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2015 WV Legislature Weakens Environmental Protections

David Sturm

The November 2014 elections resulted in a historic shift of the WV Legislature from long-time Democratic domination to Republican control. Republican leaders promised at the start of the session to avoid extremism and demonstrate that they could govern effectively. They said their priorities were to create jobs and fix the roads.

Unfortunately, almost nothing was done on either issue. Instead, the Legislature, often with many Democrats in support, used the session to roll back environmental protections on many fronts.

Renewable energy (HB-2001)

Republicans campaigned last fall on a promise to repeal the so-called “**Alternative and Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard**” (AREPS), and that was the first bill introduced, **HB-2001**. Unfortunately for Republicans, AREPS was so weak that no utility was required to do anything until at least 2025. The bill also repealed key language to require net metering, but the net metering language was restored by **HB-2201**. AEP and FirstEnergy managed some amendments that require further rule making, giving them a chance to weaken net metering and the solar power industry.

Tank Bill (SB-423)

One of the hardest-fought battles was the “Tank Bill,” which amended last year’s “Above-ground Storage Tank Act” to reduce the number of tanks affected and limit the zones where inspection and enforcement are required. The bill also opens DEP rules, allowing industry some significant loopholes to further weaken protections.

In his March 10 Coal Tattoo blog, Ken Ward Jr. explained the bill’s results very well: “And don’t let anybody try to fool you ... this bill is a huge retreat from SB 373. To know that, all you really need to understand is that it leaves tens of thousands of above-ground storage tanks out of the new regulatory program.”

With Republican leadership for the first time in more than 80 years, a high number of bills passed that were positive to WV Coal Association members, as well as businesses and industries across the state, according to the WV Coal Association.

Coal Jobs and Safety Act (SB-357)

“The Coal Jobs and Safety Act of 2015,” includes the following:

(1) The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is to propose an emergency rule that changes state aluminum criteria to a hardness-based standard. Enforcement of water quality standards for aluminum and other metals has been an important activity for the Sierra Club. The hardness-based standard allows higher aluminum levels.

(2) DEP is required to propose new contemporaneous reclamation rules to more closely match the federal rules. This provides an opportunity to weaken reclamation rules.

(3) DEP is required to propose new inactive status rules to more closely match the federal rules. Current WV rules



put a 3-year limit on inactive status. Then reclamation must begin, while there is no time limit under federal rule. This gives ample time for the company to delay reclamation indefinitely or avoid reclamation by going bankrupt.

(4) The bill allows for additional methods to be used for refuse impoundment construction. The example is to allow the use of caps and liners similar to the ones used for landfills. This is another opportunity to weaken water quality protection.

(5) The bill legally aligns Penalty Conformity for the state penalty process for NPDES permits to that of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This is another opportunity to further weaken regulations.

(6) Allow the permit to be used as shield language that protects the company from DEP water quality standard regulations. The bill explicitly exempts the coal industry from meeting key water quality standards, a loophole for coal that no other industry gets.

Of great importance to the Sierra Club, the bill limits penalties and citizen enforcement of pollution discharges. When DEP refuses to enforce the rules, citizen lawsuits have had great success in forcing polluters to clean up their discharges.

And don’t look for any serious effort to create jobs or promote safety in the “Coal Jobs and Safety Act.” Nothing in the bill actually helps create jobs, and the “safety” program rolls back safety regulations for miners.

“It’s the first time that we’ve ever voted to go backwards in coal mine health and safety,” said Del. Mike Caputo, D-Marion. “I truly believe that the passage of this bill is going to hurt people and going to cost human life.”

Coal’s success (our loss)

Some other bills on the WV Coal Association’s success list are as follows:

HB 2627 provides increased protections against property crimes committed against coalmines, utilities and other industrial facilities. There is fear that the law would be used to target environmentalists. The governor vetoed the bill.

HB-2004, the Anti-Clean Power Plan, requires legislative approval before any state plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power plants is submitted to EPA under the proposed Clean Power Plan. This bill is targeted at blocking efforts by EPA to reduce climate change impacts from coal-fired power plants, but may have the unintended consequence

of increasing EPA oversight of West Virginia’s programs.

HB-2283 (the DEP rules bill) modifies water quality standards and restores “Category A” status to the lower 72-mile stretch of the Kanawha River, which requires this section of the Kanawha River to meet standards so it can be used for public drinking water supplies. There is a weakening provision, however: “Provided; that the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection shall consider, for the 2017 triennial review, potential alternative applications for the Category A drinking water use designation to the waters of the state, taking into consideration stream flow, depth, and distance to a public water intake.”

