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A Tale of Three Utilities: Responses to Integrated Resource Planning

Autumn Long

In 2014, the West Virginia Legislature passed a bill requiring the state's electric utilities to submit Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) to the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC). Integrated Resource Planning is a process by which utility companies determine the mix of resources they will employ to meet projected demand for electricity at the lowest possible cost to consumers.

Crucially, the West Virginia law passed in 2014 requires power companies to evaluate energy efficiency and demand response on an equal footing with investments in new power plants. This is important because it is less expensive to save energy through efficiency than it is to generate energy by building new power plants.

In March 2015, the WV PSC issued an order for the state's electric utilities to submit IRPs by the end of the year. Power companies were required to document their expected electricity demand growth and how they plan to meet that demand. The PSC also asked the companies to consider the finalized rules for the EPA's Clean Power Plan (CPP) in their IRPs.

The two major electric utility companies operating in West Virginia are American Electric Power (AEP) and FirstEnergy. Both companies and their subsidiaries submitted IRPs on December 30, 2015. Neither AEP nor FirstEnergy addressed the requirements of the CPP, claiming that they cannot make any plans until the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issues a State Implementation Plan detailing how the state will comply with CPP requirements. Issuance of such a plan by the DEP may be delayed until as late as 2018. Meanwhile, FirstEnergy and AEP are failing to meet the requirements of the PSC's order.

AEP

The IRP submitted by AEP and its subsidiaries includes the addition of some solar and wind energy generation capacity. This is set to be accomplished mainly through the addition of 750MW large-scale solar and wind farms over the next 10 years. AEP also assumes that its customers will add a total of 14MW distributed (i.e., rooftop) solar generation capacity by 2025. (This analysis assumed that the federal Investment Tax Credit for solar energy would expire in 2016. Faster growth in the rooftop solar market is now expected, due to the extension of that tax credit through at least 2020.)

AEP projects that the implementation of new energy efficiency and demand response programs will meet about three percent of its energy needs through 2025. It also plans to convert two coal-fired power plants to natural gas, with expected total retirement of both plants in 2026. But AEP continues to rely on existing coal-fired power plants to supply the vast majority of its customers' energy needs.



FirstEnergy

In contrast to AEP's plans and projections, the IRP submitted by FirstEnergy and its subsidiaries does not consider any new energy efficiency or demand response options to meet projected power demands. Moreover, FirstEnergy does not view solar, hydro, or geothermal energy as cost-effective means of power generation. It considers wind energy and/or biomass co-firing of existing power plants as its only viable renewable energy options.

Despite failing to incorporate any new energy efficiency programs, fuel diversification, or renewable energy capacity in its IRP, FirstEnergy predicts extensive demand growth and a shortfall of generation capacity within this year. Its solution? To buy another coal-fired power plant!

Harrison Rural Electric

Harrison Rural Electric Association (HREA), a small rural electric cooperative based in Harrison County, submitted an IRP that contrasts favorably to FirstEnergy's derisive nod toward resource planning. Unlike FirstEnergy and AEP, HREA is a distribution-only utility, meaning it has no electricity generation capacity of its own. HREA

purchases all its electricity through an agreement with AEP Energy Partners that runs through May of 2020. This agreement somewhat limits HREA's short-term planning options. However, HREA has analyzed several longer-term demand-side options for reaching its members' energy needs — options that focus on renewable energy, particularly solar.

Due to exponential increases in power transmission and generation costs, HREA considers it necessary to move toward self-reliance by generating the majority of its own power. HREA views the addition of fossil fuel resources as neither financially feasible nor possible; thus, it points to renewable energy as the best means to reduce its reliance on the regional power grid and meet its members' energy demands at the best achievable cost.

Renewable energy options analyzed in HREA's IRP include community solar (e.g., third-party leasing arrangements); cooperative-owned solar, in which HREA would own the property and equipment; and demand-side supplier-owned solar, in which HREA would purchase power directly from a renewable energy vendor. Unfortunately, HREA does not consider energy efficiency or demand response programs in its IRP.

What it all means

In this "tale of three utilities," we see the breadth of possible responses to rapid changes in how electricity is produced and distributed in this country. That a large utility such as AEP and a small player like HREA both recognize the need to diversify and increase their renewable energy portfolios bodes well for the continued growth of the nascent solar industry in the Mountain State. FirstEnergy, on the other hand, stubbornly refuses to consider viable and necessary alternatives to its outmoded and regressive way of thinking.

In all cases, it is of great concern that energy efficiency does not play a larger role in our electric utilities' resource planning. Energy efficiency is the cheapest and simplest way to minimize energy demand growth and reduce greenhouse gas emissions while also saving consumers money and creating jobs and business opportunities.

Stay tuned for upcoming Sierra Club actions through which you can help ensure that investment decisions by West Virginia's electric utilities are in the public interest. We must hold these companies accountable for their actions and demand that they take responsibility for their roles in meeting the goals of the Clean Power Plan.

[Editors Note: As this edition went to press, the U.S. Supreme Court had just issued a stay on EPA's Clean Power Plan. What this means for the IRPs and other renewable-energy policies, only time will tell.]



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Time to put the pressure on

Help create the Birthplace of Rivers National Monument

Mike Costello, WV Wilderness Coalition

President Obama recently made significant strides in protecting special wild places by designating a significant number of national monuments. West Virginia sportsmen and business owners are now urging the President to turn his attention to the Monongahela National Forest. You, too, can help make the Birthplace of Rivers National Monument a reality.

