

Mountain State Sierran

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November/December 2012

Environmental Groups Call for Marcellus Drilling Moratorium

Environmental groups from across West Virginia are calling for a moratorium on permits for natural gas drilling in West Virginia. The call was issued at a press conference in Charleston on Sep. 11, with eleven groups joining the call. Since then, more groups and the Pocahontas County Commission have joined the call for a moratorium.

Seven conditions were proposed that should be met before new permits are issued, including mandatory well inspections, ground water protections, air pollution monitoring and control, and recognition of the rights of counties and local communities to protect their citizens.

The statement said that legislation adopted in December 2011 "was grossly inadequate, and does not provide the basic protections needed by West Virginia citizens. Yet permits for new wells continue to be issued, leaving landowners and local citizens helpless to stop the dangers in their neighborhoods."

"We can't let the gas industry wreck more West Virginians' homes and lives" said Jim Sconyers, Chair of the West Virginia Sierra Club and the lead sponsor of the statement. "Too many horror stories are occurring. Natural gas development can be done right, but today, it is being done wrong, and that needs to stop. Right Now!"

"Fracking is science without conscience, short sighted, bloated on greed, its executors revealing the essence of cognitive dissonance," said Dr. Cyla Allison, of Pocahontas County and President of Eight Rivers Council. "Fracking steals irreplaceable water and substitutes poison."

Examples of problems from around the region included toxic dust problems in Doddridge County, air pollution that sickened nearby residents, explosions at gas well sites, pressurized gases in well water, and the unwillingness of state regulatory agencies to enforce rules or respond to complaints.



Jim Kotcon gets good press coverage at state capitol.

Photo (c) Chuck Wyrastock

"The Friends of the Cacapon River support the protection of the water, land and air across the state of West Virginia," said Linda Kjeldgaard of Friends of the Cacapon River, in Great Cacapon WV. "Without adequate regulation we feel that the most precious natural resources are at risk of being lost to future generations. Proper regulation of the natural gas industry is the duty of our State."

Signatories included Sierra Club, WV Highlands Conservancy, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Environmental Council, Friends of the Cacapon River, Christians for the Mountains, Eight Rivers Council, Greenbrier River Water Association, SaveTheWaterTable.org, Coal River Mountain Watch, Doddridge County Watershed Association, and West Virginians For a Moratorium On Marcellus (WV4MoM).

The statement was delivered to Governor Tomblin and key legislators who were at the Capitol for interim meetings.

What You Can Do!

1. Ask your group to support the Moratorium. This can include local garden clubs, hunting and fishing groups, church organizations, or other civic entities.
2. Ask your local city council or county commission to issue a resolution of support for a moratorium.
3. Talk to local state Delegates and WV State Senators. Tell them that every permit issued is flawed, they all lack air pollution monitoring, protections for ground water, and there is a general lack of inspectors and enforcement. Find out if they support continued issuance of these flawed permits, or if they will support a moratorium until the Legislature can fill in the gaps in the current regulatory program.

Remembering Larry Gibson

Farewell to a True Environmental Hero

In Charleston, West Virginia, friends, family, and fellow activists gathered to celebrate the life of the late Larry Gibson. Larry, who began his fight against mountaintop removal nearly three decades ago, initially set out to protect what remained of his ancestral homeland on Kayford Mountain, now an island surrounded by mountaintop removal's devastation.

Larry, founder of *Keeper of the Mountains Foundation*, took his message all over Appalachia, creating sparks of resistance to extractive industries everywhere he went.

On Oct 14, people came from near and far to share their memories of Larry. In addition to his family, notable speakers included WV Sierra Club's Bill DePaulo, Environmental Justice organizer Bill Price, and Kate Long, who lead those gathered in "Who's Going to Watch the Home Place," one of her songs she taught us at SierraFest 2011.



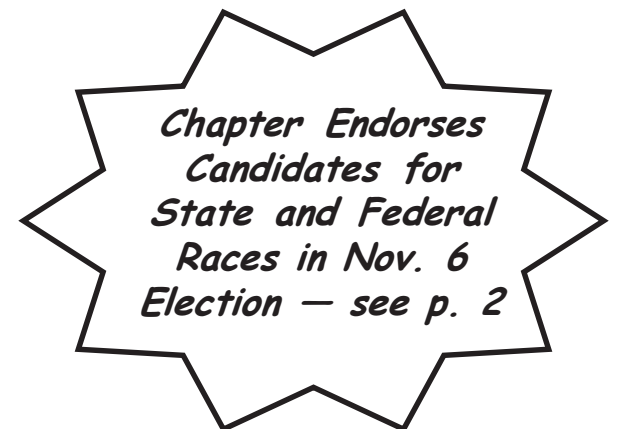
Larry shares time with WVU SSC members at Kayford.