Implementing Category A standards is considered a “gain” by the WV Environmental Council (WVEC). But the rule also had support from the WV Coal Association because the bill “includes revisions to the state’s Coal Mining NPDES Rules (47 CSR 30) to address the ‘permit as a shield’ language.” This further exempts mining operations from meeting certain clean water standards and limits citizen enforcement.

Minor “gains” for our side

Some bills the WVEC considers as gains for the environment are the following:

SB-175, WVDHHR Source Water Protection Planning Rules, contains rules for implementing new requirements for public water utilities to develop and submit source water protection plans. Citizens have a role in the development and implementation of these plans.

SB-352 allows for the development of an affordable recycling program for businesses, by enabling them to hire a waste hauler without that hauler being required to obtain a “certificate of need.” SB-352 is truly a citizen’s bill that was conceived and shepherded through the legislative process by Jeni Burns, co-founder of the West Virginia Sustainable Business Council and Emmett Pepper of EEWV.

For those interested in natural gas issues, **HB 2688**, the “Forced Pooling” bill failed at the end of the session, 49-49 with two not voting.

The 2015 Legislative outcomes were not good, but they could have been much worse. The new majority party came to the session with an industry-friendly agenda and a pile of conservative bills from the American Legislative Exchange Council. The majority party did not get its way easily because citizen activists were loudly expressing their views and demanding hearings for their voices to be heard. The citizen pushback slowed the process and generated unfavorable news about what was happening. Near the end of the session, an estimated 7,000 people rallied in Charleston to protest the Legislature’s “attacks” on working families.

A vocal public can be effective if it is organized and too large to be ignored. The number of Sierra Club members and staff has been small in previous campaigns. Members with many skills are needed. All readers of this newsletter are well qualified to help in some way, large or small.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Buy This Fracking Album

Chuck Wyrstok

I truly believe that art can be a catalyst for change. So I was excited when I heard that a group of very talented musicians would soon put out an album to raise awareness about FRACKING. There will be music from Pete Seeger, Michael Franti, Bonnie Raitt, Steve Earle, Indigo Girls, Rusted Root and many others.

The title of the album, "Buy This Fracking Album," says it all. The artists lend their voices to one of the most pressing environmental issues of our time, hydrofracking, a method of extracting natural gas from the earth's shale that often contaminates water, air and land and causes harmful effects to plant, animal and human life.

Not only will you receive a record of the most influential "activists" of the time, you'll be a contributor to the development of the artists' collective stance, that they reject this method for corporate advancement and place their value on the life of every individual in the present and future.

Michael Franti, musician and activist, said, "As a human on this planet, I've always tried to take steps to limit my footprint and protect our earth. As a musician, I have the privilege of using my music to talk about important issues and to use the power of music to inspire people to take action to make positive change".

For a complete list of musicians and purchase information, visit pledgemusic.com/projects/buythisfrackingalbum.

Leadership Training

Bill Price

Want to know more about leadership in a grassroots campaign? Want to know why teamwork is so important to the success of a campaign? Want to be a better leader? Are you feeling the need to build relationships in your campaign?

Then join us for a six-part training on Campaign Organizing, beginning May 12. The good news? You can participate from the comfort of your home. The training will be online, but interactive. We will start by digging into leadership and teamwork, talk about how to share our stories and help others develop theirs. We will talk about strategic planning and how to build good, solid, authentic relationships. And we will discuss power and how to develop power in order to WIN our campaigns.

Yes, there will be homework. Yes, you will be coached and not have to go it alone. And yes, this training has helped win campaigns in the Sierra Club.

I hope you will join me in becoming a more effective leader.

To register for the training, contact Bill Price, at 304-389-8822 or bill.price@sierraclub.org.

Marcellus Academy 2015

Learn, Share, Enjoy

What is Marcellus Academy? Let's look at the Who, What, When, Where ... and Why.

First, the When & Where.

When: June 27-28

Where: West Virginia Wesleyan College campus

Now a little about the **What**.

Marcellus Academy is for old hands and new. This year we'll feature:

- Marcellus 101: All you ever wanted to know about Marcellus, drilling and fracking.
- "Horror Stories": Sharing the personal experiences of citizens living with Marcellus in Greater Frackistan, WV.
- Impacts: Social, health and More
- Laws and Regulations
- Information Sources: Using public websites
- Infrastructure — Caused by, or causing, explosive growth in WV drilling/fracking: Pipelines, crackers, power plants

A new feature in 2015: For those who are interested and willing, we'll spend some time working to develop a Marcellus Campaign Plan. Our discussions will key on:

- What do we WANT?
- What can/should we DO?