At a time when state officials seek creative solutions to diversify our economy, more than 200 businesses, several local tourism bureaus and recreation-dependent communities, such as Richwood, Sutton, Fayetteville and Lewisburg, are urging swift action to draw new visitors, create jobs and generate critical local tax revenue.

Thanks to the increased visibility of a national monument designation, Birthplace of Rivers National Monument is expected to increase economic activity by \$5.2 million annually and increase visitation by 50,000 people. Already, outdoor recreation generates \$7.6 billion in consumer spending and is responsible for 82,000 jobs in West Virginia.

Business owners joined sportsmen groups, such as the Quality Deer Management Association and West Virginia Trout Unlimited, to champion a proposal that protects our outdoor heritage and enhances economic development opportunities. Throughout the process, a diverse group of stakeholders, many of whom find themselves on opposite sides of many issues, sought to find common ground and carve out a national monument proposal of which all West Virginians can be proud.

President Obama's monument designations have consistently protected hunting and fishing access and produced countless economic benefits. Local economies have benefited greatly from recent designations, such as the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in New Mexico, which boosted visitation by 42 percent after only one year.

For years, the Obama administration has expressed interest in Birthplace of Rivers, responding to the economic benefits the designation would provide to local communities, as well as the prospect of creating the first landscape-scale national monument in the East.

"The Obama Administration places a high priority on supporting conservation efforts that encourage a strong recreation and restoration economy," Thomas Tidwell, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, told the Pocahontas County Commission in 2013.

TAKE ACTION

Visit birthplaceofrivers.org and write a letter to the President. Through our online action form, you can let President Obama know why you support his use of executive action to create our state's only national monument. Whether you want to protect unique spruce forests, enhance native brook trout habitat, or simply give "Wild and Wonderful" the national honor it deserves, the Obama administration needs to hear from you.

HOST A HOUSE PARTY

We have a video about the monument for your guests to watch, talking points for writing letters to the President, postcards for guests to fill in, and brochures to share.

Contact Karen.Yarnell@fairmontstate.edu if you want to help the monument designation in this way. If this very special area gains the protection it deserves, as the Birthplace of Rivers National Monument, it will be because West Virginians like you continued to push for action in 2016.

U.S. Forest Service Rejects Atlantic Coast Pipeline Route

Finding that "the proposed route does not meet the minimum requirements," the U.S. Forest Service notified ACP on Jan. 19 that "alternatives must be developed" that avoid endangered salamanders and Northern Flying squirrel and their habitats in the Monongahela and George Washington National Forests. The Forest Service also asked for alternatives that avoid spruce restoration areas.

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline is proposed as a 42-inch diameter gas pipeline to carry natural gas from north-central West Virginia to North Carolina. If built, it is likely to spur greater gas drilling in the Marcellus area.

Thank-yous: Clyde Thompson, Mon Forest Supervisor, 200 Sycamore Street, Elkins, WV 26241. Phone: 304-636-1800.

Comments: www.fs.usda.gov/contactus/mnf/about-forest/contactus

WV artist donates original work to help raise funds for Chapter's conservation efforts

The West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club is offering chances to win an original sculpture by metal artist Mark Blumenstein. The piece, which he calls, "No Pipeline Thru!", is about 14-inches tall and would look great adorning a tabletop or display shelf at home or the office.

Mark's highly eclectic and outrageous, but whimsical and profound, metal sculptures have been described in many ways. "Original!," "Provocative!," "Unique!," "Comical!," and "Biting!" are just some of the adjectives applied to his work.

In "No Pipeline Thru!" our hero, victorious, has ripped the pipeline right out of the ground and, with raw power, given it a vicious crimp, bellowing, "No Pipeline Thru!" At least that's how one critic sees it — what do you see?

Tickets are \$5 each. The drawing will be held this Earth Day, April 22. The winner will be notified shortly thereafter.

Proceeds from ticket sales will benefit the WV Sierra Club's work on gas issues in the state, including pipelines, as well as our work on other West Virginia conservation issues.

For your opportunity to help support the Chapter's conservation efforts, along with a chance to win an original piece of art, you may purchase tickets in one of two ways:

1. Mail a check made out to **WV Sierra Club** for the number of tickets ordered, **by April 15**, to:

Sally Wilts, WV Chapter Treasurer
PO Box 184, Bruceton Mills, WV 26525.

Include the number of tickets requested, your name, email address, mailing address, and phone number (to notify the winner). Your ticket stub(s) with ticket number will be mailed to you.



No Pipeline Thru! — An original sculpture by Mark Blumenstein

2. Contact any member of the Chapter or Mon Group ExComs, each of whom have a few tickets on hand for sale. You may pay with cash or by check up to one hour prior to the drawing.

The winner will be announced in the July/August edition of this newsletter. For specific details about the drawing, contact Jim Sconyers, 304-698-9628, jimscon@gmail.com.

National Club Election Coming This Spring

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's website.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is

a major membership obligation. Your Board of Directors is required to stand for election by the membership. This Board sets Club policy and budgets at the national level and works closely with the Executive Director and staff to operate the Club. Voting for candidates who express your views on how the Club should grow and change is both a privilege and responsibility of membership.

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know.

Visit the Club's election website: sierraclub.org/board/election This site provides links to additional information about candidates and their views on a variety of issues facing the Club and the environment.

You should use your own judgment by taking several minutes to read the ballot statement of each candidate. Then make your choice and cast your vote. Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, please go to the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If unable to do so, you will find the ballot to be quite straightforward and easy to mark and mail.

DONATE TODAY



Help your Chapter stay strong for the hard work we do to keep West Virginia wild and wonderful.

