

M Mountain State Sierran

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Mountain Valley Pipeline Reacts to Negative EPA Comments, Announces Carbon Offsets BY AILEEN CURFMAN

The Environmental Protection Agency has finished reviewing a permit that would allow the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) to cross hundreds of streams in West Virginia and Virginia. Citing the potential for lasting environmental harm, the EPA has recommended that the Army Corps of Engineers not grant the permit.

The pipeline's route takes it over steep mountains, where rains wash away soil exposed by construction activities. The muddy runoff water ends up in streams, harming or even killing the small creatures that live in them.

In a May 27 letter, EPA Wetlands Branch Chief wrote, "EPA has identified a number of substantial concerns with the project as currently proposed, including whether all feasible avoidance and minimization measures have been undertaken, deficient characterization of the aquatic resources to be impacted, insufficient assessment of secondary and cumulative impacts and potential for significant degradation, and the proposed mitigation."

The letter became public after Appalachian Mountain Advocates, a law firm based in Lewisburg, WV, requested its release under

the Freedom of Information Act.

Shortly after the EPA comments became public, MVP announced a plan to purchase carbon offsets to make its operational emissions carbon neutral for the first ten years of service. The plan would include construction of a methane abatement project at a coal mine in Virginia and cleanup of abandoned mining and gas sites in West Virginia. MVP would also agree to purchase carbon offsets from a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources, the world's largest generator of wind and solar energy. The carbon credits would be verified annually and would meet requirements for California, which has the strictest carbon capture standards in the US.

When a company purchases carbon offsets, the purchase funds a project elsewhere that reduces greenhouse gases. The practice is beneficial compared to doing nothing, but it



Protesters gathered in Hancock, MD in May 2019 to protest pipeline construction there and in the Eastern Panhandle.

PHOTO BY AILEEN CURFMAN.

may encourage the company to avoid taking its own measures to reduce greenhouse gases. It is unclear how a company that is in the business of producing a fuel that creates greenhouse gases would make a profit while working to reduce greenhouse gases.

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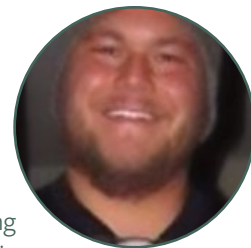
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SIERRACLUB.ORG/WEST-VIRGINIA

LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIR

No Climate, No Deal— Go Bold On Infrastructure!

BY ERIC ENGLE



The North American West is suffering massive, ongoing drought conditions, crippling heat waves, and devastating wildfires. Large parts of Germany and other European countries are suffering extreme precipitation events and flooding, as is central China. The jet stream in the Northern Hemisphere has collapsed into stalled eddies, leading to ever more chaotic weather as the poles warm at a much faster rate than the rest of the world—something many climate scientists hadn't expected for decades. We are in a climate crisis!

As I write this in July, much more extreme weather is on the horizon. Hurricane season is coming (though named storms have already occurred) and, with the present condition of the Northern Jet Stream, there's no telling what kind of winter weather we may be in for later this year. You might wonder, then, what is going on in D.C.? What have they got to say on Capitol Hill about all of this? The answer to these questions is a very grim “not enough.”

Senator Joe Manchin III of West Virginia is touting a bipartisan infrastructure bill he's pretty proud of and saying he won't stand in the way of a budget resolution to allow for discussion of a companion infrastructure bill that could only pass using budget reconciliation, because no Republican senators will support it. [Note that at press time, a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure had passed the Senate.] There are just a couple of problems here: 1) Manchin's treasured bipartisan bill is a dud, even if it could actually pass with Republican support, and 2) the Senate Parliamentarian may not go for everything we desperately need in the companion bill. (Democrats allow themselves to be beholden to the Parliamentarian's will unnecessarily, since the role—advisory only—decides what can pass muster under budget reconciliation rules and therefore cannot be filibustered and can pass with a simple majority.)

With regard to Manchin's bipartisan compromise bill, the organization Friends of the Earth finds that the bill “authorizes \$28.8 billion in nuclear, carbon capture, and dirty hydrogen compared to only \$410 million in direct authorizations for wind, solar, geothermal, and tidal, a ratio of 70:1 dirty to clean energy.” Friends of the Earth states that “even when combined with the bill's storage and efficiency programs, Manchin's proposal still amounts to twice the spending on dirty energy than on clean.”

Nuclear and carbon capture are extremely expensive. Nuclear comes with major waste, health, and safety problems (e.g., meltdown risks and potential for weapons-grade enrichment), and the technology for scalable carbon capture that has been developed since the 1970s with no truly scalable or affordable results. (Like nuclear fusion, the technology always seems to be decades into the future.)

Hydrogen shows promise, but only when derived from renewable energy used to break apart water molecules—so-called “green hydrogen.” Manchin's bill also contains funds for high-carbon-producing processes like steel and cement manufacturing, but these might be considered expensive pseudo-solutions.

We need unprecedented investment in U.S. infrastructure, including the care economy and investment in poor communities and communities of color that have long suffered from environmental injustices. We need union labor to deliver the tangibles from these investments. Tell Senator Manchin to abolish the filibuster and give us the infrastructure legislation we deserve!

West Virginia Sierra Club Chapter Directory

Email contact for all officers and staff: sierraclub.wv@gmail.com

Term ends at first meeting of indicated year.

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Paving the Road to Hell Through the Ohio River Valley

BY ERIC ENGLE

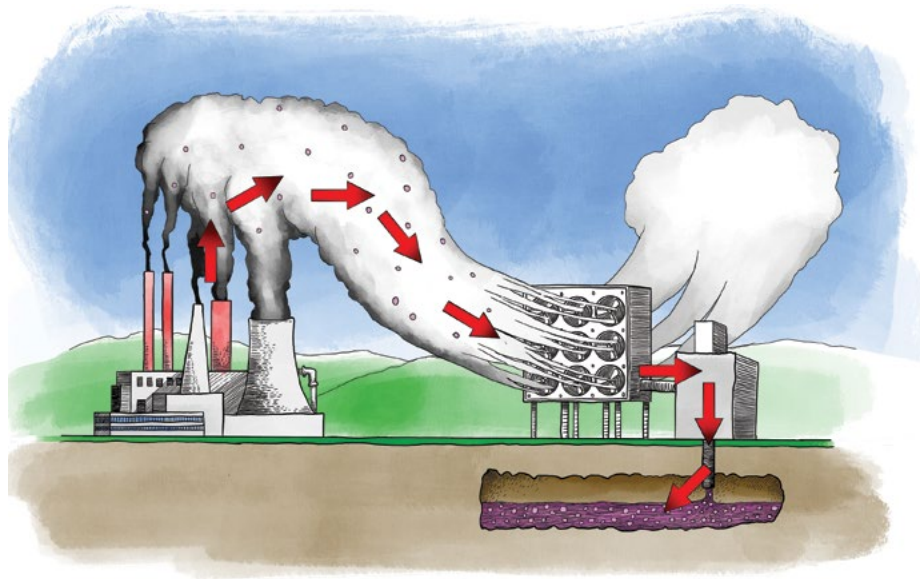


ILLUSTRATION ISTOCK / IG PHOTOGRAPHY.