Some folks call this "moving beyond horror stories."

A note on logistics: We meet at Wesleyan, eat in their dining hall (darn good), and stay overnight in their air-conditioned dorm. All these expenses, plus mileage, are paid by West Virginia Sierra Club. Members and nonmembers alike are welcome.

The **Who** and **Why** go together. Marcellus Academy is for everyone who wants to learn about Marcellus and fracking, everyone who knows some basics but needs to know more, people who want to get together with experts as well as folks living with Marcellus impacts. We think this is probably you!

The full Marcellus Academy program is included at right. Take a look, mark your calendar, and register today.

To register, contact Jim Sconyers, at jimscon@gmail.com, 304-698-9628. Include your name, email address and phone number.

Agenda for Marcellus Academy 2015 West Virginia Wesleyan College

Saturday, June 27

- 8:30 am Arrive, check in
- 9:00 am Introductions: Jim Sconyers, Jody Mohr
- 9:30 am Ice-Breakers: Liz Wiles
- 10:00 am: Marcellus 101: Everything you always wanted to know about Marcellus, drilling, fracking: Bill Hughes, Wetzel County Action Group
- 11:30 am Open mike for personal "Horror Stories" — Earth, Air, Fire, Water, Home — moderator Jody Mohr, with Bill Hughes
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm Health Impacts: Dr. Mike McCawley, Department of Occupational & Environmental Health Sciences, WVU School of Public Health, and Dr. Jill Kriesky, Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project
- 2:00 pm Using Online Gas Databases: Permits, violations, more: George Monk, citizen gas analyst
- 3:00 pm Rules of the Game: Laws and Regulations affecting Marcellus: Wendy Radcliff, Environmental Advocate, WV Department of Environmental Protection
- 4:00 pm Campaign Development: Jim Kotcon
 - What do we WANT?
 - What can we DO?
- 5:15 pm Dinner
- Evening Keely Kernan's film "In the Hills and Hollers." The film is an intimate exploration of life in the midst of the natural gas boom in West Virginia and explores the often-dire consequences of monoeconomies based on fossil fuels.

Sunday, June 28

- 8:00 am Breakfast
- 9:00 am Infrastructure Driving the Marcellus Boom: Pipelines, Crackers, Power Plants: Jim Kotcon
- 10:00 am: Marcellus Campaign development (continued): Jim Kotcon
- 12:00 pm: Lunch
- 1:00 pm: Wrap-Up: Jody Mohr
 - To Do List
 - Follow-Up Plans
- Site Visit/Field Trip Planning Team: Jim Sconyers
- 2:00 pm Depart

Energy efficiency team develops strategy

Laura Yokochi

Strong energy efficiency programs have the potential to solve many of the problems West Virginia faces, including environmental destruction, wasted resources, lack of economic opportunity and high utility bills. Being involved in our Chapter's Energy Efficiency Campaign Team (EECT) is a way to make a difference, in our own local communities as well as on state policy. It is also an interesting way to meet new people with common goals. During a daylong training session and planning meeting on March 28 in Flatwoods, we set priorities, formulated a timeline and assigned specific tasks for each participant.

Local efforts include weatherization workshops, educational activities for children in summer programs, speaking to community organizations, and activities on college campuses. We will also continue to promote audits of city and county buildings, encouraging them to complete recommended efficiency measures to save taxpayer money.

Public policy efforts will focus on the Integrated Resource Plans (IRP), which the PSC requires all electric utilities in the state to have by Jan. 1, 2016. Through letters and personal meetings, we will attempt to influence the planning process to ensure that energy efficiency is included in each utility's plan. Public forums on the IRP and are planned during the summer and fall. We also plan to work with Energy Efficient West Virginia and the Our Children, Our Future campaign to promote energy efficiency legislation.

Publicity and outreach are crucial to the success of this campaign. In addition to traditional media, we will use online resources to publish articles and letters to gain support. We will also reach out to organized groups and individuals to coordinate and organize activities promoting energy efficiency.

Many areas in WV are starting Solar Coops: See if it's right for you

Jim Kotcon

I'd like to tell you why I will join the Morgantown Solar Coop (and why you may want to consider it, too!)

As the solar power industry expands, economies of scale are bringing costs down and innovative financing methods are making solar power affordable. One approach coming to West Virginia is the Solar Coop. Coops are now underway in Wheeling, Morgantown, Fayetteville and Monroe County.