Near the end, board members from the Keeper of the Mountains Foundation came with a clear message: our work, Larry's work, is not done. The Foundation is working on Kayford Mountain to juxtapose the solution with the problem: sustainable community development in the form of solar panels beside the devastation of mountaintop removal.

There was truth in former Congressman and Secretary of State Ken Hechler's speech at the memorial: "Larry Gibson will live forever in our hearts. Larry expected us to stand up for the same principles he fought for. We promise you, Larry, we will never give up — never, never give up."

Among his copious tears, Chapter Chair Jim Sconyers had two thoughts: "One, I wept for the loss of one of the most courageous and inspiring leaders the West Virginia environmental movement ever had. And two, the fight must go on, and it's up to us. It's a fight we must, and will, win. Mountaintop Removal is an abomination that will be stopped."

Larry's family has requested that those wishing to express condolences make donations to the Keeper of the Mountains Foundation. To view more stories and photos of Larry, or to donate to his Foundation, please go to: mountainkeeper.blogspot.com.



Chapter Endorses Candidates for November 6 Election

With the general election coming up November 6, the West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club announces its candidate endorsements.

West Virginia House of Delegates

We have endorsed a “baker’s dozen” of candidates for the West Virginia House of Delegates. Before endorsing, the Chapter’s Political Committee reviews a candidate’s qualifications, positions, record of supporting positive environmental initiatives, and more. Those whom we are endorsing for the House are “green” and deserve our support. Here are the candidates we’ve endorsed and information about their districts. Feel free to take this material with you as a guide when you vote.

Candidate	House District Number	County
Margaret Staggers	32	Fayette
Bonnie Brown	35	Kanawha
Barbara Hatfield	35	Kanawha
Nancy Guthrie	36	Kanawha
Meshea Poore	37	Kanawha
Richard Iaquina	48	Harrison
Mike Manypenny	49	Taylor
Mike Caputo	50	Marion
Linda Longstreth	50	Marion
Tim Manchin	50	Marion
Barbara Fleischauer	51	Monongalia
Charlene Marshall	51	Monongalia
Stephen Skinner	67	Jefferson

Candidates for Federal Offices

Sue Thorn for Congress

Sue Thorn is running for Congress in Congressional District 1. Her opponent is one-term incumbent David McKinley. Thorn is an advocate for the middle class on economic and social issues. She is a progressive on the environment. Her opponent speaks for the coal and power plant interests who finance him. Thorn will be a breath of fresh air compared to McKinley, who is one of the most extremist anti-environmental members of Congress.

Barack Obama for President



For president, the choice is clear. The Sierra Club has heartily endorsed Obama for re-election. Mr. Obama has achieved much for the environment even though he has been stymied in many cases. Obama respects and understands science, unlike his opponent.

Helping a Candidate

Now that we’ve endorsed candidates, they can use our help. A little input — whether knocking on doors, making phone calls, putting up signs, or more — can provide a much-needed boost to a campaign. Contact the candidates in your area if you have time to offer during the last days before the election. Every little bit helps.

Citizen Coal Ash Permit Monitoring Workshop Learn How to Monitor Coal Ash Permits from Home

Coal ash is dumped all over West Virginia, wherever there is a coal-fired power plant. After the coal burns, the ash has to be disposed of. That means it is trucked to a dump site, where groundwater and rain cause water to flow through and out of ash ponds.

Coal ash contains many toxics. Each outflow from an ash pond is regulated with a permit from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP). The permit states the maximum allowable discharge of a range of pollutants, such as arsenic and lead.

The ash pond operators are required to file “discharge monitoring reports,” documenting the actual amounts of the pollutants they discharge. But here’s the catch: Sometimes nobody looks at these reports! They go into a file at WVDEP. It is entirely possible that the reports show violations of the permits, but if nobody looks at them, then clearly violations can go unnoticed with no enforcement.

This is exactly what happened at Mon Power’s Albright power plant. Folks doing some research on another issue stumbled upon serious violations of arsenic discharges. Subsequently this led to major enforcement action that would not have happened if left to the WVDEP.