Carbon Capture: Solution to climate change or just another pipe dream?

The old saying goes, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” It’s cliché, but it’s once again applicable to a situation unfolding in the Ohio River Valley and across the U.S. A report from July 18 in the online publication DeSmog discusses how “[a]n organization run by former Obama-era Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, with the backing of the AFL-CIO, a federation of 56 labor unions, has created a policy ‘blueprint’ to build a nationwide pipeline network capable of carrying a gigaton of captured carbon dioxide (CO₂).”

At first this sounds promising, right? Well, let’s look a little more closely. As the DeSmog piece states further down, “Instead, the proposed CO₂ pipeline network would be used to offer a lifeline to existing fossil fuel power plants. In Appalachia, for example, 90 percent of the carbon emissions the plan seeks to capture would come from existing coal-fired power plants in the Ohio River Valley. Those plants, none of which are currently outfitted with the costly upgrades needed for capturing carbon, are already facing difficult questions about their ability to compete economically with wind and solar energy.”

The article continues: “Right now, all of the world’s existing Carbon Capture, Usage, and Storage (CCUS) projects combined have the capacity to remove just 37 million metric tons of carbon per year—a tiny sliver of the 1,000 million metric tons (or one gigaton) that [this project] proposes.”

Carbon capture projects have been in development since the 1970s. For 50 years the projects have been, and continue to be, too expensive and the technology not far enough along. Even what little carbon dioxide actually gets captured is often sold to the oil industry to help recover more oil! So, the plan here, orchestrated by fossil fuels flunky Ernest Moniz and his cohort, in conjunction with the Biden administration Department of Energy, is to build a massive pipeline network, larger than the network that already exists for oil and gas, at an estimated cost of hundreds of billions of dollars, for CO₂ we can’t safely and efficiently capture. And what we do capture will, in all likelihood, be used to keep coal-fired power plants polluting, more gas and oil flowing, and therefore to delay the complete phaseout of fossil fuels all the longer.

“From a purely economic perspective, [carbon capture and sequestration] does not make sense,” the Center for International Environmental Law is quoted as saying in an earlier DeSmog report. “The simpler, surer, and cheaper solution is to end this and similar subsidies for the fossil fuel economy and invest the savings in accelerating the transition to clean energy.”

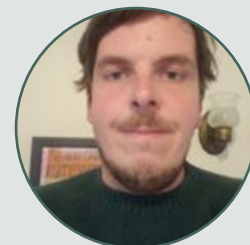
I live with my family and work in the Mid-Ohio River Valley. I’m going to work with organizations like the West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club, Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action (an organization I chair), and numerous others to fight this development every step of the way. Carbon capture is not a timely, affordable, or practical answer to the climate crisis, and the Ohio River Valley has had enough of fossil fuels, petrochemicals, plastics, and other hazardous chemicals and substances. We can, we must, and we will do better than this! 🍌



BlueGreen Alliance:

Now Is the Time for Major Change

Earlier this year, I had the honor of accepting the position of Appalachian Regional Field Organizer for BlueGreen Alliance, a coalition that unites labor unions and environmental organizations to solve today's environmental challenges in ways that create and maintain quality jobs and build a clean, thriving, and equitable economy.



BY DAN TAYLOR

As an ExComm member for the West Virginia State Sierra Club, this was particularly exciting, as Sierra Club is a founding member of the BGA coalition. Our work has focused on delivering real results for working families and our environment, including lifting up President Biden's Build Back Better agenda.

West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin has helped negotiate a bipartisan infrastructure package, which does some positive things such as investing in public transit, electric vehicle infrastructure, and lead pipe replacement. However, we feel that it does not go far enough to meet the needs of West Virginia on climate, infrastructure, labor, or good jobs.

We believe the time to act is now. Working people and their families need and want immediate, bold action, not half-measures—as does our climate. We must seize this window of opportunity and push for a budget reconciliation package that builds on the proposed American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan. By investing in high-road labor requirements, equity, and environmental standards throughout the economy, we can strengthen and improve West Virginians' earnings, as well as working and living conditions.

We can help workers and their families overcome the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, while creating millions of high-quality jobs in clean manufacturing,

clean energy, restoration, reclamation and resilience, the care economy, and the modernization of our infrastructure around the country. Importantly, these investments must be prioritized for the communities that need them most.

We must be as bold and transformative as our current moment demands and reject short-sighted half-measures that would delay or weaken economic recovery. Anything less than full commitment may fracture the broad constituencies and organizations that are unified in support of ambitious investment.

We are urging our senators and representatives to act now on:



Investing in our infrastructure, including modernizing our schools, hospitals, and transit systems; delivering broadband internet access to rural communities; modernizing our energy grid and upgrading the state's water systems; and protecting communities through infrastructure resiliency. These investments can provide a much-needed jolt to our economy while delivering good jobs, improving public health, and bringing crucial climate mitigation efforts to communities.

Supporting and retooling America's manufacturing sector with a major reinvestment in fortifying and transforming heavy industry to reduce emissions and build more of the clean products, materials, and technologies of the future here—all while providing more pathways into good, family-supporting jobs. We cannot cede American manufacturing jobs to our global competitors because we failed to be forward-thinking in boosting the sector for both the short and long terms.

Helping our communities and workers thrive as our energy system transitions. This means investing in communities, protecting the health and wellbeing of workers, incentivizing new development, providing wage and benefit support to dislocated workers, and fully funding cleanup and reclamation work in our state.