A solar coop is a group of individuals who band together to procure solar photovoltaic panels at reduced cost. A large part of the cost of residential solar is the time and effort by the installer to mobilize, bring materials in and

do set-up and take-down. But rather than requiring this cost for each installation, a solar coop gets a number of people in a community to work together, allowing the installer to do all of those homes and businesses with a single staging effort. The savings are then passed on to the purchaser, and may lower costs by as much as 20-30 percent.

Farms and rural businesses are eligible for additional grant funds. Add in the current tax credits, net metering benefits and other financial incentives, and an expensive solar installation becomes very affordable, with payback times in the range of 8-12 years. So with a 25-year guarantee on your panels, you can expect many years of low-cost, pollution-free electricity.

To join, start by visiting the WV Sun web page, at wvsun.org.

Click on the Solar Coop link to learn about the coop nearest your home. The initial application starts a preliminary screening to evaluate your site to determine if solar is a good fit. Bids from installers are reviewed by the local group, but you are under no commitment until you get an individualized proposal for your location. Only if you then sign a contract will you owe anything.

I want to do this because I want to start freeing myself from fossil fuels. The cost has always been a barrier, but with the solar coop, this is now looking like an economically competitive alternative to ever-increasing utility bills.

If you ever wanted to go solar, now is your chance!

Thrilled to hit the ground running

The first few months of 2015 have been very educational for me and it's thrilling to be the new chapter chair.

* The WVSC and environmental movement saw challenges and frustrations working with the new Republican-controlled state legislature and victories when PNC announced it would divest from companies with mountaintop removal coal-mining operations. Many chapter members across the state spoke at FERC environmental scoping hearings against large, interstate natural gas pipelines and rallied at the Capitol in Charleston in favor of strong clean-water protections on the first anniversary of the Elk River coal chemical spill.

* We also were reminded of why our chapter's work is so important when an oil train in Mount Carbon derailed and exploded and there was a landslide at the Yeager Airport, due in large part to the history of strip-mining on airport property. Of course, these specific incidents are in addition to the daily, continued abuses by industry of West Virginia's water, air, public land and communities. WVSC members play a vital role in protecting our homes and families and striving for a better future for West Virginia against these abuses.

* The Chapter's Energy Efficiency Campaign is in its second year and has already seen much success. The group held a campaign strategy meeting in March, developing their plans to expand the campaign into new areas of the state and build on the progress made in current projects.

* The Marcellus Campaign continues its fight against expansion of gas infrastructure, including the four major 42-inch pipelines proposed for the state. And plans are underway for the 5th Annual Marcellus Academy, June 20-21, at West Virginia Wesleyan.

* Members with the Beyond Coal Campaign (BCC) participated in the March 16 anti-MTR "Put Your Foot Down" rally in Charleston. Just one day after the rally, Dr. Rahul Gupta, Bureau of Public Health commissioner, and Randy Huffman, DEP Secretary, agreed to evaluate the growing scientific literature that finds communities close to MTR sites are at higher risk for illness, including cancer and heart disease, birth defects and premature death. While not the end goal, this is a big step forward for the state.

Make sure to read the related articles about our campaigns to discover how you can get involved.

As a new chair, I was excited to attend the bi-annual Chapter Chairs Assembly in Camp Meeker, Calif. This was a great opportunity to meet fellow SC leaders and activists, learn about the variety of issues individual chapters work on and speak with chapters that work on similar issues, e.g., gas and oil pipelines. One idea moving forward is to establish lines of communication among those chapters with similar issues so they can better understand each other's local issues, how each fits into a bigger, regional picture, exchange ideas on campaign strategies and work as a coalition on specific actions.

Also at the assembly, I learned more about the Club's new initiative on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) that is rolling out this year. Over the next few months and years, chapter members will be introduced to why and how this initiative was developed, how the chapters have been and will be involved, and the resources and trainings available for chapters to implement their own DEI plans.

I look forward to working with our members to figure out what diversity means in WV. How do we take advantage of the diversity we already have in the chapter? What other issues and organizations are our members involved in, and how could the WVSC and those organizations support each other?

The chapter has often worked with groups whose focus isn't necessarily environmental but with whom we share common ground. There are so many ways that environmental concerns overlap with those of health, poverty, family, religion, labor and the economy. Growing the connections amongst these groups strengthens the work of the WVSC chapter and, in the end, will mean we succeed on all our issues.