That’s where you can help. With a little simple basic training, you can learn how to obtain the discharge reports and review them for violations. All of that can be done online at home once you learn the basics. It’s one way of “holding polluters’ feet to the fire,” to make sure they are not putting excessive toxics into our streams.

West Virginia Sierra Club is holding two workshops to learn how to review ash pond discharge reports. Our “instructor” is Mike Becher of Appalachian Mountain Advocates. Pick the one most convenient for you. We’ll spend a Saturday morning on the simple basic skills, and when you leave you will be ready to become a citizen coal ash permit monitor – a.k.a. member of the Order of Ash Kickers!

For questions, or to register for one of the workshops, contact Jim Sconyers, jimscon@gmail.com, 304-698-9628.

Workshop Program

Workshop dates — participants choose one:

Charleston - January 5, 2013, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
WV Citizen Action Group office
1500 Dixie Street

Morgantown - January 12, 2013, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Downstream Strategies office
295 High Street #3

Program Outline

9:30 AM Coffee
10:00–10:15 Welcome, Workshop Purpose and Goals
10:15–12:15 How To Monitor Permits
12:15–12:30 Q & A, Wrap-Up

Targeting Our Efforts to Reduce National Oil Addiction

A picture really is worth 1000 words. For a map of our national oil consumption, county by county, check out the following website:

<http://sierraclub.typepad.com/compass/2012/09/targeting-our-efforts-to-reduce-national-oil-addiction.html>

And, here’s a cool Sierra Club GoogleMap to see how your county stacks up:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/maps/oil-dependence.html>

HELP WANTED

*Chapter Job Vacancies
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Outings Chair

Dan Soeder, our outstanding Chapter Outings Chair, is forced by professional commitments, writing projects, and home farm duties to resign. We need a new outings chair.

Are you interested? Do you know someone who would be a good candidate for the position? Without a good coordinator our state outings program will suffer.

Please contact Dan Soeder at 304-568-2164 or danielsoeder@gmail.com to learn more about the outings program and what the outings chair position entails.

Secretary

Our long-serving Chapter secretary is retiring soon. We need a replacement. The primary role of the secretary is to attend four annual Chapter Executive Committee meetings, take accurate minutes, edit and finalize the minutes, and distribute them. It’s an important (essential) but focused volunteer position.

Jonathan, our current secretary, will serve through the January 2013 Executive Committee meeting. The new secretary would take the reins at the April 2013 meeting.

If you are interested, please contact chapter chair Jim Sconyers at jimscon@gmail.com or 304-698-9628.

Membership Chair

This position has been vacant for several months. We need a membership chair to ensure new members are properly welcomed and informed of activities and events in their areas. An ambitious chair could even develop recruitment strategies, like hosting parties or movie nights.

For more information, please contact Jim Sconyers at jimscon@gmail.com or 304-698-9628.

Executive Committee Nominations

Both the Chapter and the Monongahela Group are looking for a few good folks to be leaders and decision-makers for their respective groups. ExCom ballots go out in December. To nominate yourself or someone else to run for election to either governing body, please send a 100-word statement with your qualifications to: sallywilts@yahoo.com





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Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
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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Water and Wellness: Health Impacts of Fossil Fuel Extraction

Sally Wilts

The Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, with support from WV Highlands Conservancy, WV Citizens Action Group and Sierra Club, organized the conference “Water and Wellness: Health Impacts of Fossil Fuel Extraction” held on September 8 in Morgantown. Nearly 100 people attended and were treated to authoritative presentations by researchers in public health and emotionally wrenching stories of families displaced and made ill by mountaintop removal and shale gas extraction.

Wilma Subra, environmental scientist and environmental justice advocate, was the keynote speaker and gave a comprehensive overview of the health risks associated with the development of shale gas. She detailed the high incidence of symptoms experienced by those in proximity to oil and gas drilling or processing. She stated categorically that eventually all well casings will fail, so the potential for pollution of air, soil and water continues into the future.

Six individuals spoke tearfully of helplessly watching their children and families become ill and being ignored or told that the chemicals they were being exposed to weren't harmful. The communities that they loved prior to the mountaintop removal or shale gas exploitation were destroyed and since most people have the majority of their assets tied up in their homes, they are forced to remain even as they are poisoned and made miserable by noise, dust, explosions, fouled water and air. Agencies which should be safeguarding these families are indifferent to their plight, and the exemptions granted to the oil and gas industries from environmental regulation and lack of enforcement have allowed these extractive industries to proceed without adequate oversight.

