



Mountain State Sierran

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Longview Power Seeks Air Pollution Permit for New Gas Plant

BY JIM KOTCON

Longview Power, now renamed Mountain State Clean Energy (MSCE), has proposed a new 1300-MW gas-fired power plant adjacent to their current 590-MW coal-fired plant at Fort Martin in Monongalia County. The plant would emit over 5 million tons of greenhouse gases per year, and this does not include upstream emissions from the wells, pipelines, compressors, and other infrastructure needed to produce the gas.

The draft air pollution permit would also allow emissions of 39.9 tons per year (TPY) of sulfur dioxide, 321 TPY nitrogen oxides, 276 TPY carbon monoxide, 141 TPY volatile organic compounds, 23.3 TPY hazardous air pollutants, and 210 TPY of PM_{2.5} (particulate matter with diameter less than 2.5 micrometers).

An on-line public hearing on this proposed permit by the WV Division of Air Quality (DAQ) was held Oct. 19.

Duane Nichols, coordinator for the Mon Valley Clean Air Coalition, identified environmental justice issues as important concerns when he said, “You can’t find a worse location in

the state of West Virginia.” He pointed out that two existing coal-fired power plants and their associated truck traffic, noise, and air pollution already impact the Fort Martin community where the new plant would be located. The site is adjacent to the Fort Martin Community Center and a church, and it is also within a few miles of the University High School, Mon General and University Hospitals, and the WVU Football Stadium.

Betsy Lawson of the Mon Group of the Sierra Club described traffic and air pollution issues in her neighborhood.

One of the biggest concerns is the weak effort to limit emissions of greenhouse gases. While DAQ estimated the cost of carbon controls, DAQ failed to include analysis of the environmental and economic cost of carbon emissions. They proposed to allow *increased* emissions in future years, failed to consider “upstream” emissions from new gas wells and compressors stimulated by the power plant, and set emissions limits higher than those for similar permits with similar

turbine technology. In fact, DAQ’s proposed permit “limit” for greenhouse gases is even higher than the level that MSCE asked for in their application, and it increases further in later years.

These problems, coupled with the numerous inconsistencies and technical errors in the draft permit, caused the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club to call for a new or revised permit, with an additional comment period to allow for meaningful public comment.

What You Can Do

While the public comment period has expired, you can contact WV DAQ and ask for a new comment period on a revised air pollution permit. Insist that greenhouse gas emissions be as stringent as possible. Write to: WV Dept of Environmental Protection, Division of Air Quality, 601 57th Street, SE, Charleston, WV 25304. Be sure to refer to the draft air permit for Mountain State Clean Energy (R-14-0038).

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Departure Message from the Co-Chair

BY ERIC ENGLE



It was with a heavy heart that I recently resigned from the position of Co-Chair of the Executive Committee for the Sierra Club West Virginia Chapter. Leaving the Executive Committee is not an easy decision, but I have many commitments right now as a parent of two teens with a full-time job. I'm also engaged in other volunteer activism that has become more encompassing.

The WV Chapter is a special and important organization. Passionate, highly intelligent, and highly capable individuals commit themselves to this Chapter's Executive Committee and the broader organization and are outstanding leaders in the fight for a better world for us and posterity. If you are a member of the Sierra Club in West Virginia, I encourage you, in addition to your annual membership dues, to give and do all that you can to support this organization.

Just the litigation that the Sierra Club has supported in West Virginia has had an immense impact! In many cases, the courts are the only place where relief and redress can be adequately provided, especially given current political gridlock. The Sierra Club does an exceptional job seeking to hold fossil fuel, chemical, and other polluting industries across our state and region accountable for the harms they frequently do.

Sierra Club also does an incredible job supporting the interests of the people when it comes to the writing and implementation of numerous rules and regulations at both the federal and state level. Whether dealing with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, the WV Department of Environmental Protection, the state Public Service Commission, or another entity, you can bet that the Sierra Club will be there to present expert testimony and make sure that the people are heard, and their concerns are represented.