Book Review:

The Book of Barely Imagined Beings: A 21st-century Bestiary by Caspar Henderson

Review by Richard Mier, Martinsburg

Perhaps you already know this: the waterbear (Eutardigrada), when faced with unfavorable ambient conditions, can wait them out in a cryptobiotic state called a tun. As a tun, it sheds almost all of its body water, hardens its exterior surface and can exist thusly for 120 years! This bit of incredibility about the waterbear (the "W" in Henderson's new bestiary) is one of many in this wondrous book, though he doesn't stop simply with all the amazing feats of derring do accomplished by his exotic beasts. He starts with natural history but then riffs and ruminates off in myriad directions stoked by his apparently near-limitless knowledge of, well, pretty much everything, including anthropology, evolutionary science, philosophy, the history of science, cosmology, poetry, sex. The list goes on.

Inspired by "The Book of Imaginary Beings" by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges as well as by medieval bestiaries, Henderson's book of beasts in engrossing not least because of the truly amazing beasts he chooses to write about but also because they actually exist (well, all except the quetzalcoatlus, which had a wingspan of 12 meters and has been extinct since the late Cretaceous). Let me also note that he writes engagingly and is terminally enthralled by his subject matter. You will be too.

The beasts run from the axolotl (a Mexican salamander and one of the cutest animals ever photographed), to the zebrafish. Each has a strange and compelling story that he tells brilliantly, providing each with an environmental context and an evolutionary history. But going beyond the mere erudite, he uses the details of each animal as a springboard into other pools, including language, music, philosophy and cosmology.

Beginning with the axolotl, he describes the ancient belief that features salamanders living without apparent injury or pain in the midst of fire. This leads to St.

Augustine, alchemy, Aristotle and Pliny. Also, in the same chapter, is a discussion of fossilized giant salamanders and the idea, new and controversial in 1830, that animals actually undergo extinction. Plus, there's the conquest of Mexico by Cortes leading to the drainage of the axolotl's stronghold Lake Chalco, smallpox and limb regeneration (a snap for axolotls, apparently).

Looking randomly in the index under "W" we find Richard Wagner, George Wald, wallabies, the Chinese poet Wang Wei, waterbears, James Watson, Raquel Welch, whale faeces (he's British), Walt Whitman and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Words I can guarantee you you've never seen before are on almost every page: analemma, apophenia, traceur, neotony, tilth among many others.

Shot through is his love and faithfulness to all the inhabitants of the natural world, including us, Homo sapiens, which is featured in Chapter 8 under "H", with thoughtful descriptions of how our depredations are pushing more and more of our fellow species, many featured in his book, to the brink of extinction and beyond. For those not too familiar with "deep time" there is a handy appendix concerned with eons, eras, and epochs. There's also an extensive bibliography and, if that's not enough, an interesting blog page, with a picture of an axolotl, at www.barelyimaginedbeings.com.

Constantly looking for commonalities (the axolotl, after all, has arms, hands, fingers, eyes and a smile), Henderson describes in the last chapter one of the fundamental things that we humans share with penguins, a love of play. He writes that for both, we can use the same equation: play = joy + learning. And, he continues, "In the case of humans, play is the first step to practical wisdom, which as Aristotle saw, is the ground of virtue." It's a good summary of this book of beasts: playful, learned and joyful. To learn for yourself how penguins ended up in the chapter concerned with zebrafish, you'll have to read the book, and I think you should.



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WVU SSC stays busy

Amanda Stoner

The Sierra Student Coalition (SSC) at West Virginia University has been working to increase public awareness of local, regional, national and global environmental issues, while encouraging our peers, faculty and administration to increase overall sustainability at WVU and limit the impact we as students and citizens have on our environment.

Open to all students

SSC is open to students from all majors and backgrounds who are interested in learning about environmental issues. Having more people improves the quality of discussion during each meeting and helps to ensure that students from all backgrounds are engaged and can help the SSC better understand the relationships between environment concerns and all other fields of study.

We often sit at a table in our student union area and reach out to hundreds of students as they walk by, recruiting and educating. Over the past couple of years, we have developed a strong base of dedicated and innovative members who have helped us to be successful in our endeavors and initiatives.

Advocacy

There are several key projects that the SSC has been working on this year.

The first is advocacy work. It is common for SSC members to contact their representatives or have "letter-writing parties" at meetings. With the aid of some pizza, SSC members have been known to produce 9-12 letters to state or federal congressmen and -women in one night.

Also, we sometimes set up "phone booths" in the Mountainlair (a hub of student activity at WVU) and ask students passing by if they are interested in contacting their representatives or signing petitions.

Through our phone calls, letters, emails and petitions, we have expressed our concerns about topics such as SB-423 "Amending the Aboveground Storage Tank Act," the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, the Pisgah-Timber Project at Coopers Rock State Forest, energy efficiency in West Virginia, and HB-2004.