A panel of public health researchers spoke briefly about their work and then were available for questions. Dr. Michael Hendryx, Ph.D. (WVU) has published studies showing

increased rates of cancer, heart disease, respiratory and kidney disease and birth defects, as well as shortened lifespan, in individuals in proximity to coal mining and processing. He stated that legislators are largely ignoring these peer-reviewed studies.

Dr. Ben Stout, Ph.D. (Wheeling Jesuit University), aquatic biologist famous for his work with families whose wells have been polluted by coal slurry underground injection and for demonstrating that drainage from MTR fills does not mitigate for the streams that are buried, has been studying natural gas produced water. He is advising those with wells in areas impacted by shale

drilling to check their water daily with a conductivity meter, and to have background water quality tests done at a lab repeatedly prior, during, and after drilling. He cautioned that the chemicals that are returned to the surface as produced water are extremely toxic.

Dr. Jill Kriesky, Ph.D. (U of Pittsburgh) related that there is a lack of funding to perform the public health studies that are needed to determine the effects of the pollution from shale drilling and processing. She cited several efforts that are underway and gave us several resource contacts.

For further information on mountaintop removal, www.ohvec.org or www.ilovemountains.org are excellent sources of continuously updated information.

For Wilma Subra's presentation, go to http://www.earthworksaction.org/files/publications/SUBRA_3_Shale_Gas_Plays-Health_Impacts_sm.pdf.

The Southwest PA Environmental Health Project provides recommendations for water testing, both for a baseline and after drilling begins. **Baseline testing should be done before drilling starts within 3 miles of your home.** Baseline testing should include ethane, conductivity, and chloride in addition to the DEP recommended testing of bacteria, nitrates, TDS and pH. Other chemicals are recommended to be tested every six months during extraction activity. For a copy of the guidelines:

<http://www.environmentalhealthproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/SWPA-EHP-wellwater-testing-strategy.pdf>.

Another interesting website to check out:
<http://www.learnstuff.com/big-bad-corn/>

PATH Power Line Officially Dead

Frank Young

Year-old and longer predictions that the nearly 300-miles-long PATH (Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline) project was dead or dying were not exaggerations. In late August the thirteen-state regional electrical grid operator PJM — often referred to as an energy “cartel” — officially cancelled its demand that its member companies American Electric Power (AEP) and First Energy (formerly Allegheny Energy) construct a three-state, 765 Kilovolt electricity transmission line across West Virginia, through Virginia, and into Maryland. PATH was quietly cancelled with a simple PJM internal letter dated August 28, 2012.

The PJM Board of Managers terminated the PATH project and removed it from the planning process, effective immediately. In a letter to PJM's Transmission Expansion Advisory Committee, PJM Planning Vice President Steve Herling said that an analysis shows that “reliability drivers no longer exist for the project.”

Herling's brief letter continued, saying that, “The analyses incorporated the continued trends of decreasing customer load growth, increasing participation in demand response programs and the recent commitment of new generating capacity in eastern PJM.”

In other words, and as project opponents have said all along during the course of the three-year unsuccessful attempt to get PATH permitted by state regulatory commissions in three states, PJM now admits that the originally claimed needs for such a 200-foot tall and 300-mile long monstrosity “no longer exist.”

After PJM placed the PATH project in “abeyance” in March of 2011, the project's many opponents declared then that the estimated \$2.2 billion dollar project was “dead.” The late August PJM announcement is the official declaration that PATH is dead. AEP and First energy cannot fight for continua-

tion of the project without the PJM system's support.

In West Virginia, the PATH case at the WV Public Service Commission (WVPSC) generated approximately 225 interveners (official parties to a case) against PATH — several times more interveners than any other case in WVPSC history.

But what does it mean when a giant electrical power transmission project is declared “dead”? The adage that “You can't take it with you” apparently does not apply to such projects.

Although the line will not be built, its developers claim to have incurred about \$225 million in early project expenses — advertising costs, legal fees, property easement costs, etc. A large and effective citizen group opposing PATH — called StopPATH WV — has gotten involved in the process that will decide how much of that \$225 million will be allocated to electricity ratepayers.