Prioritizing equitable rebuilding and investments in communities most in need, including low-income communities, communities of color, and deindustrialized communities. This should include support for workers hardest hit by changes in the energy economy and coal miners afflicted by black lung. The response to this crisis should deliver a healthier, cleaner, and more equitable future.

Rebuilding the public sector and investing in social infrastructure and the care economy. The crises we face have spotlighted the critical importance of investing in front-line workers who keep our communities thriving, such as first responders, educators, nurses, public health and social workers, safety net program providers, home care assistants, utility technicians, and child care workers. We need to rebuild the capacity of the public sector, the health care system, education, and community-based services to prepare for and respond to disasters like COVID-19 today or future crises like climate change.

Providing critical long-term support and protections for workers. Workers and communities cannot deal with crises alone—whether they are disastrous hurricanes, wildfires, or global pandemics. We must rebuild and expand the social safety net, including pensions, health care, and retirement security, and ensure and enforce worker and community health and safety. This should start with passing the PRO Act. These policies will help ensure that working families are better equipped to handle the next financial, health, or any other crisis we may face.

If we invest at the scale needed to truly build back better from the impacts of the pandemic, we can build a stronger, fairer, and cleaner economy that creates and sustains the high-quality jobs of the future and makes our communities and workers more resilient to crises.

make our voices heard given the position of our elected officials in Washington. Make your voice heard and let them know that our climate and our economy require bold solutions and bold action. To learn more or to volunteer, go to www.bluegreenalliance.org or contact me at dtaylor@bluegreenalliance.org. 

As part of his new role in the BlueGreen Alliance, Dan Taylor will be leaving the Mountain State and moving to Richmond. The West Virginia Chapter thanks Dan for his service on the ExComm and looks forward to working with him in his new position.

FROM THE CONSERVATION CHAIR

WV Activists Organize to Fight Climate Change



WEST VIRGINIA CLIMATE ALLIANCE

WV Climate Alliance Works for Transition in the State

Over the last few months a new coalition has helped organize climate action in West Virginia. The West Virginia Climate Alliance is a broad-based coalition of almost 20 environmental, faith-based, civil rights, and civic organizations, as well as other groups focused on climate change. Members of the Alliance work together to provide science-based education on climate change to West Virginia citizens and policymakers. We seek to advance climate solutions that focus on three pillars of reform:

- 1. Climate justice for communities that have borne the brunt of our current fossil-fuel economy,**
- 2. A true transition for coal miners and other fossil fuel workers likely to be impacted by the transition to a low-carbon economy, and**
- 3. A significant reduction in greenhouse gases in accordance with the findings of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.**

One useful product is A Citizen's Guide to Climate Change (available at: www.wvclimatealliance.org/resources). This document describes in a layman's terms the causes of climate change, the impacts both here in West Virginia and globally, and some solutions. If you are not a scientist but want simple, credible facts, this guide is for you.

The Alliance meets regularly via video conference, and I have participated on behalf of the West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club. The Alliance is coordinating meetings with Senators Manchin and Capito to discuss how infrastructure investments can simultaneously help West Virginia thrive while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A series of town hall meetings is underway to highlight the opportunities these investments represent, including how to create jobs and help with a true transition for fossil fuel-dependent communities. West Virginia cannot afford to be left behind.

For more information, check out their web page at: www.wvclimatealliance.org or contact me at: jkotcon@gmail.com.

Carbon Capture and Sequestration Rules at WVDEP

Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) is an expensive and complex group of technologies designed to capture carbon dioxide and store it deep in the Earth so that it cannot contribute to climate change. While the basic methods have been around for decades, they are energy-intensive and expensive. Most frequently, these are discussed for fossil-fuel power plants and other large sources of carbon dioxide, but newer technologies are exploring ways to capture carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere.

In most cases, CCS is not economically feasible, although some pilot projects are in operation and use the carbon dioxide for "enhanced oil recovery." These operations are described as "Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage" (CCUS) and are usually only feasible if the source of carbon dioxide is located near oil or gas fields, since long-distance pipeline transport undercuts the economics of CCUS.

In West Virginia a pilot project was conducted in 2009-2011 at the Mountaineer Power Plant in Mason County. This project captured only



BY JIM KOTCON

a small percentage of the Mountaineer Plant emissions. A proposal to scale this up to capture more of the emissions was dropped due to economics and the uncertain regulatory future.

West Virginia's political leaders continue to tout CCS as the salvation of the coal industry. The U.S. EPA adopted rules in 2010, and the WV Department of Environmental Protection is now proposing to adopt similar rules to regulate CCS. If approved by EPA, the state would have "primacy" and have authority to issue permits and regulate CCS wells.

The Sierra Club comments on these rules recognize that West Virginia's proposed rule is nearly identical to the federal rule. The proposed rule (47-CSR-13) creates a new category of underground injection wells (Class VI) for CCS. The rule's authority is based in the Safe Drinking Water Act, and we believe that a more comprehensive regulatory program is needed to address issues such as property rights for "pore space," transfer of liability, and other legal issues not addressed by the proposed rule.

WVDEP held a comment period last summer and will submit the proposed rule to the WV Legislature for approval. That means our issues will still be active when the Legislature convenes in January.

To get involved, or for more information contact jkotcon@gmail.com.

Distributed Organizing Campaign Underway

The Sierra Club's Organizing Department is providing assistance for a "Distributed Organizing" campaign in West Virginia. Distributed Organizing is a method of organizing that is ideal for activists and citizens concerned about specific causes who live some distance from Congressional offices or other lobbying targets.

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Greenbrier River Trail Achieves National Recognition

BY MEL WAGGY

Like many Sierra Club members, much of my free time is spent biking, hiking, boating, birding, and cross-country skiing, mostly on public lands.

In West Virginia, my favorite place is the Greenbrier River Trail, a 78-mile former railroad line converted into a recreation trail for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Located between Cass and Caldwell, it is the longest trail of its kind in West Virginia. The trail provides many breathtaking views as it passes through several small towns, crosses 35 bridges, goes through two tunnels, and cuts through some of the state's most remote areas. The wildflowers, geological formations, wildlife, and views are spectacular throughout the length of the trail.