Make a quick and easy donation or join "the Club" from the Chapter's home page:

westvirginia.sierraclub.org

Energy Efficiency Campaign Team Supports LEEP Legislation

Autumn Long

The WV Chapter's Energy Efficiency Campaign Team is working to support passage of an exciting new bill currently pending in the WV State Legislature. This bipartisan legislation is good for communities, business and the environment.

The legislation would authorize Local Energy Efficiency Partnerships (LEEPs) in West Virginia. LEEP legislation would allow local governments to create a funding mechanism for local businesses and property owners to make energy-efficiency upgrades to their buildings.

The LEEP model uses the energy savings realized on the properties to pay for the upgrades' up-front costs. Because an investment-grade energy audit is required to verify the projected costs and savings, there is no risk to taxpayers, and local governments are not responsible for making the upgrades. Privately held bonds backed by the building's energy

savings fund the improvements. Property owners pay back the loans on their tax tickets.

Thirty states and the District of Columbia have enacted similar programs. Establishing LEEP in West Virginia will promote economic development by empowering local businesses and property owners to save money and create jobs. Reducing the energy costs of commercial buildings helps local property owners to keep their tenants and the businesses they run. This helps keep West Virginia businesses in the state. The jobs created by energy efficiency upgrades are local, well-paying, skilled labor in the construction trades. Energy upgrades result in lower bills for consumers and tenants, making it easier for businesses, industries and residents to stay in West Virginia.

This is one bill with a good chance of passing our Republican-dominated legislature, if we can get it moving. As of this writing, LEEP legislation has not yet been

formally introduced in the WV House of Delegates, but it does have bipartisan sponsorship and we are hopeful for its swift introduction in the House. LEEP legislation has been introduced in the WV State Senate as SB 370, with co-sponsorship by Senators Chris Walters (R-Putnam) and Ronald Miller (D-Greenbrier).

SB 370 is now being considered in the Senate Energy, Industry and Mining Committee. Unfortunately, many bills die in committee, so it is important that our elected officials know that their constituents support LEEP legislation.

Take Action

You can help build support for this legislation by making a phone call or sending an email to your local senators and delegates. Let them know who you are, where you are from, and why you think LEEP legislation would help your community.

Contact information for state legislators can be found at: www.legis.state.wv.us

Chapter Makes Early 'Snap' Endorsements

Jim Sconyers, Political Committee Chair

The Chapter made a few what might be called "snap" endorsements of candidates in January.

What is a snap endorsement?

There are several deadlines for filing to run for office. In January, a small number of candidates registered for pre-filing, a technical status that enabled them to begin accepting campaign donations. These were the candidates we looked at.

The second criterion was more important. We next looked for pre-filers whom we knew well. We had worked with them previously, and/or they had consistently championed good environmental bills. This gave us a very short list of three candidates.

Mike Manypenny

During his three terms in the West Virginia House, Mike was always one of the two or three greenest members. He introduced numerous environmental bills, including one requiring frackers to pay for the water they withdraw from our streams. We've revived this bill in the current session, hoping for more success with it.

Manypenny is now running for the U.S. House in Congressional District 1, northern West Virginia. He is running unopposed in the Democratic primary. His opponent in the general election will be incumbent David McKinley. McKinley is unopposed in the Republican primary.

Evan Hansen

Many of us have watched Evan grow his company, Downstream Strategies, from a one-man venture to a dynamic and widely respected environmental and economic think tank. Evan would be a rare item: a scientist in the West Virginia House. Another unusual combination is that of scientist and small businessman, with 12 employees.

Evan is running for the West Virginia House in District 51, the Morgantown and Monongalia County area. His district is multi-seat, allowing for five to be elected. Downstream Strategies has produced many reports and analyses of some of the state's large issues. One of its most recent studies is an analysis of how West Virginia can meet the requirements of the federal Clean Power Plan.

Mike Pushkin

Mike has been a reliable ally on environmental bills and issues. Showing a sense of humor, Mike sponsored HB 2925, "Relating to drug testing of legislators." Examples of some of the more serious bills he has sponsored are HB 3005, "Prohibiting blasting within six hundred twenty-five feet of an occupied dwelling," and HB 3013, "Relating generally to horizontal well control standards." Also, during the E-day/water rally, he sang the song he wrote after the chemical spill, "We're all a bunch of water," in the Capitol rotunda.

Mike is an incumbent, running for reelection in House District 37, which encompasses part of Kanawha County.

The Chapter will be making more endorsements now that the filing deadline for all candidates has passed. We'll get those into the May/June *Mountain State Sierran* for our members to use as a guide.

E-Council Sets Legislative Priorities

Karen Yarnell

The WV Environmental Council (E-Council) is the group that lobbies with and for both large and small West Virginia environmental organizations. Accordingly, at its annual fall conference each October, the E-Council and interested citizens develop its lobbying priorities for the next legislative session.

For 2016, the following priorities were established:

First tier

1. Public health impact assessment of industrial and natural resource development proposals. Too often, proposals for development have negative impacts on the health of neighboring people.
2. Local energy efficiency partnerships (LEEP). This would create local government revolving-load funds providing opportunity for local businesses to invest in energy efficiency projects.
3. Regulating the siting of wholesale electricity-generating facilities.
4. Oppose weakening water-quality standards and

fight for strengthening DEP rules regarding oil and gas drilling and above-ground storage tanks.

Second tier

(to work on as the opportunity arises)

5. Monitoring the impact of fracking and the pipelines that accompany oil and gas production. This includes forced pooling, landowner rights, pipeline siting and water withdrawals.