According to StopPATH WV member and leader Keryn Newman, by the end of 2012, PATH will have already collected more than \$95 million from PJM region ratepayers since PATH was awarded a 12.4 percent “incentive return on equity” authorized by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 2008.

Reportedly the PATH partners also may be allowed to recover an additional \$130 million in capital investment in the project, if they convince FERC that they had no fault in the abandonment of the project and that all expenditures were prudently incurred. “The PATH project could end up costing electric consumers nearly a quarter billion dollars by the time it's all said and done,” Newman said.

So while PATH is dead, its memory lives on in the pocket books of ratepayers, and in the bank accounts and financial statements of AEP and First energy.

View from the Chair — Jim Sconyers

A Fracking Discussion

Here is an archetypal “dialogue” between Citizen and Industry.

Citizen: The well casing failed.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The shoddy cementing job failed.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The well exploded.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The pit leaked into the stream.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The trucks clogged our roads and damaged them.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The trucks blocked emergency vehicles.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The waste liquids you pump under-

ground cause earthquakes.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The air emissions from the well pad made my family sick.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The water in my faucet can be lighted on fire.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The well operations ruined my farm fields.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: The mess at the well drilling site made my property lose value.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Citizen: This industry has destroyed our lives.
Industry: That wasn't fracking.

Industry: See? We just showed you: gas is a safe and desirable industry — embrace it!

NEWS from WVU SSC

By Hannah Spencer

The West Virginia University chapter of the Sierra Student Coalition has been working hard so far this semester. We are interested in many environmental issues but our group is small, so we have decided to narrow our focus to one or two projects.

One possible project would be to initiate recycling efforts for off-campus housing facilities. Many students find it inconvenient to recycle at these facilities, given the recycling centers in town are not within walking distance for most students. If we can convince the large housing units to provide recycling bins on their premises, we could potentially increase the amount of recyclables in Morgantown.

A second project involves learning more about the energy inefficiency of the student recreation center. The Rec Center's budget has been tightened and we feel that decreasing electricity use during off-hours will free up more money. Since every student pays a campus fee that goes toward the Rec Center, we should have a say in cutting electricity use and costs.

Other projects include bringing in speakers from Friends of Blair Mountain and Keepers of the Mountains. All projects are still being discussed; no action has been taken yet.

Collectively, we plan to attend the "Do the Math" tour presented by 350.org in November in Columbus, OH. Bill McKibben, a founder of 350.org, will be discussing our environmental impact and other issues, such as the Keystone XL pipeline. SSC members are eager to hear Bill speak.

Although our group has many ideas, our numbers are small. We are starting recruitment efforts for new members by setting up tables at student housing complexes. During our tabling efforts, we are urging students to sign the Appalachian Communities Health Emergency (ACHE) Act, which will put a moratorium on additional mountaintop removal mining permits until further health impact studies have been conducted. We have met some opposition, but we have also met students who were interested in learning more. We hope to increase our student membership and are excited to provide new environmental education at WVU this semester.



Mary Ann Maul makes her point.

Highlights of SierraFest 2012

Dr. Alan Ducatman, Interim Dean of WVU's School of Public Health, described health impacts of Marcellus gas drilling. Ted Boettner, from the WV Center on Budget and Policy, described the idea of a Future Fund, which would place a portion of severance taxes for gas, coal or other resources into a trust to promote state needs, economic development, education or health care. Evan Hansen of DownStream Strategies described the future of coal in WV, while Diane Bady of OVEC talked about legal successes in the battle against mountaintop removal. Favorite outings included tree planting in Canaan Valley and a hike to historic coke ovens in Blackwater Canyon.

Many thanks to Jim Sconyers and the other organizers. Good food and great people make SierraFest a real treat, one you won't want to miss next year.



Dr. Alan Ducatman



Ted Boettner



Evan Hansen

Photos (c) Chuck Wyrostock

MON GROUP MEETINGS

Thursday, Nov 8, 7-9 PM
Climate Reality Project
WVU campus location, TBA

Sandra Fallon, a local activist, will present a short update on climate change and answer questions about her work with the Climate Reality Project. The WVU SSC is co-sponsoring her presentation. To be notified of exact meeting location, contact: sallywilts@yahoo.com (304-379-7567).

Thursday, Dec 13, 6:30-9 PM
Holiday Potluck & Social
Home of Jim Kotcon/Candice Elliott

Gather in the Cheat Lake area of Morgantown to enjoy good food and good company, celebrate the past year's victories, and plan for next year's battles. Families & friends are welcome.