We live in a time of multiple and potentially existential crises for humanity. As earth's dominant species, we have not been responsible stewards of earth's plentiful resources. The climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis, and the contamination crisis (from plastics and chemical pollution) combine to threaten all present life on this planet. I will remain a member of the Sierra Club and the WV Chapter because I know that this organization will continue the endless struggle to chart a better course for us all. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture and development, conservation, and more are required for our futures. I know that Sierra Club will continue to lead the way on all of this and more.

Though I'm ending my three-year tenure on the Executive Committee, I hope you'll join me in continuing to build and grow this organization in our beautiful Mountain State.

In Solidarity,
Eric Engle

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.

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Gearing Up for the WV 2022 Legislative Session

BY JIM KOTCON

Legislative issues will soon be dominating headlines. Some key issues will carry over from previous years, including efforts to help transition coal communities affected by the decline in the coal industry. The WV Legislature has been conducting listening sessions in coal communities to seek suggestions on how to help those communities thrive as they transition to a new economy.

Efforts to protect water quality will also be high on the priority list, as changes to water quality regulations are being proposed. Of greatest concern is an effort to allow “case-by-case” standards as part of a water pollution permit process. Currently, all permits are expected to meet state water quality standards, but this new provision would allow an industry to seek weaker standards and would give much less time for the public to respond.

A major concern for the Sierra Club is the very weak bonding requirements for coal mines and gas wells. Currently these companies are required to file a bond to assure mine sites are reclaimed and gas wells are plugged. This bond is essential because there is no other incentive for a company to reclaim their site once the coal or gas is gone. In fact, the Legislature in 2021 adopted a bill to require full cost bonding for wind and solar energy facilities, too.

An immediate concern is that the bonds for coal mines are much too low. While costs to reclaim mine sites can exceed \$10,000 per

acre, the bond is capped at \$5,000. As coal companies go bankrupt, renege on their reclamation responsibilities is consistently one of their first acts. West Virginia established a “Special Reclamation Fund” based on a tax on coal mined, and this fund is supposed to cover the costs of reclaiming mines for bankrupt companies. However, the Special Reclamation Fund is woefully inadequate to cover all the mines currently facing bankruptcy, and the WV Legislature and the WV Department of Environmental Protection have been slow to address this shortfall.

Not too far behind is the WV gas industry. While recent legislation was intended to speed up plugging of abandoned or non-producing wells, the amounts do not appear to be anywhere near adequate for the size of the problem. Leaking gas wells spew pollutants into our water and air, and natural gas (methane) is one of the most potent greenhouse gases. While a bond of \$5,000 is required for a single well, current legislation allows a company with multiple wells to file a “blanket bond” of \$50,000 for all their

wells. Unfortunately, delaying well plugging and reclamation is a common operating practice for many companies, leaving a legacy of pollution.

What You Can Do

As always, we will continue to oppose efforts by industry to weaken pollution standards. Starting now, you can contact your legislators and ask that they work to shore up existing bond requirements for coal mines and gas wells. Tell them that full cost bonding should be required for coal and gas, just as it is for industrial-scale wind or solar facilities.

The WV Sierra Club will again be working with the WV Environmental Council during the 2022 Legislative session. You can learn more, including how to subscribe to their weekly Legislative Updates, at <https://wvecouncil.org>. For more information, email jkotcon@gmail.com or call 304-594-3322.

Carbon Capture: A Distraction from Real Solutions

BY ERIC ENGLE

Sean O’Leary, senior researcher at the Ohio River Valley Institute (ORVI), based in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, penned a piece for the Charleston Gazette-Mail that I’d like to draw attention to here because his topic has enormous potential impacts for the Ohio River Valley.