Third tier

(to work on as appropriate)

6. Campaign finance reform
7. Clean energy incentives
8. Tax reform ensuring that natural resource extractive industries are taxed appropriately
9. Right to work

Please join the WV E-Council in fighting for these issues by contacting your delegates and senators, attending committee hearings, staying informed and making financial contributions. All of these issues will lead to a better quality of life for West Virginians.



Clean Water Conference

WV Wesleyan College
January 19

Autumn Long

In January 2014, a coal-cleansing agent contaminated the source of drinking water for 300,000 people in nine West Virginia counties. Two years later, West Virginia Wesleyan College and the Buckhannon River Watershed Coalition co-hosted a Clean Water Conference to commemorate that disaster and educate the public about potential dangers to our water supplies.

Conference coordinator Abigail Benjamin conceived the idea for the event after viewing "Elk River Blues," a documentary film about the 2014 water crisis, by West Virginia filmmaker Mike Youngren. The filmmaker was present to kick off the evening's agenda with a viewing of his film at Wesleyan College's Virginia Thomas Law Center for the Performing Arts. The auditorium was packed with a crowd of more than 250 Wesleyan College students and faculty, members of the public, and students from Buckhannon-Upshur High School.

Following the film screening, a panel of experts commented on issues raised by the documentary and took questions from the audience. Panelists included Dr. Eric Waggoner, Wesleyan College associate professor of English; Angie Rosser, executive director of the WV Rivers Coalition; Dr. Kim Bjorgo-Throne, Wesleyan College assistant professor of Biology and Environmental Science; Tom Landis, City of Buckhannon water plant supervisor; and Dr. Rob Rupp, Wesleyan College professor of History and Political Science. Several Wesleyan students from the Charleston area also volunteered to share their personal experiences during the 2014 water crisis.

Citizen action groups, environmental organizations, and government agencies were available to answer questions and distribute information about our public water resources. Groups participating in the conference included the **West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club**, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Buckhannon River Watershed Coalition, Friends of the Cheat, Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The evening's agenda concluded with small-group breakout sessions in which attendees were encouraged to get involved in various volunteer efforts to help protect clean water. Sierra Club Chapter Chair **Liz Wiles** led a session focused on the oil and gas industry's withdrawal of water from our public streams and rivers without paying for it. Wiles encouraged attendees to contact their elected officials about this issue and ask legislators to impose a fee for the gas industry's use of this valuable natural resource.

WV Gas Summit, Jackson's Mill, December 15

Autumn Long

Representatives from more than 30 groups, organizations and coalitions from across West Virginia gathered in December at Jackson's Mill to meet, network and learn about each other's work regarding the shale oil and gas industry's impacts on public health, the environment and local communities. Each attending group works to address one or more of these impacts, including property rights; water, air and noise pollution; water withdrawals from our state's streams and rivers; pipelines; wastewater treatment facilities; and waste disposal and transport.

Summit attendees included members of community action groups, faith leaders, scientists and public policy professionals. Statewide organizations represented at the summit included the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Environmental Council, West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, West Virginia Surface Owners' Rights Organization, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. The West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club was strongly represented, with attendance by Chapter Chair **Liz Wiles**, Marcellus Campaign Co-chairs **Jody Mohr** and **Jim Sconyers**, Energy Committee Chair **Jim Kotcon** and other Chapter members. Also in attendance was **Kirk Bowers**, Pipelines Program Manager of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The summit offered an opportunity for representatives of these groups to meet face-to-face; learn about each other's missions, goals, and strategies; and brainstorm about future collaborative efforts. Policy proposals during the current session of the West Virginia State Legislature were of immediate concern, chief among them the so-called "Forced Pooling Bill." Longer-term objectives included the development of legislation to require industrial



Gas activists Jim Sconyers (center) and Laurie Ardison compare notes after a summit presentation.

users to pay for the water they extract from our public streams and rivers. Broad agreement was also reached on the need for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to conduct a regional Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to evaluate the cumulative impacts of several proposed interstate natural gas pipelines on natural resources and the environment in the Central Appalachian region. Summit attendees left the event feeling encouraged by each other's victories and invigorated by a renewed sense of urgency to work together to address the impacts of the oil and gas industry on the climate, environment, and West Virginia's people and communities.

Sierra Club Holds Successful Solar Summit, Dec. 19

Jim Kotcon

More than 20 Sierrans and Clean Energy activists gathered Dec. 19 to plot a clean energy future for West Virginia. The WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced a comment period to gather public input on how the state should implement the EPA's Clean Power Plan.

As specified in HB 2004, adopted in 2015, WV-DEP must report on the feasibility of meeting EPA's Clean Power Plan standards, and must submit an implementation plan to the WV Legislature for approval, before submitting it to EPA. Summit participants identified some credible strategies that emphasized energy efficiency and renewable energy sources to meet West Virginia's electric energy needs while still reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2025.

Sierra Club comments to DEP included 10 policy recommendations. Because many of the most cost-effective approaches to reducing greenhouse gas emissions are regulated by the Public Service Commission, not the WV-DEP, we recommended that an interagency task force be established to coordinate the state's response. We also recommended that DEP adopt specific policies to increase energy efficiency, encourage early reductions and consider a carbon tax as an option to provide incentives for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

For the full 26-pages of comments, contact Jim Kotcon, jkotcon@gmail.com.

[See Editor's Note on page 1.]

2016 WV Sierra Club Election Report Chapter Executive Committee

The 2-year terms of Jim Kotcon and Jim Sconyers expired at the end of 2015. There were five candidates on the Chapter ExCom ballot, including both incumbents, April Keating, Laurie Ardison and Chuck Conner.