The West Virginia State Park System manages the trail with assistance from the Greenbrier River Trail Association (GRTA), a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to protecting and maintaining the trail as well as promoting its use. Recently, the board of GRTA applied to get the trail designated as a National Recreation Trail (NRT) under our National Trails System, which is administered by the National Park Service. To qualify for this designation a trail must be maintained in good, safe condition, be open to the public, be in compliance with land use and environmental laws, and have no gaps along its length. In June 2021 GRTA announced that the Greenbrier River Trail had been named to the NRT system.

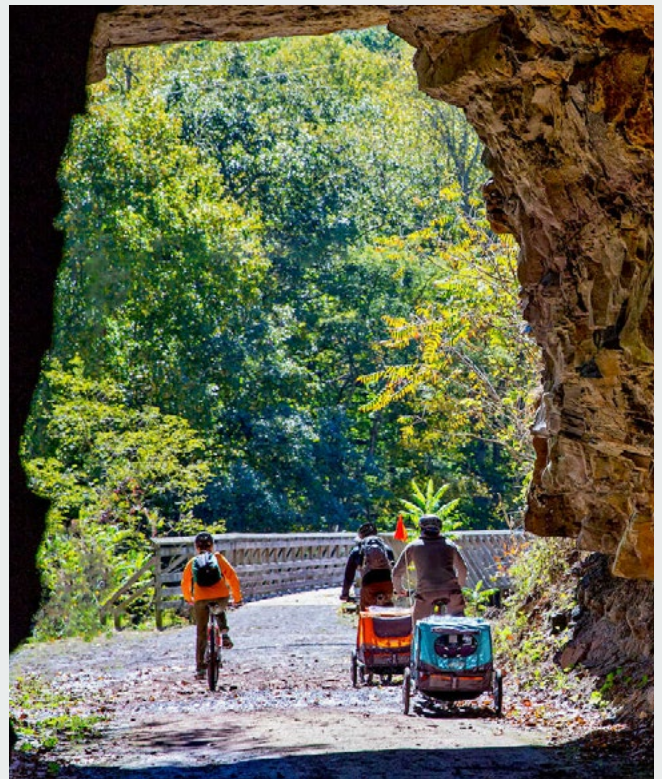
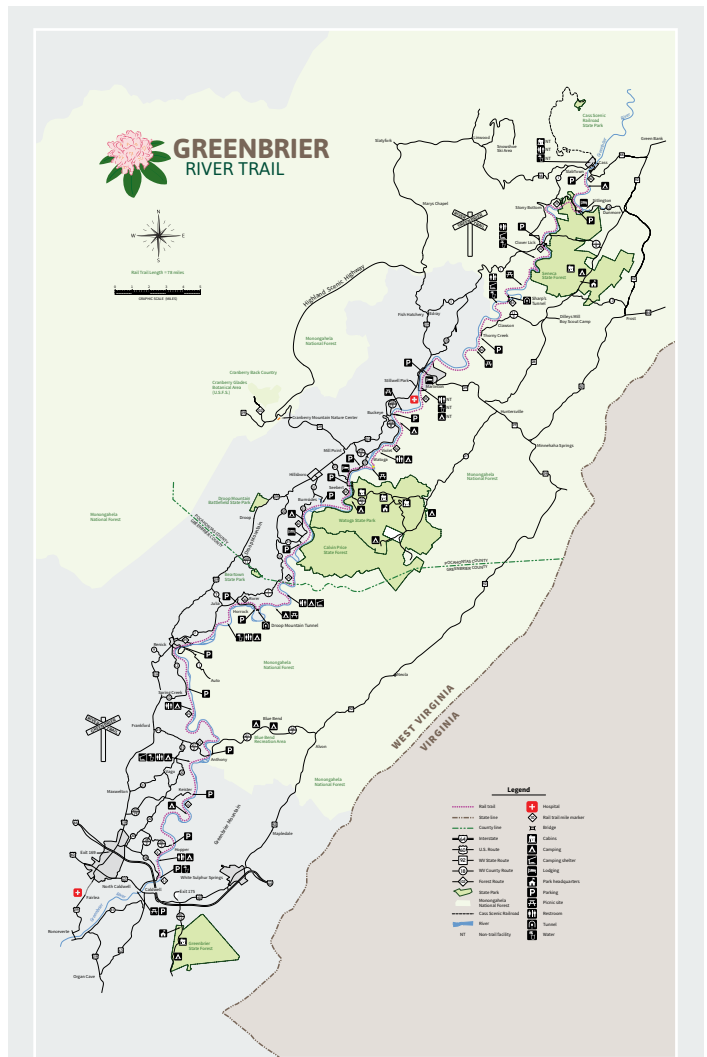
What does this designation mean for the Greenbrier River Trail and its users? The likely impacts will be increased visitor use. This designation tends to raise awareness of and interest in trails and increase their status among trails. The trail will be promoted on the American Trails website at no cost to our state or the GRTA. Unfortunately, increased visitation does not mean increased funding; however, an NRT designation will help when applying for grants. Additional benefits from this designation may include economic growth in bordering communities.

There are many places where you can access the trail, and a map can be found on the GRTA website. If you're an outdoor recreation enthusiast or nature lover, the Greenbrier Trail has something to offer. If you are interested in learning more about our National Trails System or the GRTA please go to www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailsystem/index.htm or www.greenbrierrivertrail.com.

Happy trails to you until we meet again! 🍃

The Greenbrier River Trail, newly recognized as a National Recreational Trail, provides car-free recreation along a former busy railroad line.

PHOTO AND MAP COURTESY OF GREENBRIER RIVER TRAIL ASSOCIATION.



What Can One Person Do: Reduce Your Energy Use!



BY AILEEN CURFMAN



PHOTO BY ISTOCK / SVETL.

In the following addition to Aileen Curfman's series on personal environmentalism, fictional Simon and his WVU housemates determine that a little up-front cost and weekend work will result in long-term saving while helping the planet.

Simon looked up from his computer and stared out the window at the lights of Morgantown far below. His room, in the attic of an old house at the top of a steep hill, had a great view. A gust of wind blasted against the window, rattling the glass in its dilapidated wooden frame. November was far off, and the trees outside the house still had leaves, but a chilly draft made Simon shiver. He zipped up his hoodie and thought about the essay he needed to write. Absolutely uninspired and completely stuck, he headed downstairs to get a snack.