Sean covered a proposal by the former Energy Secretary during the Obama administration, Ernest Moniz, and his colleagues titled, *A Low Carbon Energy Transition in Southwest Pennsylvania*. Sean

wrote, “The project’s centerpiece is ‘a pipeline and storage network that would run east-to-west, connecting power plants in Indiana and Armstrong counties in Pennsylvania to Coshocton, Ohio, and north-south, connecting Beaver County to Greene County and extending into West Virginia.’”

Sean states that according to an analysis of this plan by ORVI, “if CCUS [Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage] were implemented in the nation’s gas-and-coal-fired plants currently in operation

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A Cloud of Complications Emerges to Surround Rockwool in Ranson



BY LYNN DELLES

The Eastern Panhandle has seen changes in the air and water since the insulation manufacturer Rockwool started firing up its furnace in Ranson. The Jefferson County Foundation has been keeping a close eye on this new major air emissions source, carefully monitoring the site and the region's groundwater for evidence of violations of federal law.



Photo taken in September above Rockwool's B170 Melt for Reuse area. Note the pile of light beige material. This is bauxite, a raw material naturally high in aluminum.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFFERSON COUNTY FOUNDATION INC.

Permit change needed?

In July 2020, it came to light that Rockwool, during construction of its facility, had notified the WV Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) that it would change its original plan to use coal to fuel its melting furnace, resulting in the factory's ability to use either coal or natural gas. However, it wanted to maintain the high emission limits associated with its original operation plan. Since the melting furnace is Rockwool's largest emission source, the Foundation worried that the air permit issued no longer accurately reflected the planned operation of the plant and thus did not meet the standards of the Clean Air Act. In a May 17 letter, the Foundation asked the EPA to engage WVDEP to require Rockwool to obtain a permit that accurately reflects Rockwool's planned operation and federal requirements. With support from US Representatives Jamie Raskin (MD-8) and David Trone (MD-6) and several state and local officials from the region, the Foundation met with EPA Region III in August and continues to work with them to address these concerns.

Call for Inspections

Even under the current air permit, Rockwool's actions provide cause for concern. Information gathered by the Foundation showed inappropriately stored material at a 20,000-square-foot pit waste site. In October, two WVDEP inspections performed in response to the Foundation's complaints revealed that raw material had been inappropriately stored in this location and that the enclosure being used needed improvements.

Aluminum Concerns

Operating only since May 2021, Rockwool has already had serious issues with stormwater management. According to WVDEP records, Rockwool has had unreported chemical spills, defects in the pond liners requiring repair, unpermitted transfer of polluted process water to the stormwater, and three design changes of an inadequate stormwater system. Each discharge monitoring report in 2021 revealed elevated heavy metals, and in the last two quarters of such filings Rockwool reported elevated aluminum levels—four times higher than the benchmark levels in the permit.

Following this report, the Foundation's ongoing water monitoring program found elevated aluminum in a nearby spring. A USGS study previously showed the spring to be affected by surface contamination near Rockwool. In August the levels of aluminum in the spring had increased from less than 100 µg/l (micrograms per liter) prior to Rockwool's operation to 189 µg/l, and had jumped to 3800 µg/l by September. This is 19 times higher than the EPA's guidelines for aluminum in drinking water, at least 38-fold pre-operation levels, and more than 30% higher than Canada's current health-based standard. This spring goes on to contribute to the drinking water of two local municipalities, including Harpers Ferry, which has announced that it will now test for aluminum quarterly as a precaution.

The Foundation's appeal of Rockwool's inadequate and inappropriate operational stormwater permit continues with a hearing before the WV Environmental Quality Board in February 2022.

Lynn Delles is the Director of Strategic Communications for the Jefferson County Foundation Inc.

What You Can Do

Rockwool can and should operate more safely, and the Sierra Club, in partnership with the Jefferson County Foundation, will continue to hold it accountable for compliance with the law.

For more information on our progress and how you can help, please visit our website: jeffersoncountyfoundation.org.