Please bring a favorite dish to share. Contact Candice for directions: 304-594-3322, or celliot2@comcast.net.

EXCOM MEETINGS

Saturday, Nov 10
Canaan Valley State Park Lodge

Marcellus Campaign planning session, 9AM-noon. Executive Committee to conduct business, noon-4PM.

Very inexpensive rooms are available for overnights. Contact Jim Sconyers for more details: jimscon@gmail.com or 304-698-9628.

Saturday, Jan 19
Morgantown, WV

Chapter ExCom will meet at home of Jim Kotcon/Candice Elliott. Contact Jim Sconyers for agenda, or Candice for directions.



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2013 Sierra Club Calendars



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304-594-3322

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.

Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates.

Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to the Editor at

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

Deadline for
Jan/Feb issue
December 6

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.

ALASKA! I spent a week in the 49th State back in June with my older daughter, Elizabeth. Beth lives on Maui, in Hawaii, where she works in a spa at one of the upscale hotels. I was planning to visit her in the islands, when she told me she was making plans to travel to Alaska. Since I had never been there, and the flight was about the same distance and cost from Pittsburgh, I said fine — see you in Anchorage. (It was actually her suggestion; I did not barge in, uninvited, on my daughter's vacation.)

I posted most of my adventure on Facebook as we went, almost like a travelogue. This technology still amazes me. Some of the highlights are pasted below to help tell this amazing story.

We did several awesome hikes the first few days, including a long and spectacular trail along some Class IV rapids on the Eagle River, north of Anchorage, and across the snowfields (in June) at the Alyeska Ski Resort south of town. The best king crab I've ever had was at Humpy's in downtown Anchorage — freezing it and flying it to the east coast just ruins it. The second best king crab I've ever had was on the waterfront in Seattle, which was pretty outstanding, but this was even better. Beth, who works in the resort industry, tells me that the established restaurants set up deals with the fishing boats, and get the best of each day's catch.

Except for the mosquitoes, Alaska is amazing and wonderful. No wonder my late brother, Jim, loved it so much. I have a strong feeling that he is traveling with us.

Summer Solstice in Alaska is like Mardi Gras, and parties are going on all weekend. We went to the 49th State Brewery in Healy, north of Denali National Park, for dinner, good beer, and to hear a band called H-3 (named after the freeway on Oahu). It was Caribbean Reggae music played by a Hawaiian band in Alaska under the midnight sun. You just have to love a planet where all that can happen. At 11:45 PM, the sun was still a red globe hanging in the north. We were 350 miles from the Arctic Circle, so it dipped below the horizon for like 20 minutes and then it was morning.

We hiked a couple of trails in Denali NNP, but didn't see any wildlife larger than a squirrel. When we got back to the parking lot, however, there was an enormous female moose and her two calves wandering around on the service road. The babies were cute but the size of small cattle; momma was definitely NOT cute, and bigger than a horse. She had a bad temper and was given free range of the parking area by all concerned for as long as she wanted.

We then headed down to Seward. Mt. McKinley was impressive, but Beth and I decided the Kenai Peninsula is the best part

of Alaska. Mountains, glaciers, salmon swimming up creeks, waterfalls into cold ocean waters, shingle beaches, sea lions and whales are all within about ten miles of Seward. We took the wildlife/glacier cruise, where we saw three humpback whales, an orca, Dahl's porpoises, several otters, harbor seals, Steller sea lions, four bald eagles, and a bunch of puffins. The captain took us close to one of the glaciers and turned off the engines, so we could hear the ice groaning and creaking as it moved slowly down toward the ocean. It was pretty bizarre, and then an iceberg would calve off with the sound of a gunshot. Glacial ice contains highly compressed air bubbles, and is a translucent, glowing blue color. I've never seen anything like it. They brought a chunk of the ice onboard the boat and made margaritas from this centuries-old, pre-industrial age snowfall. It was probably the purest water I have had in my life.

We came back to Anchorage after dinner at the Double Muskie, a legendary Cajun restaurant in the Alaska woods. We finished off the trip by having drinks with a couple of Beth's friends at Chilkoot Charlie's on Spenard, a legendary (and really impressively huge) drinking establishment. So THAT's what they do all winter when there's no daylight. Chilkoot Charlie's contains an exact replica of the Bird

Cage, a popular bar south of town that was partially swallowed up by subsidence during the Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964. The reproduction of the Bird Cage maintains the same crazily tilted bar and all the other weird touches of the original. Alaska has left me stunned, and I was sorry to come home. But isn't that the best way to end a vacation? It can't possibly be seen in a week, and I'll be back.