The kitchen door opened and his roommates burst in. "Geez, it feels like December out there!" exclaimed Todd.

"Guys," Simon announced, "I grew up in rickety old houses like this one. If we don't take action, our utility bills are going to eat up all our spending money."

"So, we're going to spend all our cash on weatherstripping and caulk?" asked Jeremy.

"The landlord certainly isn't going to do it. And the stuff we need is cheaper than our heating bill will be if we don't do it. We moved a dozen times when I was a kid. I know exactly what to buy."

"Simon's right," Todd said. "Saturday's game is too far away, and none of us are planning to go. Let's go to the hardware store, get the stuff, and spend the afternoon doing the job." Jeremy nodded in agreement.

The decision made, Simon climbed the steps to his chilly attic room, sat down and confidently typed the title for his essay, "Reduce Greenhouse Gases and Save Money Too—It's Easy If You Know How."

About 20% of U.S. energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions stem from heating, cooling, and powering households. Lowering your thermostat saves fuel, but it isn't all about sacrifice—you can take advantage of winter sunshine by opening curtains and allowing the sun to warm up the room. Use inexpensive insulating materials. If you can sew, use quilted fabric to make curtains for those chilly nights. Replace the filters in your heating system. Drain the sediment from your water heater so that it will run more efficiently. If you have a room you rarely enter, turn down the heat in that room and close the door. Use a draft guard at this doorway as well as outside doors. You can probably think of more ways to reduce your carbon footprint. 🍃



Learn some tips, use the EPA's handy calculator to evaluate the carbon footprint of your home, and study the science with these resources:

- **BOB VILA:**
tinyurl.com/bob-vila-home-winterization
- **NRDC:**
tinyurl.com/nrdc-save-energy
- **SMART ENERGY:**
tinyurl.com/smart-energy-save
- **JUST ENERGY:**
tinyurl.com/just-energy-winter
- **PNAS:**
tinyurl.com/pnas-carbon

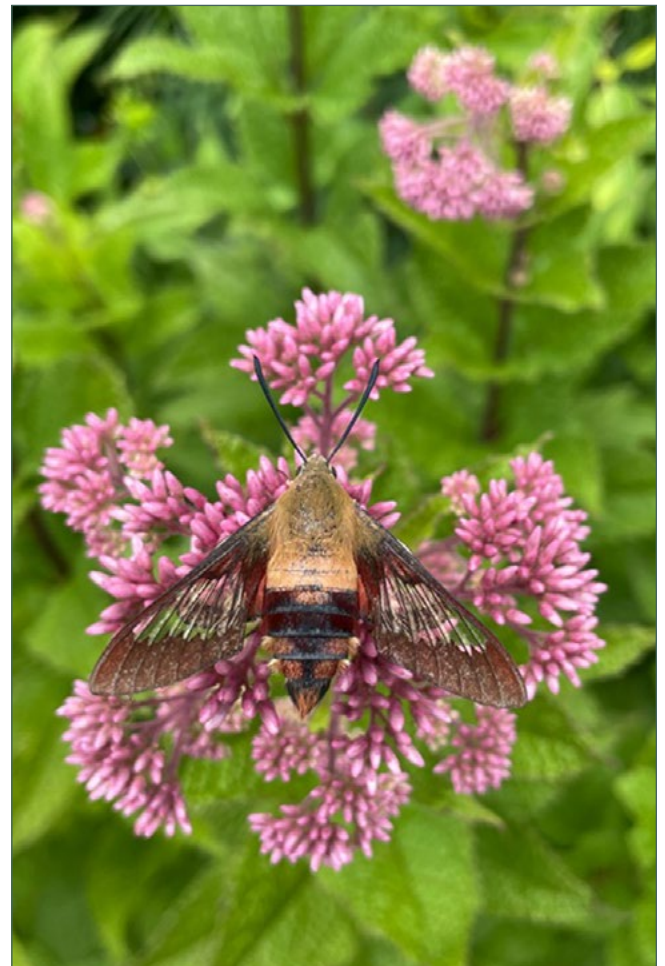
Pre-order your 2022 Sierra Club calendars now

BY CANDICE ELLIOTT

Ordering Sierra Club calendars from the WV Chapter beautifies your wall or desk and contributes to our work in West Virginia. To get a better idea of how many Club calendars I should order this year, I am asking members and friends to contact me before September 20 if you would like to purchase them from the chapter.

As usual, two styles will be available: the monthly Wilderness calendar to hang on your wall (retails for \$14.95; our price \$13) or the weekly Engagement calendar for your desk or bag (retails for \$15.95; our price \$14). If you live within 25 miles of Morgantown, or have occasion to pass through, you need not pay for shipping, as I will arrange to deliver your calendars myself. Otherwise, I ask that you include \$7 with your payment to help defray the cost of mailing them. Payment may be made either by sending me a check (made out to: WV Sierra Club) or by using the Donate button (via PayPal) on our Chapter webpage and entering "Calendars" in the Notes section.

You need not pay at this time, but I would like to know how many of each style you are likely to purchase so I can be sure to order the correct quantities. Please send me your expected order along with your address and phone number, either via email (celliot2@comcast.net) or postal mail (414 Tyrone Avery Rd, Morgantown WV 26508). I will arrange for delivery in October and November when I have calendars in hand.



Clockwise from top left: Cardinal flower, taken at Mason Dixon Historical Park, Core, WV; Hummingbird moth enjoys Joe Pye weed at the West Virginia Botanical Gardens, near Morgantown; Lotus pond, Palace of Gold, Moundville.

PHOTOS BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN.

WVU's Sierra Student Coalition Advances Environmental Activism on Campus

In the midst of an unconventional year, WVU's Sierra Student Coalition (SSC) has continued to make changes at the University.

**BY SAMANTHA SPECTOR
AND DANIELLE WITT**

One of the main areas of focus during the spring semester was to break free from single-use plastics. The club created a Break Free from Plastic petition calling for President Gordon Gee to sign a pledge committing to action. The petition yielded over 800 signatures from faculty and students. Since in-person activities were limited, social media campaigns were used to spread the club's message.