Public Service Commission Gouges ApCo Ratepayers to Protect Polluting Power Plants

On December 23, 2020, two WV utilities, Appalachian Power Company (ApCo) and Wheeling Power, asked the WV Public Service Commission (WV-PSC) for approval to make modification to the Mitchell, John Amos, and Mountaineer power plants in order to comply with new regulations. Without these upgrades, the plants would be required to close by 2028. The companies' request asks West Virginia customers to cover \$192 million of the costs, with Virginia and Kentucky customers paying the remainder of the \$383 million total cost.



BY JIM KOTCON

Sierra Club testimony showed that the cost to ratepayers of keeping these three aging plants open until 2040 far outweighed the cost of alternatives. If a carbon cost is imposed, those costs to WV ratepayers could exceed \$2.4 billion.

Nevertheless, WV-PSC approved the WV share of those costs on August 4, 2021.

Similar cases asking Kentucky and Virginia customers to pay their share of the costs were also filed in those states. The Kentucky PSC rejected the proposal on July 15, finding that the companies had significantly overstated the cost of alternatives. Virginia filed a similar decision rejecting the upgrades on August 23.

Because of the conflicting decisions, ApCo filed a new request with the WV-PSC on Sept. 8, 2021 to ask that WV ratepayers pick up the entire cost of the upgrades. In fact, the cost of the upgrades had increased to over \$483 million during the intervening nine months since the initial application was filed. The effect of this request was to ask WV ratepayers to subsidize the electricity costs for Virginia and Kentucky ratepayers.

The Sierra Club and other intervenors objected, as did hundreds of letters of protest. In fact, the only supporter of this request was the WV Coal Association. The PSC mandated an accelerated schedule, thus, no opportunity for detailed analysis of the projected costs or benefits was allowed. The WV-PSC approved ApCo's request on Oct. 8. 🍀

Late-Breaking News!

On October 27 Kentucky Power announced plans to sell their share of the Mitchell power plant to Liberty, a Canadian company. Liberty would own and obtain power from Kentucky's 50% share of the Mitchell plant through 2028. It is unclear what happens to the plant or its 200 workers after 2028.

This case will have a major impact on West Virginia ratepayers and the future of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. Customers in the First Energy territory (MonPower and Potomac Edison) can expect a similar WV-PSC case soon.

For more information, email jkotcon@gmail.com or call 304-594-3322.

CARBON | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

and the cost were to show up in our electric bills, residential customers in Pennsylvania would see their bills increase by \$266 per year. Ohio customers would pay an additional \$416 per year. And West Virginia customers would pay a staggering \$736 more or \$61 per month. Nationally, the average increase would be \$293 per year, or about 21%. Commercial and industrial bills would increase even more."

For American Electric Power customers in West Virginia (Appalachian and Wheeling Power customers), this increase would be on top of the \$443.8 million in environmental compliance costs that the West Virginia Public Service Commission decided to shoulder these ratepayers with to keep three coal-fired power plants in West Virginia open past 2028, with a goal of keeping them burning through 2040. Even WV Senator Joe Manchin described the proposal by Moniz and others as "so darn expensive that it makes it almost impossible."

CCUS is just nonsense at this point as we try to mitigate and adapt to human-caused climate change. A webinar on September 17, hosted by the Science and Environmental Health Network (SEHN) and Physicians for Social Responsibility, spelled out perfectly with numerous expert panelists what a colossal waste of money, time and resources CCUS really is. SEHN calls it "the fossil fuel industry's new Rube Goldberg scheme"—a reference to American cartoonist Rube Goldberg and his chain reaction-type machines or contraptions intentionally designed to perform a simple task in an overly complicated way.