...

For those who haven't yet heard, this will be my last calendar as Chapter Outings Chair. I just don't have the time available anymore to give this the effort it requires. The shale gas stuff has me traveling every other week, and farm stuff is taking my weekends. I really struggled to get the last few calendars out. If I can't do it right, I'd rather not do it at all. Therefore, I need to step aside and let someone else handle it. If anyone is willing to take over the duties of chair, please talk to Jim Sconyers. I have enjoyed training, planning, hiking, bicycling and paddling with many wonderful people, and I hope the outings program continues to move forward.

Thank you for all that you do.

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

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



Dan Soeder receives the Exemplary Outings Chair Award at SierraFest 2012 from Ann Devine-King, one of several outings leaders Dan has trained and mentored.

Dan is stepping down as Chapter Outings Chair to devote more time to his job and farm. During his tenure, the number of Chapter outings offered each year has multiplied several fold. He will not be easy to replace.

FALL/WINTER OUTINGS

Sat, Nov 3

Cooper's Rock Autumn Adopt-a-Trail Service Outing

not rated — The WV Sierra Club will be leading trail maintenance on Cooper's Rock Intermediate Cross Country Ski Trail. Rated easy hiking and easy to moderate work intensity, the fall clean-up emphasizes clearing the fallen leaves, drainage restoration and trail clearing. Trail length is 0.6 miles and total hiking length is a 1.25 mile loop. Volunteers should wear sturdy boots and carry work gloves, water, snacks. Adults and adolescents are invited to help and those under 18 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or a legal guardian. Volunteers will be required to sign a standard Sierra Club Liability Waiver and a DNR Volunteer Work Program Agreement. Please pre-register with the leader.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

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

Sat, Nov 10

Valley Falls State Park Day Hike

rated moderate — Join us for a moderate hike at Valley Falls State Park. We will do an out-and-back hike on the Rhododendron Trail to see the "hidden" waterfall at the end of the trail. This is a short hike of about 4 miles, with some steep sections. Bring your camera, as there are some great photographic opportunities. Sturdy foot-wear, water and snacks are necessary; trekking poles can be helpful. Meet at 9 AM at the main parking lot, near the water falls. Please pre-register with the leader.

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

Nearest town: Fairmont, WV

Web info: www.valleyfallsstatepark.com

Sat, Nov 10

George Washington National Forest

rated moderate — This is a 6.4 mile out and back hike on the Half Moon Trail in the GW National Forest. The first half is all uphill, although on easy footing with a beautiful overlook of the valley at the top. Meet at 10:30 AM at the trail head on Trout Run Road, 8 miles from downtown Wardensville. Brightly colored clothing is recommended because it will be archery season.

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

Nearest town: Wardensville, WV

Sat, Jan 12

Coopers Rock Day Hike

rated moderate — Join us for a hike of about 7 miles. We will start at the Day-Use Lot, hike the Scott Run Trail, and then continue on the Roadside Trail to the Overlook. Plan is to eat lunch at the Overlook, and then hike back to the cars. Bring snack & water; trekking poles can be helpful; dress for the weather. Contact leader for directions, rendezvous location, and start time.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

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

Sat, Feb 16

X-C skiing at Blackwater Falls State Park

rated moderate — Cross-country ski on 5-6 miles of trails in Blackwater Falls State Park and Monongahela National Forest. The route will be from the Blackwater Falls Trading Post parking lot to Pase Point, with overlooks and great views of Blackwater Canyon. This outing is not for beginners; some moderate skill level on X-C skis is needed to enjoy this trip. All participants must supply their own equipment. Please pre-register with leader; outing will begin at 10 AM.

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

Nearest town: Davis, WV

Web info: www.blackwaterfalls.com



Sierra Club

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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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Preserve the Future

Not everyone can make a large gift to protect the environment during their lifetime, but you can preserve the environment for generations to come by remembering Sierra Club in your will. There are many gift options available. We can even help you plan a gift for your local Chapter.

For more information and confidential assistance, contact:

Sierra Club Gift Planning Program
85 Second St, Second Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
gift.planning@sierraclub.org • (800) 932-4270

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

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