We have made our voices heard and are excited to continue doing so in the future.

Outings

The SSC organizes outings, presentations, demonstrations and fundraisers. SSC frequently takes trips to places such as Snake Hill Wildlife Management Area, Coopers Rock State Forest and the WVU Arboretum to hike and enjoy the scenery. The SSC has been monitoring the water quality of Scott's Run, a stream that runs through Coopers Rock, with skills and tools we received from a training seminar with Trout Unlimited. We ventured out to the WVU Organic Farm to learn about its functions and look at the little lambs.

We also carpool to or encourage our members to participate in events such as



Grant Speer, as the Bag Monster, invites passersby to the Sierra Swing, on April 10.

Winterfest, Hug our Trees Day at Coopers Rock, SierraFest and Cheat Fest to show our support for other nonprofits and like-minded organizations. On April 17, several SSC members and friends traveled to Canaan Valley to plant red spruce trees and camp, an outing we look forward to all year. In addition, we are open to other fun activities such as kayaking, mountain biking and cross-country skiing.

Programs

SSC often invites guest speakers to give presentations on issues such as climate change, natural gas pipelines and timbering projects so we can be as informed as possible. We try to catch the attention of the campus community by performing demonstrations such as forming a human pipeline in front of the Mountainlair, holding signs and handing out flyers.

We have been working on a project called the President's Climate Commitment, in which we analyze the university's utility bills and work to provide the administration with information they need to increase energy efficiency on campus.

We close out each school year with our annual Sierra Swing fundraiser. This year, we had it at the Morgantown Brewing Company and enjoyed a night full of good food, great music, raffle prizes and loads of fun.

The Sierra Student Coalition would like to thank everyone in the community who has helped us with our efforts, especially our faculty advisor, Jim Kotcon. We are grateful for all of the opportunities we have had this year and we look forward to protecting our environment and serving our community in the future!

Perspectives on Outings

— Russ Flowers, Outings Chair

Spring has Sprung!

Spring has finally arrived and the brutal winter is behind us. Finally, I feel comfortable putting my winter clothes away.

The signs of spring are everywhere. For me, the signs of spring are the robins returning to my backyard in large numbers and red-winged blackbirds hanging on cattails in the wetlands singing their song "conk-la-ree." The grass turning from a dingy brown to dark green and the forsythia bushes and cherry trees blooming. With these signs of spring (and too many more to mention), my excitement is growing to get out and explore nature. My senses are on overload this time of year. My winter hibernation is over and it's time to dust off my hiking boots and hit the trail. To me, this is Mother Nature's reveille.

There are so many things that I want to do, but where to start? We are so fortunate to live in a state where outdoor activities are plentiful and with so many breathtaking opportunities. We are blessed with numerous city parks, county parks, state parks and forests, national parks and forests, wildlife management areas, nature preserves, wildlife refuges, etc. These areas offer miles of hiking and bike trails; lakes, streams and rivers for paddle excursions; nature centers for outdoor education; and so on.

Besides having all these areas for outdoor activities, we are also fortunate that there are no fees to enter them. For example, some of our neighboring states charge admission to their state parks and most national parks in the west also charge an admission fee.

Next, how to get started. The web is the best place to go, with its numerous free resources and maps. Most parks have their own websites with lots of free resources and lists of activities. Bookstores and park gift shops also have numerous guidebooks and brochures. And of course, there is the Club's outings program.

I welcome you to join us for one of our many diverse outings (available at different skill levels) ranging from hikes, bike rides, nature walks, canoeing, workshops, service projects, etc. As your Outings Leader Chair (OLC), I challenge you to participate in at least one of our outings. Also, remember the outings are open to club members and nonmembers alike, so you are encouraged to invite a friend.

If you don't see an outing in your area or one you are interested in, please feel free to contact me and I will see if we can plan whatever particular outing you suggest. For example, the outings program has been requested by some members to have outings in the area around the proposed Birth Place of Rivers (BPOR) National Monument. We took this feedback and have challenged our outings leaders to conduct more outings in this area to promote its importance.

If you are interested in participating in an outing or becoming an outings leader, please feel free to contact me or one of the many outstanding outings leaders.

"The mountains are calling, and I must go."
— John Muir

Take to the Outdoors!

Committed to the Future: Grant to Mountain SOL

Jody Mober

During the WVSC Executive Committee meeting on April 4, in Elkins, the ExCom voted in favor of a grant request received from the Mountain Stewardship & Outdoor Leadership School (SOL). Mountain SOL is an outdoor, environmental education school that opened in Fall 2014, in partnership with the Morgantown Learning Academy (MLA).