Ballots were mailed to all Chapter member households in good standing. Of 1,766 ballots mailed, 217 were returned, a 12.3 percent return rate. Ballots were counted on January 3 by Candice Elliott, Sally Wilts and Barb Howe.

In a very tight race, **Jim Kotcon** received the most votes, with **Laurie Ardison** coming in second.

Monongahela Group Executive Committee

The 2-year terms of John Bird, Gwen Jones and Brian Bellew expired at the end of 2015. There were four candidates on the ballot: John Bird, Autumn Long, Laura Yokochi and Travis Boothe.

Ballots were mailed to all Mon Group member households in good standing. Of 426 ballots mailed, 61 were returned, a 14.3 percent return rate. Ballots were counted on January 3 by Candice Elliott, Sally Wilts and Barb Howe.

Autumn Long, John Bird and Laura Yokochi were the winners.

Term Limits

The Sierra Club National Board of Directors recently passed a resolution that ExCom term limits be adopted by each chapter. Individual chapters could choose either two- or three-year terms and whether a break was needed after two or three consecutive terms.

At the WV Chapter ExCom meeting on Jan. 16, in Morgantown, the ExCom voted to change the Chapter's bylaws to reflect that ExCom members may serve three consecutive two-year terms, but must sit out at least one year before running for re-election. This change takes effect in 2017.

The Chapter Bylaws will now read as follows:

Members elected may serve an unlimited number of terms in the capacity, except that, after any three consecutive full two-year terms, that member shall not be again eligible to serve as delegate at-large until one year shall have elapsed after the conclusion of the third such consecutive term. This amendment shall take effect beginning with eligibility for election in the annual election in 2017.

Can-do Attitude Needed to Solve Climate Crisis

I recently had a Facebook exchange with an old high school friend who commented on a status I posted about the President's State of the Union address. I shared how excited I was to hear Obama compare the space race and Apollo Project to the challenge we face transitioning to a clean energy economy: "Sixty years ago, when the Russians beat us into space, we didn't deny Sputnik was up there. We didn't argue about the science, or shrink our research and development budget. We built a space program almost overnight, and 12 years later, we were walking on the moon."

My friend asked some legitimate questions about how we would pay for this, noting that the current political and legislative "environment" would not allow for any kind of government subsidies or public investment to make this happen.

For starters, we can remove subsidies, tax incentives and tax loopholes from which the fossil fuel industry benefits and instead offer those to the renewable energy, clean fuel and energy efficiency industries, further decreasing the costs of those and making them more cost-effective than fossil fuel. This, of course, is already the case in many places across the country and world, with costs of solar and wind power almost equal to or less than those of oil, gas and coal.

If someone tries to argue that we shouldn't manipulate the market in such a way or that the government shouldn't be in the business of picking winners and losers, remind

them that in the late 1800s, similar strategies were employed to implement the use of fossil fuels more quickly, effectively and cheaply.

Another tactic that would have a big impact on the costs of energy would be to factor in ALL the costs of using fossil fuels, including the cost of environmental degradation and cost of healthcare for those made sick by that degradation.

But my main point to my friend was not to delve into all the hows, whats and whens, it was this: Transitioning to a clean energy economy is an incredibly complicated and complex challenge that I certainly don't have all the answers for; no one does. However, in the past, when Americans recognized a great challenge and threat to our future, the country came together, both private and public sectors and citizens, to figure out how we were going to meet and overcome that challenge. They also looked at all the ways we would have to get there, economically, legislatively, regulatory et al., because they knew that was what was needed at that time.

Climate disruption is THE challenge of our time, not just for the U.S., but also the world. We MUST figure this out. And we have to figure out how to do it JUSTLY. If we're going to do this, we need leadership in our government and private sectors to say, "Yes, this is happening; yes, this is huge; yes, it's going to take a long time and we all are going to have make some sacrifices, but we're going to rise to the challenge because that's what America does."

Like the analogy to the Apollo Project because of how it brought the country together, how public and private entities worked together, and how Americans demonstrated that we KICK A**. And yes, this energy transition is a race — not just with other countries that already are beating us (e.g., Germany, Japan, China), but also a race against time. And it's only going to cost more the longer we wait. We've already wasted at least 15 years while we "debated" whether or not the climate was even changing and whether we were responsible for it.

Here in West Virginia, we also need to make sure that those communities that have relied on fossil fuel or extractive industries for their economy are not left behind to become once again "sacrifice zones." The people who get left behind are those who say, "We can't do this; it's too big," or "It will be too expensive," or "Why should we risk our own economy when other countries aren't doing anything?" To me, those people (including fossil fuel executives, elected officials, pundits) are unpatriotic and un-American.

The Apollo Project is not a perfect example or model, but the spirit in which it was undertaken is what we need now to meet our generation's greatest challenge so that we can ensure future generations' prosperity. Isn't that what America is all about?

Let's get together the greatest minds across the spectrum of energy, economics, health, and justice and get this done!

2 years after water crisis, Charleston paper endorses BOR National Monument

Mike Costello, WV Wilderness Coalition

In early January, West Virginians marked the two-year anniversary of the devastating chemical leak in the Kanawha Valley. In an editorial on January 17, the *Charleston Gazette Mail* reminded readers of the importance of protecting headwaters and urged designation of the Birthplace of Rivers National Monument.

"The historic 2014 pollution mess that ruined the public water supply for 300,000 West Virginians showed the crucial importance of protecting Appalachia's clean streams.

