bike ride will depend on the desires of the group, but expect a ride of about 10-15 miles. Bring along some water, don't forget your helmet, and make sure your tires are properly inflated. Meet at 6 PM at Ruby McQuain Park.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

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

Sun, Jul 8

Great Allegheny Passage

rated moderate to strenuous — Beat the summer heat by bicycling this delightful and challenging rail-trail up the high Allegheny Front from Frostburg, MD, to Meyersdale, PA, and back for a round trip of about 30 miles. The packed-gravel trail is built along an old railroad grade, complete with spectacular views, viaducts and tunnels, including a cool 3300-footer under Big Savage Mountain. Mountain bike tires are helpful but not required. Meet in Frostburg at noon in the trail parking area on New Hope Road. Heavy or steady rain cancels. Contact leader for details and directions.

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

Nearest town: Frostburg, MD

Web info: www.atatrail.org/index.cfm

Sat Jul 14

Coopers Rock Hike

rated easy to moderate — We'll do an out-and-back hike of about 6 miles along the "Goodspeed Highway Trail" on the Chestnut Ridge Park side of the forest. Contact leader for information on parking. Meet at 9 AM.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: www.coopersrockstateforest.com and <http://coopersrock.org>

Sat, Aug 4

Blueberry Picking: Dolly Sods Wilderness

rated easy — Family and pet friendly activity. This will be a 4-mile hike in Dolly Sods at a very leisurely pace to allow for wild blueberry and huckleberry picking. The meeting place will be just off Freeland Rd in Canaan Valley and we will caravan up to the parking area nearest the wilderness area. The hike begins at the trailhead in the Canaan Institute at 9 AM. There is no shade in Dolly Sods or protection from rain, so be prepared for both. Bring sun protection, rain gear, snacks and a container for your berries. Please pre-register with the leader.

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

Nearest town: Davis, WV

Web info: www.patc.us/hiking/destinations/dolysods.html

Sun, Sep 2

Endless Wall Trail, New River Gorge

rated easy to moderate — Family and pet-friendly activity. Hike along the edge of West Virginia's most spectacular canyon. Meet at the National Park Service Canyon Rim visitor center on Route 19 near Fayetteville, on the north end of the famous bridge pictured on the back of the WV state quarter. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Pets must be well behaved and on a leash, (children must also be well behaved, but a leash is optional). Step off at noon for a 3.5 mile circuit hike. Heavy or steady rain cancels. Please pre-register with the leader.

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

Nearest town: Fayetteville, WV

Web info: www.midatlantichikes.com/id191.html

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

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March / April 2012

*Sierran Going
Electronic
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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
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contact Paul Wilson
at 304-725-4360*

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