Through a program developed and taught through Mountain SOL, the grant will be used to support the engagement and learning of MLA middle-school students in a unique and creative way. As part of their required year studying West Virginia history, the students will embark upon a field trip to historic sites, with opportunities to learn about coal-mining wars, as well as other resource-conflict sites in southern West Virginia.

The WV Sierra Club is committed to supporting leadership development. This grant brings a tangible opportunity to engage, educate and empower both our youth and our members in learning from one another.

The grant request was approved for no more than \$2,000 for the 2015-'16 academic year.

Stay tuned for alerts and additional information regarding how you might become inspired to play a role in supporting the future leaders of the WV Sierra Club.

Info: Morgantown Learning Academy: learningacademy.org; Mountain SOL School: mountainsol.org.



Like us on Facebook to get more up-to-date information about our "doings."

Sierra Club West Virginia
Mon Group of the WV Sierra Club
WVSC Marcellus Shale Campaign

Outings — Spring & Summer

Sat, Apr 25 Day Hike: Greenbrier State Park Big Red Trail

rated easy — This will be a 6-mile hike in the Greenbrier State Park, mostly on the Big Red Trail. Toward the end of the hike, we will have lunch by the lake. Meet-up spot to be determined depending on creek levels. Please register with trip leader.

Leader: Pam Peitz, 240-818-655, pspeitz@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Hagerstown, MD
Web info: dnr2.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/western/greenbrier.aspx

Sat, Apr 25 Arbor Day Hike: Birthplace of Rivers (BPOR)

rated easy — Join us for a leisurely day hike in the area of the proposed Birthplace of Rivers National Monument. We will meet at the Cranberry Visitors Center at 9:45 a.m. and will hike for 3-4 hrs. During the hike, we will celebrate the blossoming of trees and wildflowers of the region. Bring snacks/lunch, water, proper hiking shoes/boots and binoculars. Please pre-register with the leader; outing is limited to 10.

Leader: Jane Birdsong, 304-636-8195, janebirdsong67@gmail.com

Nearest town: Hillsboro, WV
Web info: birthplaceofrivers.org/pocahontascountywv.com/cranberry_glades_nature_center.aspx

Sat, May 9 Workshops: Wildflowers/Weeds & Geology

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

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

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

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

Sat, May 9 Day Hike: White Oak Canyon area of SNP

rated strenuous — This will be a 7-mile hike in the Shenandoah National Park (SNP), with beautiful waterfalls and wild flowers. The hike will start at the White Oak Canyon Parking area in SNP. We will meet at the Walmart in Front Royal, VA, at 10 a.m. It is a long drive to the trail head, so allow all day for the event. Please register with trip leader.

Leader: Pam Peitz, 240-818-655, pspeitz@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Etlan, VA
Web info: hikingupward.com/SNP/WhiteOak

Sat, Jun 13 Workshops: Birds & Soils

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

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

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



Abbreviations Used

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

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
July/August issue**

June 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.

Sat, Jun 13 Points of View Hike: Blackwater Canyon

rated easy — We will do an easy hike, and an easier walk, to two amazing "points of view" high above Blackwater Canyon. First we hike the Pase Point Trail (3 miles round trip) on a generally easy and mostly level trail. We'll pass through heavy forest as the Blackwater River keeps us company far below. We end up at Pase Point, high above the confluence of the main stem and North Fork of the Blackwater, with outstanding scenic view for miles down Blackwater Canyon. Then we drive to the Lindy Point trailhead and walk the easy trail to the Lindy Point overlook (0.8 mile round trip). Here we have a different perspective on the canyon far below. Views are spectacular, including Lindy Point itself. We'll (optionally) wrap up with restorative pizza at a local bistro. Please pre-register with leader.

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

Nearest town: Davis, WV
Web info: blackwaterfalls.com

Sat, Jun 13 Day Hike: Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area

rated moderate — This will be a 7-mile hike that includes a portion of the Tuscarora Trail, with one very steep/long section. We will begin in the Woods Resort development. Meet up at the Woods Resort Golf course parking area at 10 a.m. Please register with trip leader.

Leader: Pam Peitz, 240-818-655, pspeitz@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Hedgesville, WV
Web info: wvexplorer.com/attractions/wildlife-management-areas/sleepy-creek-wildlife-management-area

Sat, June 27 Day Hike: Olson Tower/Blackwater Canyon Area

rated moderate — Join us for this 6-mile out-and-back hike on the Canyon Rim Trail, starting near Olson Lookout Tower, with great views of Blackwater Canyon and solitude.