It seems industry movers and shakers just can't help but want to carve up the Ohio River Valley more and more. First it was talk of the Appalachian

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Protecting East Lynn Lake Wildlife Management Area



BY MEL WAGGY

East Lynn Lake Wildlife Management Area (ELWMA) is located in Wayne County, WV about 38 miles south of Huntington. Created primarily for the protection of high-quality wildlife habitats, the site offers many recreational opportunities, including camping, boating, and hunting. The WV Department of Natural Resources (WVDNR) manages the 22,928-acre site under a license agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

Recently ELWMA, the second-largest Wildlife Management Area in the state, has been making the news. Earlier this year the WV Division of Highways (WVDOH) held a public meeting to discuss a proposal for establishing a new Hatfield-McCoy off-road vehicle (ORV) trail system in a portion of ELWMA. The original proposal for the trail came about in a discussion with the Corps attempting to find a solution to illegal ORV riding occurring in ELWMA. By law, no motorized off-road riding is allowed there. Efforts to patrol the property have been hampered since the level of illegal riding has grown beyond what the DNR has resources to handle. In addition to eroding trails and destroying natural resources, illegal ORV riders leave behind conspicuous amounts of trash and risk great injury to themselves and others due to the nature of the terrain. An article in Metro News indicated that on any given weekend the area might have close to 200 illegal riders, many of them from out of state. The plan, if successful, would have transferred 9000 of the nearly 23,000 acres to the Hatfield-McCoy Trail system, a highly popular, regulated ORV trail system in WV that requires permits.

Proponents of this proposal were few. Several groups, like the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club (WVSC), opposed this change because of the inherent destructive nature of ORV riding. Comments from the Chapter centered on concerns regarding degradation of wildlife habitat. Motorized off-road riding disrupts foraging and nesting opportunities, destroys vegetation and cover, and increases noise

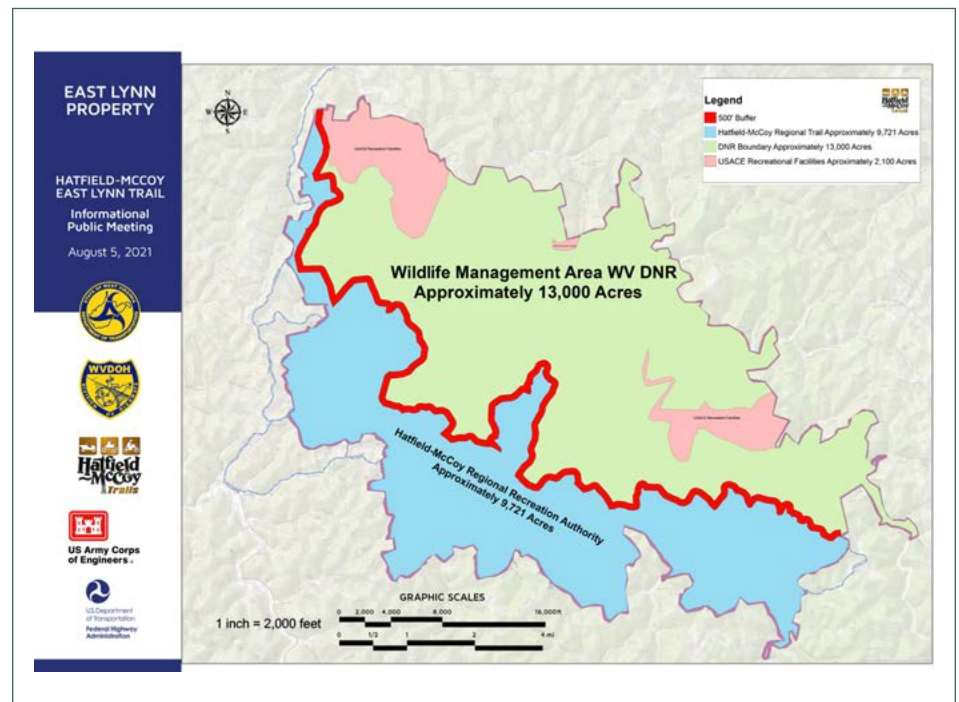
and air pollution. Off-road riding has also been associated with compact soils and excess erosion, and it can disrupt ecosystem processes such as floodplain function. In essence, the impacts of off-road riding are contrary to the management objectives of ELWMA. Additionally, conservation groups were concerned about impacts to other user groups (hunters, hikers, etc.) and what precedent would be set if we turned over the management of public lands to a private entity.