The officers of WVU's SSC are enthusiastic about the coming semester and have many ideas for events. We hope to conduct a waste audit, educate about recycling, arrange recruitment events, organize a Sierra Swing fundraising event, host trash clean-ups, push the Break Free from Plastic Pledge, and work with the University on implementing compost systems. WVU's SSC will also be volunteering with the Morgantown Green Team to organize a 5K to raise awareness for climate change.

In honor of Earth Day, WVU's SSC will work with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) staff and committed volunteers during Canaan Valley's annual Earth Day celebration. This event is hosted by the West Virginia Nature Conservancy, a conservation group that has protected over 125,000 acres in the state, and the Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative. WVU's SSC attends Canaan Valley's tree planting every year in an attempt to help close vegetation gaps between the valley floor and surrounding ridges. The tree planting event occurs in two sessions, totaling six hours, with a lunch break in between. TNC staff and volunteers work together to plant thousands of locally-sourced Canaan balsam fir and red spruce seedlings. These seedlings are planted in the least visited areas of the park, where they will improve habitats for rare animals and plant species, improve hydrology, increase water percolation into the underlying bedrock, restore carbon-rich soils, and reduce erosion.



SSC looks forward to meeting individuals with similar interests and welcoming them into the chapter. With in-person activities starting up again, the group has high hopes of conducting an Earth Day celebration this year. Last year, because in-person celebrations were impossible, the Office of Sustainability put together a virtual Earth Week. Students were able to engage in a virtual 5K, in which they could also engage in an in-person campus scavenger hunt. There were many sustainability conversations students could take part in, along with several small, in-person activities. Normally, SSC hosts an annual Earth Day celebration on the Mountainlair Green with live music, a raffle, tables for small businesses and other environmental clubs, and free food and beverages. The upcoming school year has many exciting opportunities for people of all interests to come together and fight for a greener campus. 🍃

Above: Samantha Spector (left), 2021-22 President for WVU's SSC. She has been a member of the student chapter since 2019 and is studying environmental soil and water sciences with a minor in conservation ecology. Danielle Witt (right), 2021-22 Vice President for WVU's SSC. She has been a member of the student chapter since 2020 and is currently studying animal and nutritional sciences.

At right, clockwise: Treasurer Jillian Blair (left) and President Samantha Spector (right) hosting a table for WVU's SSC outside of Woodburn Circle in April 2021. PHOTO TAKEN BY JAMES LAMP. Alexandra Bunn participating in Canaan Valley's annual tree planting for Earth Day in 2021. PHOTO TAKEN BY SAMANTHA SPECTOR. Canaan Valley's Earth Day Celebration featuring Samantha Spector participating in their annual tree planting in 2019. PHOTO TAKEN BY LILY WALSH. WVU's Sierra Student Coalition hosted a clean-up at Whitmore Park in Morgantown, WV. The members cleaned up around eight bags of trash in April, 2021. PHOTO TAKEN BY SAMANTHA SPECTOR.



MVP | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Carbon offsets do not address other environmental damage from a company's activities. Along MVP's route, if the Army Corps of Engineers grants the pipeline its water quality permit, the candy darter fish and its companions will continue to suffer and die.

For more information, see:

- www.virginiamercury.com/blog-va/epa
- www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210712005218/en
- www.wired.com (search carbon offsets)

In late-breaking news, two protesters were arrested at an MVP site in Greenbrier County. Anna Grace Woolly, 19, of Viles, North Carolina and Thomas George Tackett, 25, of Jackson, Missouri, have been charged with Trespassing on Property, Obstructing an Officer, and Conspiracy.

Also, Monroe County residents are reporting that MVP appears to be preparing to dig an open cut across WV Route 122, instead of boring under the highway as residents had been led to expect. An open cut will likely mean that residents will have to use alternate routes that involve lengthy detours. Residents called the local Department of Highways office but got conflicting information about whether the project had received a permit for a bore or an open cut. Residents complain that the permitting process did not include an opportunity for public comment.

ORGANIZING | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Distributed Organizing can be done either in person or via the internet. Tactics can range from phone banking to video conference lobby meetings or news media events. Options are limited only by your creativity.

Our initial focus is to demonstrate support for federal legislation on infrastructure investments in clean energy and energy efficiency. West Virginia faces a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transition its economy in ways that are environmentally responsible and socially just. If you think this is for you, contact jkotcon@gmail.com. 🌱

Eastern Panhandle Happenings



BY GAIL KOHLHORST

You're invited to join the Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club at the annual picnic at 6:30 pm, **August 24**, at the Kester Pavilion, Poor House Farm Park, Almshouse Road, outside Martinsburg. Due to COVID-19 we will be taking extra safety precautions: Guests are asked to bring their own food and beverage, dinnerware, and utensils. While this is a social event, masks and distancing will be observed. After dinner, there will be an easy walk around the pond for those who wish to do so.

During the past quarter, the Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club group has been working with and supporting the Jefferson County Foundation to monitor operations of the new Rockwool insulation plant in Kearneysville. The purpose of this is to protect our water and air quality in the surrounding region. "Rockwool has unreported chemical spills, defects in the pond liners requiring repair, unpermitted transfer of polluted process water to the stormwater, and aluminum levels 210 times over the Reporting Level Limit in discharge samples," reports the Foundation.

The Eastern Panhandle Group is offering a \$1,000 grant for the purpose of planting trees in one of the nine municipalities in the Panhandle. Applications were sent to the mayors of Bolivar, Harpers Ferry, Charles Town, Shepherdstown, Ranson, Hedgesville, Berkeley Springs, Martinsburg, and Paw Paw. Applications are due August 14, and an award will be made by August 31. Weekly announcements appeared in the local paper, and there will be a public announcement when a winner is determined.

For more information or to get involved in EPSC activities, contact Gail Kohlhorst at kohlhorst@comcast.net or 304-283-7222.

Eastern Panhandle Group Calls for Nominations

The Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club executive committee has three positions up for election this year. The group invites Sierra Club members to nominate themselves or any member from Jefferson, Morgan, or Berkeley County interested in serving as an officer.

NOMINATIONS MAY BE SENT TO
Ed Wheelless at ewheelless@laurellodge.com or
PO Box 1011, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
 AND MUST BE RECEIVED BY **NOVEMBER 1**.