Contact leader for more details.

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

Nearest town: Parsons, WV
Web info: fs.usda.gov/recarea/mnf/null/recarea/?recid=7055&actid=64

Sat, Jul 11 Workshops: Wetlands & Aquatic Habitats

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

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

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

Sat, July 11 Adopt-A-Trail Service Outing: Cooper's Rock

rated easy — This will be the summer trail clean-up on our "adopted" Intermediate Cross Country Ski Trail and loop for 1.25 miles at Cooper's Rock State Forest. Much of the work will be cutting back vegetation, cleaning out and restoring drainage ditches/culverts and general trail clearing. We'll have time to ID trees along the way. Some moderate-intensity work will be necessary using shovels, rakes and pruners and moving reasonably sized rocks. Anything requiring power tools or heavy lifting is deferred to the Forest Superintendent. Volunteers should wear sturdy boots and work gloves and carry water and snacks. Contact leader for more details.

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

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

Sierra Club Liability Policies For Chapter Outings

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

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

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

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

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

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

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver, which can be viewed on the web at www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms 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.



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Sierra Club
West Virginia Chapter
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West Virginia Sierra Club Chapter Directory

Chapter Executive Committee

Liz Wiles ('16) Chair
304-212-4855, Liz_Wiles@comcast.net

* **Jody Mohr ('16) Vice-chair**
304-782-4019, jodynic7@hughes.net

Gary Nelson ('16)
304-258-6669, glnelson1@frontier.com

Jim Sconyers ('15)
304-698-9628, jimscon@gmail.com

Jim Kotcon ('15)
304-594-3322, jkotcon@wvu.edu

* Chapter Delegate to National Sierra Club

Monongahela Group ExCom

Brian Bellew ('15) Chair
304-261-2461, bbellew@mix.wvu.edu

* **John Bird ('15)**
304-864-8631, johnbird@frontier.com

Gwen Jones ('15)
304-599-5815, gwenjones23@yahoo.com

Liz Wiles ('16)
304-212-4855, Liz_Wiles@comcast.net

Amanda Stoner ('16)
304-886-3435, amstoner@mix.wvu.edu

* Mon Group Delegate to Chapter ExCom

Other Chapter Leaders

Archives / Chapter History Kathy Gregg
304-473-8124, gregg@wwvc.edu

Conservation Gary Nelson
304-258-6669, glnelson1@frontier.com

Energy Jim Kotcon
304-594-3322, jkotcon@gmail.com

Environmental Education Gwen Jones
304-599-5815, gwenjones23@yahoo.com

Marcellus Campaign Jim Sconyers
304-698-9628, jimscon@gmail.com, and Jody
Mohr, 304-782-4019, jodynic7@hughes.net

Membership Chuck Conner
304-927-1664, chuckrayconner@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor Candice Elliott
304-594-3322, celliot2@comcast.net

Outings Chair Russ Flowers
304-482-7919, russwvu@yahoo.com

Political David Sturm
304-363-7160, davidsturm@ymail.com

Secretary Patricia Marroquin
304-838-0832, antes@msn.com

SSC, WVU Brian Bellew
304-261-2461, bbellew@mix.wvu.edu

Treasurer Sally Wilts
304-379-7567, sallywilts@yahoo.com

Webmaster Paul Wilson
304-725-4360, pjgrunt@gmail.com

Wildlands Karen Yarnell
304-657-0812, karen.yarnell@fairmontstate.edu

Wilderness Coalition Mike Costello
304-645-0949, michael.costello@wwwild.org

To Contact CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATES

The Hon. Joe Manchin
Shelley Moore Capito
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Phone: (202) 224-3954 (JM)
(202) 224-6472 (SMC)

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

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

The Hon. David McKinley
Alex Mooney
Evan Jenkins
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-4172 (DM)
(202) 225-2711 (AM)
(202) 225-3452 (EJ)

Favx: (202) 225-7564 (DM)
(202) 225-7856 (AM)
(202) 225-9061 (EJ)

To Contact the GOVERNOR

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin
State Capitol
Charleston, WV 25305

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

To Contact STATE LEGISLATORS

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

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

Mail address:

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

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

Regional Sierra Club Staff

Environmental Justice/Beyond Coal Bill Price
304-389-8822, bill.price@sierraclub.org

Energy Efficiency Organizer Danny Chiotos
304-886-3389, daniel.chiotos@gmail.com



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

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