Therefore, we hope Congress or President Obama finally approve the proposed Birthplace of Rivers National Monument in Monongahela National Forest, giving special status to 123,000 acres where six West Virginia streams originate. They are the Elk, Greenbrier, Gauley, Cherry, Cranberry and Williams."

In the months following the water crisis of 2014, tourism businesses across the state were hit by a tarnished image of "Wild and Wonderful." The *Gazette* was one of the strongest voices to call for national monument designation to put the state back on the map as a destination for pure headwaters and pristine natural resources, and to protect those resources from myriad threats of industrial development.

This is the third time the *Gazette* has editorialized in support of the proposed monument. The *Clarksburg Exponent Telegram* and *Wheeling Intelligencer* join the *Gazette* as major newspapers in support of the initiative.

The *Gazette's* most recent endorsement comes at a critical time, when a broad coalition of West Virginia businesses, conservationists, sportsmen, religious groups and community leaders are urging President Obama to designate the Birthplace of Rivers National Monument in 2016.

"Either Congress or the president can prevent ... misfortune by declaring the national monument. We hope all West Virginia leaders press for action."

We thank the *Gazette* for their continued support, and echo their plea to all West Virginia leaders, and all West Virginians, to help make this historic conservation victory a reality.

End of Coal Industry as we know it still leaves a Legacy of Pain for us all

Jim Sconyers

We see the coal industry going into a tailspin. Mines are closing; miners are being laid off with little or no prospect of being hired back. State tax receipts have nosedived because we historically put way too many eggs in the coal basket.

Coal companies rush to declare bankruptcy, so they can wiggle out of their pension and health care commitments to current and retired workers.

But don't think this is only going to be painful for coal workers. We are all going to share in the financial pain — pain that could become extreme, to say the least.

The short version: Inadequate reclamation bonds by the coal companies are one more item forfeited when the company goes belly up. The bond is completely inadequate for the reclamation required, but the company and/or its bond and permit no longer exist. By law, the WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) takes over the reclamation — and even then, the work is often inadequate and the pollution continues.

This is the tip of a terrifying iceberg. It's a lose-lose.

The state legislature and WVDEP have painted themselves and the citizens into an untenable

corner. The legislature has recklessly allowed pathetically inadequate bonding amid its largesse to King Coal, and the DEP desperately tries to avoid biting the bullet of ultimate responsibility for reclamation. But the courts remind DEP that, "Sorry, you ARE now responsible for reclamation at the defunct mine." There are already many existing mines where this scenario is playing out, and many more are being added as one coal company after another closes up shop.

But the law requires that the reclamation be done. In many situations the polluting mine will need ongoing work — possibly for decades.

The outcome is predictable. Citizens will be presented with bills for billions of dollars — yes, that's billions.

Will this be the straw that breaks the state? Will West Virginia become the next Puerto Rico, unable to pay its obligations but required to do so?

Legacy — this is our legacy from a legislature always eager to give away the farm to King Coal, with catastrophic financial consequences that should have been all too obvious at the time.

I'm an elderly senior citizen. Maybe these chickens won't all come to roost in my lifetime. But they will in yours.



Monongahela Group

John Bird, Mon Group Chair

The Monongahela Group (Mon Group) of the WV Chapter is currently the only active regional Sierra Club group in West Virginia. Our mission is to provide Sierra Club members in Preston, Monongalia, Taylor, Marion, and Harrison counties with chances to gather to discuss environmental issues of concern, socialize and explore natural areas.

In the past, the Mon Group has sponsored environmental movies, a forum on the Clean Power Plan, rail-trail bike rides, Coopers Rock and Core Arboretum walks, letter writing, etc. Topics we might discuss include pipelines, shale, water, climate change, coal, renewable energy, roads and energy efficiency.

The newly elected Mon Group ExCom is excited to start a new year. We invite all Sierra Club members, as well as the general public, to attend our meetings and help us plan events, organize outings, and develop advocacy and outreach campaigns. We would love to hear your ideas and concerns, and we need your energy and support. We ask you to help us define and start to solve the environmental problems facing West Virginia.

Wed, March 9, 6:30 p.m.

Our first meeting is a social gathering at "Joe and Throw," 323 1/2 Adams St., Fairmont. This will be an informal social event and brainstorming session.

Wed, April 6, 6:30 p.m.

Our second event is a family night (bring the kids!) at the Fairmont Bowling Center, 1 Kirkway Drive, Fairmont.

All are welcome to both of these events. We hope you can join us. If you cannot attend these meetings, please send ideas to johnbird@frontier.com. Put Mon Group in the subject area. Make sure to like us on Facebook at "Mon Group of the WV Sierra Club."

WV Chapter ExCom

April 9, Shepherdstown

Aug. 13, Lewisburg

Nov. 12, Burnsville (Braxton), The 79er

All members are welcome to any Chapter ExCom meeting. For details, contact Chapter Chair Liz Wiles.

WV Enviro Council

The West Virginia Environmental Council, of which WV Sierra Club is a member, will hold its Annual Awards Dinner from **6-10 p.m. on Thursday, March 10**, at the Charleston Woman's Club.

The catered dinner will include vegetarian and meat dishes, salad and dessert. Beer and wine will be sold. The cost is \$20 per person or \$35 per couple. Awards will be presented for the Mother Jones, Chuck Chambers Public Service, Laura Forman Grassroots Activist of the Year, Linda Schnautz Environmental Courage, Youth Activism and a special volunteerism award.