Executive committee members participate in regular meetings and typically perform other volunteer activities for the group. They serve two-year terms. The election will take place this fall (watch for the ballots in the winter issue of the Mountain State Sierran or in the mail), and newly elected officers will take their positions at the first 2022 meeting.

For more information on the EPSC group or on serving as an executive committee member, contact Gail Kohlhorst at kohlhorst@comcast.net or 304-885-0733.



Poor House Farm Park will once again provide a historic and scenic setting for Club picnickers August 24.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTINSBURG-BERKELEY COUNTY PARKS.



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Sierra Club Water Sentinels are the first line of defense of America's waters. We live on the water planet. However, water is a finite resource with only about 1 % of the world's water actually being available for human consumption. Water pollution & over-use are threatening both the quality & quantity of our water resources at an alarming rate.

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Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



Contributions, gifts & dues to Sierra Club are tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to SIERRA magazine and \$ 1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.



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Enclose a check and mail to:
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 Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041
 or visit our website: www.sierraclub.org

West Virginia Outings Program Begins Anew!



On a July hike Sierrans explored the ruins of factories and water race structures in Harpers Ferry NHP. PHOTO BY TOM LOCONTE.

In February 2020 nearly 30 people joined me on a beautiful winter day for a hike at Rolling Ridge Retreat Center in Shannondale, WV. The group enjoyed discovering a little-known, privately owned natural area with some great Blue Ridge trails. They also enjoyed the usual camaraderie we find on Sierra Club hikes. A few even signed up to help the retreat center in its efforts to improve their trail system.

Although by that time we had all learned about the mysterious virus that was wreaking havoc in China and was slowly spreading to the U.S. and elsewhere around the globe, none of us imagined that this would be our last West Virginia Chapter hike until July 2021. Hiking groups throughout the nation have reacted to the pandemic in wildly different ways. Sierra Club was among the most conservative, with a shutdown of all in-person outings and gatherings for more than a year and a half. That move, though made with the best intentions of safety and caution, proved to be controversial among outings leaders and participants. It has cost the Club some volunteers and members.

The good news is that Sierra Club outings are once again open. Day trips were allowed starting on July 5; multi-day and Club commercial outings are still opening gradually. The Club is leaving some of the

safety protocols up to chapter leaders, but our announcements must include the call for ill people to cancel their participation, and we are urged to keep participant numbers low and to not include shuttles in the plans. Masks and proof of vaccination are not required unless chapter or outings leaders want such requirements.

I'm pleased that about a dozen individuals helped me reopen the West Virginia outings program in July with a hike in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Together we explored an area with beautiful Shenandoah views as well as Civil War fortifications and ruins of water-powered factories. It was great to be back hiking with a group!

However, here in the Mountain State, our lack of outings has been not only from the coronavirus, but also from a lack of volunteer trip leaders. Most of this beautiful state and its wonderful rivers and trails remain out of range for this busy volunteer living in the state's easternmost corner. I'm pleased that Adrienne Epley Brown's inaugural (and mentored) outing is included in this issue's listings. I look forward to her sharing her love and knowledge of nature and the outdoors with folks in Morgantown and beyond.

The **Mountain State Sierran** is published quarterly by the West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club and distributed to all paid members—in print (when requested) or electronically. \$1 of each member's annual dues helps offset the cost of producing this newsletter.

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Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates. Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to ccraig@laurellodge.com.

**DEADLINE FOR THE 2022 WINTER ISSUE:
NOVEMBER 6**

Opinions expressed in the *Mountain State Sierran* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Sierra Club.

If you are interested in leading hikes, bike rides, river adventures, or other outdoor events in your area or elsewhere, please contact me (ccraig@laurellodge.com or 304-433-1260). Requirements for leading Sierra Club trips are reasonable, and you would have support. Many of us became advocates of nature and our environment after discovering them outdoors. Your help in sharing such adventures with others would be valued and appreciated. 🍃



BY CHRIS CRAIG



Outings

Note about all Sierra Club Outings: We have resumed outings after a long closure due to the pandemic. Our goal is to offer healthy, social, and enjoyable outdoor adventures, and we ask all participants to be conscientious about your health and safety as well as that of others. At this time we will not require masks or proof of vaccination, but we do require that anyone who has recently tested positive for COVID or anyone who does not feel well, NOT join us on hikes or other activities. We ask everyone to be conscious of reasonable physical distancing.

Saturday, August 28, 2021

Day Hike: Big Schloss, George Washington National Forest, VA/WV

This hike will take us through one of the loveliest areas of George Washington NF. We'll walk along a clear, bubbling trout stream, climb to a rocky ridge full of laurel and scrub oak, and through mature forest with a dense undergrowth. One highlight will be the rocky ledge of Big Schloss, named by early German settlers for its castle-like appearance. Our loop will include some level walks, but also 1800 feet of elevation gain and areas of mountain switchbacks. The hike is open to those able to maintain a moderate pace on mountain terrain for a long day's hike. There is no charge for the hike, though contributions are welcome. Due to the possibility of intense heat and possible rain, dress in or bring clothing that will provide protection from sun and rain. Only 15 attendees will be allowed, so reserve with the trip leader to assure your space and to learn of late cancellations due to weather.

Distance/ Difficulty: 12.0 miles
DIFFICULT

Duration: 7 hours

Bring: Lots of water, lunch and snacks, layered clothing for variable weather, protection from sun and bugs, hiking poles may be helpful, masks welcome but not required

Meet: 9 am, NFS parking lot on FDR 92 next to Little Stony Creek crossing. Contact the trip leader for detailed directions and to reserve your space.

Leader: Chris Craig
ccraig@laurellodge.com
304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Woodstock, VA and Wardensville, WV

Cancellation policy: We will cancel if weather predictions indicate likely storm or downpours.

Monday, September 6, 2021

Day Hike and Outdoor Presentation: Tom's Run Preserve

Tom's Run Preserve is a 318-acre conservation trust owned and managed by the West Virginia Land Trust. It is just a few miles south of Morgantown and has a small network of recently constructed trails through hilly woodlands. We will hike the easy Elizabeth's loop and the moderate Hollenhorst loop, crossing several streams on bridges or stepping stones. We will also have a brief presentation from Land Trust staff on the preserve.

Distance/ Difficulty: 0.7 mile/EASY, followed by 0.5 mile/MODERATE

Duration: 2 hours

Bring: a snack, water, sunscreen, and shoes for the varied terrain

Meet: 10 am, Tom's Run Preserve parking lot, Little Falls Road. From I-79 south of Morgantown, take the Goshen Road exit, turning right on Goshen Road, left on Smithtown Road, and immediately right on Little Falls Road. Continue .4 mile and turn right on the new gravel road. You will see a Tom's Run sign on your right at the parking lot entrance.

Leader: Adrienne Epley Brown
adrienne_epley@yahoo.com
702-465-9119

Nearest towns: Morgantown, WV

Cancellation policy: We will carry on in drizzle but postpone in case of a downpour.

Sunday, September 12, 2021

Day Hike: Appalachian Trail: Keys Gap to Buzzard Rock, VA/WV

We begin our series of hikes on the Appalachian Trail in West Virginia/Northern Virginia with this hike right along the border. We will hike out and back from Keys Gap, where Route 9 crosses the Blue Ridge, to the scenic outcrop at Buzzard Rock and back. The hike is along the ridge, avoiding major climbs or descents. The hike is open to any adult or child (accompanied by an adult) fit for the distance and some elevation changes. National Park Service regulations restrict our group size to 25, and parking is limited at Keys Gap. Contact the trip leader to reserve your space and to be notified about last minute changes or cancellations. The hike is free, though donations are welcome.

Distance/ Difficulty: 7 miles, MODERATE

Duration: 3.5 hours

Bring: Water and lunch, protection from sun and bugs, hiking poles may be helpful, masks are welcome but not required.

Meet: 9 am, Keys Gap AT parking lot at the VA/WV state line on Route 9. Note that this lot is limited in space, so park closely to others. You may find additional parking nearby off the road in WV. Recommended approach to the lot is from the east (VA) to avoid a left turn on the highway.

Leader: Chris Craig
ccraig@laurellodge.com
304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Hillsboro, VA and Harpers Ferry, WV

Cancellation policy: We will carry on in light rain but cancel in a downpour.



The West Virginia outings program resumed in July after a 17-month hiatus due to the pandemic. Sierrans explored the cannons, ruins and views of the Murphy Farm and Virginius Island in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. LEFT PHOTO BY ED WHEELESS. RIGHT PHOTO BY TOM LOCONTE.

Saturday, October 9, 2021

Day Hike: Legacy Loop, Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, Purcellville, VA

This moderately easy hike explores the rolling trails of an educational center located on former farmland in Loudoun County's Blue Ridge country. It will take us through historic farmland and past small lakes and streams. With 695 feet in elevation gain, it is open to anyone, including minors accompanied by adults, of adequate fitness for a trail walk on rolling terrain. However, there is the possibility of one stream crossing that could involve wet feet! Be prepared with appropriate footwear and possibly hiking poles. Well-behaved dogs on leashes allowed. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

Distance/ Difficulty: 6 miles/MODERATELY EASY (but with possible fording of stream)

Duration: 3 hours

Bring: water and lunch, shoes appropriate for water and mud, hiking poles may be helpful, masks welcome but not required.

Meet: 10 am, Blue Ridge Center Parking, 11661 Harpers Ferry Road (VA 671), Purcellville, VA. Due to the possible adjustment of meeting place, it is recommended you reserve your space by notifying the trip leader.

Leader: Chris Craig
craig@laurellodge.com
 304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Hillsboro, VA and Harpers Ferry, WV

Cancellation policy: We will carry on in light rain but cancel in a downpour.

Saturday, November 20, 2021

Day Hike: Ziler Loop, Cacapon State Park, Berkeley Springs, WV

Cacapon State Park's Ziler Loop winds upward about 990 feet to the top of Cacapon Mountain, the highest mountain in the Eastern Panhandle. A great trail to spot birds and deer, to enjoy good views, and to experience fall views amidst a forest of mixed hardwoods, pines, and blueberries. This hike is open to all who can handle a steep and rugged trail at a moderate pace. Well-behaved dogs on leashes allowed. This hike is free, but donations are welcome.

Distance/ Difficulty: 5 miles/MODERATE

Duration: 3.5 hours

Bring: clothing appropriate for changing weather, water and lunch, hiking poles may be helpful, masks welcome but not required.

Meet: 10 am, Batt Picnic Area (keep to the left well past the nature center and clay shooting range), Cacapon State Park, US 522, south of Berkeley Springs, WV.

Leader: Chris Craig
craig@laurellodge.com
 304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Berkeley Springs, WV

Cancellation policy: We will carry on in light rain or snow but cancel in heavy precipitation or icy conditions.

Saturday, December 18, 2021

Day Hike: Appalachian Trail: Harpers Ferry to Loudoun Heights, VA/WV

Our series of Appalachian Trail hikes in WV/Northern Virginia continues with the diverse northernmost section. We will meet in Camp Hill, or the upper town of Harpers Ferry, cross the Shenandoah River with dramatic views from the US-340 bridge, and ascend Loudoun Heights. Along the way, careful eyes will spot 19th-century charcoal hearths and Civil War fortifications. This section, though short, includes a steep climb from the river to the ridge. It is open to anyone capable of the climbs on rugged terrain. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. There is no charge for this hike.

Distance/ Difficulty: 6 miles/MODERATELY DIFFICULT

Duration: 3.5 hours

Bring: layered clothing for a range of temperatures, water and lunch, hiking poles may be helpful, masks are welcome but not required.

Meet: 10 am, Old school parking lot, 850 Fillmore Street (across the street from Appalachian Trail Conservancy), Harpers Ferry, WV.

Leader: Chris Craig
craig@laurellodge.com
 304-433-1260

Nearest towns: Harpers Ferry, WV

Cancellation policy: We will carry on in light rain, but cancel or alter plans in case of ice, snow, or heavy rain.



Sierra Club

West Virginia Chapter

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Morgantown, WV 26504

sierraclub.org/west-virginia

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Fall 2021



This newsletter is printed by Progressive Printing in Martinsburg, WV on 100% post-consumer, recycled paper, using vegetable-oil-based inks.

Chapter ExComm Meeting

The next meeting of the WV Chapter of Sierra Club Executive Committee will be held online at **10 am – 2:30 pm, Saturday, October 23.**

Email sierraclub.wv@gmail.com or call 304-314-2709 for more information or to receive the link.



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