Book Review

Beyond the Hundredth Meridian

John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West
by Wallace Stegner (1954)

Review by Richard Mier, Martinsburg

Start at the Canadian border, driving south on State Highway 3, and you'll pass through North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. You will be driving, more or less, on the 100th meridian, which cuts the lower 48 roughly in half. To your right, as you head south, are a million or so square miles of plains and mountains with an average yearly precipitation of about 11 inches. It is dry country and it is John Wesley Powell's country. This land was his life's preoccupation, and he knew it was mostly too dry to support agriculture unaided by irrigation. It is also the central landscape of this classic environmental history written by Wallace Stegner, and published in 1954.

Amidst this dry land, on the high desert of southeastern Oregon, sits the little town of Burns. Named by a Scot immigrant for poet Robert Burns, it is the county seat of Harney County. At around 10,000 square miles, Harney County is the ninth largest county by surface area in the U.S., slightly smaller than Denmark.

More than 7,600 people live and work in Harney County, and about 75 percent of the land is owned by the government, mostly the federal government. This includes the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Malheur, of course, will be famous for at least a while as the site of the recent occupation by a group calling themselves Citizens for Constitutional Freedom, led by Ammon Bundy. Bundy argued that the 7,000 square miles or so of federal land in Harney County was "ours," not (how to say this) ours.

His is not a new fight, this fight over land. Burns was founded in 1880, three years after passage of the Desert Land Act. It provided, at minimum cost, 640 acres (later 320) to anyone who could, within three years, irrigate them. It was, like the Homestead Act of 1862, designed to provide to the American yeoman farmer land upon which to farm, to make his way and settle the land. A worthy goal, and though some came to Harney County, fewer stayed. Beset by fraud from the beginning, it was a land grab. Today the average farm in Harney County is 3,000 acres, and the biggest cash crop is not corn or wheat, but cattle. The population of Burns peaked in 1960 at 3,523. Today it is 2,728.

This "second opening" of the West, in the years after the Civil War, was stoked by legislation like the Desert Land Act and was based upon a fraudulent misapprehension. Early maps had originally and accurately labeled large swatches of the arid western land, "The Great American Desert." By 1870, the desert was gone on the maps and was replaced by exuberant testimonials, boosterism, political opportunism, and the fortuitous presence of increased rainfall over the plains during the 1870s. It wasn't a desert, it was the Garden of Eden. That

"rain follows the plow" seemed for a time to be true, and thousands convinced themselves to, as Horace Greeley wrote in 1865, "go west."

Powell knew and wrote that it wouldn't end well, and it didn't. As Stegner writes, Powell used "bear language in a bull market." He had first achieved notoriety and influence by exploring the "plateau province" of western Colorado, Utah and southern Arizona, in 1868. He took four boats and nine men down the Green River, then the Grand and, eventually, for the first time ever by anyone, the Colorado.

Much more than a river runner, Powell was also a geologist, a surveyor, a mapmaker and an ethnologist. His 1878 "Report on the Lands of the Arid Regions" attempted to provide a scientific basis for policy-making as the federal government tried to deal with westward migration. He was the first and most prominent of governmental scientists, and as director of the U.S. Geological Survey from 1881 to 1894, Powell attempted to establish a General Plan of scientifically based and socially informed development in the West. He was not successful. Trying to forestall settlement destructive to both land and settler, he ran afoul of self-oriented political forces beyond his control.

"Beyond the Hundredth Meridian," which tells this story, is part of the canon of environmental writing. And though it's been 60 years since publication, it reads like it could have been written yesterday. A story of an exceptional person, it is also a tale of exploration and the history of a place.

Perhaps most importantly, it shows how one talented person can invent a new way of looking at governmental responsibilities, how a government can and should serve its people. Powell didn't believe that the West was the Garden of Eden, but he didn't believe it was the Great American Desert either. He believed that geography and humanity could coexist and mutually prosper. We didn't listen then, and still aren't listening very well, but he showed us the way.

Stegner is, of course, one of America's great 20th-century writers. He writes things like this: "The river went past them smooth and taffy-colored, spinning in quiet whirlpools, sucking at its mud banks." He obviously likes this man he is writing about and writes passionately about Powell's ideas and the West they both loved. It's still a great read.



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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 May/June issue

April 8

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.

Help Count Eagles at Pipestem

The most beautiful chorus that harkens that spring is here is that of the “spring peeper.” It signals the end of winter and the arrival of spring. Found in ponds and many watering holes, these amphibians make a beautiful noise that begins with one, then two, then many others joining in for a loud spring serenade. After a long cold winter, all creatures begin to come alive, and we humans long to hit the trail and escape into the wild places.

I saw an eagle a few days ago soaring along the Kanawha River at my home. I occasionally catch a glimpse of these magnificent birds along the river here. No other bird inspires such emotions as this symbol of our nation. Decimated by pesticides decades ago, it has made a dramatic comeback in the lower 48. Today there are nesting pairs on many rivers and lakes in West Virginia.

On January 9, Pipestem State Park hosted its annual Eagle Survey. Sixty-seven participants observed 33 bald eagles and four golden eagles. I was there on a WV Sierra Club hike along the Bluestone River with three others. Though we hiked 7 miles, none of us saw any eagles that day.

Another Eagle Survey hosted by Pipestem State Park is set for March 5. To participate, you may call the park or just come along on a WV Sierra Club hike along the Bluestone River with us. Hopefully, we will see some eagles this trip.

Check out our upcoming outings online at westvirginia.sierraclub.org, at Meetup.com under “West Virginia Chapter Sierra Club” in the Morgantown area, and “WV Sierra Club - New River” in the Fayetteville area. Outings are also listed on Active Southern West Virginia (activeswv.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.

Outings List

Please contact the designated leader for each outing to sign up or to get additional details.

Sat, March 5

Day Hike: Bluestone State Park

rated easy — This is an easy 7- to 8-mile hike along the Bluestone River. We will also be participating in Pipestem’s Eagle Survey, so bring your binoculars.

Leader: Mike Price, 304-400-8354, mikeprice54@suddenlink.net

Nearest town: Hinton, WV

Web info: bluestonesp.com

Sat, March 19

Day Hike: Valley Falls State Park

rated strenuous — A 7-mile loop hike through the park with a stop at the waterfalls along the way. There are a few steep/rocky sections, so this hike is not recommended for beginners. Wear appropriate hiking boots and clothing. Bring a snack and water. Trekking poles can be helpful.

Leader: Aaron Vedock, 304-365-4396, amvedock@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Fairmont, WV

Web info: valleyfallsstatepark.com

Sat, March 19

Day Hike: Appalachian Trail in PA

rated strenuous — This 7-mile hike along the AT will start at Pen Mar County Park, MD, which has beautiful views of the valley below. We will cross the state line and hike north to the Old Forge Picnic Area. Please register with the leader before March 15 so we can arrange shuttles. The hike plus shuttles will take more than three hours, so plan accordingly.

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

Nearest town: Waynesboro, PA

Web info: appalachiantrail.org/home/explore-the-trail

Sat, March 26

Day Hike: New River Gorge, Glade Creek

rated moderate — This 6-mile hike, out and back, will take us up Glade Creek of the New River, where we will see beautiful waterfalls along the way. Meet at the Glade Creek Campground.

Leader: Mike Price, 304-400-8354, mikeprice54@suddenlink.net

Nearest town: Glen Jean, WV

Web info: nps.gov/neri

Sat, April 2

Day Hike: Snake Hill WMA

rated moderate — This is a 6- to 7-mile loop hike with elevation changes that connects several scenic views, including Table Rock, Cheat View, and several lesser known views along Snake Hill’s canyon rim. Acquired in 1996 by the State of West Virginia, the SHWMA is across the Cheat River Gorge from Coopers Rock State Park.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: coopersrockstateforest.com/wvdrn.gov/Hunting/WMAMap.shtm

Sun, April 3

Day Hike: New River Gorge, Southside

rated moderate — This 7-mile hike on the Southside Trail in the gorge allows for great views of the river and gorge. We will shuttle between Thurmond and Cunard. Meet at the historical town of Thurmond.

Leader: Mike Price, 304-400-8354, mikeprice54@suddenlink.net

Nearest town: Glen Jean, WV

Web info: nps.gov/neri

Sat, April 9

Day Hike: Appalachian Trail in MD

rated moderate — This 6-mile hike will begin at the AT trailhead on US-40, in Maryland. We will then hike south on the AT and pick up the Bartraan Hill Trail to Greenbrier State Park. We will loop around the lake, stopping for lunch at the lake’s picnic area. Pack a lunch and water.

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

Nearest town: Hagerstown, MD

Web info: appalachiantrail.org/home/explore-the-trail

Sat, April 23

Day Hike: New River Gorge

rated moderate — This 5- to 6-mile hike at the Gorge starts at Fayetteville Town Park and continues on the trails out to the Long Point Trail, which ends at a rock outcropping with beautiful views of the New River Gorge Bridge.

Leader: Mike Price, 304-400-8354, mikeprice54@suddenlink.net

Nearest town: Fayetteville, WV

Web info: nps.gov/neri

Sat, April 23

Adopt-a-Trail Spring Cleanup:

Coopers Rock State Forest

not rated — The WV Sierra Club will lead a spring cleanup on the Intermediate Cross Country Ski Trail in the park. Volunteers seeking community service are encouraged to participate. Work will include cleaning out ditches and culverts and clearing trails. Volunteers should wear sturdy boots and bring gloves, water and snacks. Volunteers must sign a Sierra Club Liability Waiver and a DNR Volunteer Work Program Agreement.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: coopersrockstateforest.com/coopersrock.org

Sat, April 30

Day Hike: Watoga State Park

rated moderate — This will be a 5- to 6-mile hike on some of the older trails in the park that are being restored. Come out and enjoy this beautiful park.

Leader: Beth Little, 304-653-4277, blittle@citynet.net

Nearest town: Marlinton, WV

Web info: watoga.com

Sat, April 30

Day Hike: George Washington NF

rated strenuous — This 10-mile hike begins at the Wolf Gap Campground in VA and concludes at the Half Moon Trailhead on Trout Run Road in Wardensville, WV. We will hike to the top of Big Schloss. Please register before April 26 to arrange for shuttles. Allow 4 ½ hours or more for this hike.

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

Nearest town: Wardensville, WV

Web info: hikingupward.com/GWNF/BigSchloss

Fri-Sun, May 20-22

Outings Leaders Event: Holly River SP

not rated — WV Sierra Club Outings Leaders, both new and experienced, will meet at Holly River State Park to discuss the state’s outings program and hike on trails in the park. All members interested in leading outings for the WV Chapter are encouraged to attend. Please RSVP before March 15.

Outings Chair: Mike Price, 304-400-8354, mikeprice54@suddenlink.net

Nearest town: Pickens, WV

Web info: hollyriver.com

Abbreviations Used

AT	Appalachian Trail
NF	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
WMA	Wildlife Management Area



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Mon Group of the WV Sierra Club
WVSC Marcellus Shale Campaign





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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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