Opponents of this proposal, however, were not unified in their reasoning. Most folks opposing this plan did so not because they were opposed to ORV riding in ELWMA, but because they were opposed to regulating the off-road riding. Available sources indicated that this sector produced a petition opposing the regulated trail system with more than 12,000 signatures. This indicates that many of the ORV riders hope to continue riding in ELWMA even though they know it's illegal.

For better or worse, the plan was scrubbed. WVDNR is left to manage this property, and the Natural Resources Police (NRP), a division of the agency, have stepped up patrols

in ELWMA. Unfortunately, ELWMA is very difficult to patrol because there are many ways to access the trails, many folks ride at night, and NRP is short-staffed. Initial focus will be on issuing warnings, but at some point that will change. In the past they have issued tickets to illegal riders and towed vehicles. Unfortunately little traction from these efforts has been gained due to lack of support in the court system. WVDNR remains committed to protecting ELWMA and is also very concerned about rider safety due to the nature of the terrain.

What can you do to help protect this and other public lands at risk from illegal ORV riders? Contact your state legislators and ask them to support the NRP by increasing its funding. Additionally, encourage young folks looking for a career in law enforcement or wildlife protection to check out opportunities at the NRP. Few jobs are more worthwhile than protecting public lands, particularly those we West Virginians hold dear to our hearts. 🍃



Initiative Funds Solar Projects

BY AUTUMN LONG

The Appalachian Solar Finance Fund (SFF) is a new program designed to jump-start commercial and institutional solar projects in coal-impacted communities throughout Central Appalachia. The SFF will use a recent \$1.5 million Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER Initiative award to offer select subgrant awards for solar projects in nonprofit and public institutions such as schools, municipal buildings, fire and rescue stations, libraries, water treatment plants, and other community buildings. The SFF will also facilitate competitive technical assistance contracts for solar installations on commercial enterprises serving as community anchor institutions, such as child care centers, medical facilities, subsidized housing developments, Main Street businesses, and local manufacturers. The program will develop additional investment and credit enhancement strategies to unlock more solar deployment in the region.

The SFF is a joint project of Appalachian Voices, the Central Appalachian Network, Partner Community Capital, Invest Appalachia, and New Resource Solutions that aims to accelerate solar development and economic growth in Central Appalachia. Support for the Appalachian Solar Finance Fund is provided by the ARC POWER Initiative, the Appalachian Investment Ecosystem Initiative, the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, New York Community Trust, the Educational Foundation of America, and other pending sources. The resulting solar projects will produce a powerful convergence of employment opportunities, business creation, new investments, and wealth retention in Central Appalachian communities directly impacted by the decline in the coal economy. Commercial, government, and nonprofit building owners and facilities managers, and solar developers and installation professionals are encouraged to learn more and apply for SFF support at solarfinancefund.org. 🍃

Autumn Long is Project Manager at the Appalachian Solar Finance Fund's Energy Storage & Electrification Manufacturing Jobs Project.

A Cautionary Tale for the Would-Be Solar Homeowner

BY BETH LITTLE

If you have a large electric bill and you make a good income, you might be a more successful candidate for a solar-energy system than someone like me. I built a partially earth-sheltered house with wide framing for extra insulation and made sure it was very weather-tight. For 32 years I have heated with wood and managed easily with less than two cords a year. Fire was in the relatively small firebox of a wood cookstove, which also provided cooking in the winter, and it was not maintained overnight. But now at 82 and retired, I want to stop dealing with firewood and use baseboard heaters instead. Cleaner air and no more splinters, bruises, bashed toes, and mess.

When I built, I didn't go with solar because I didn't want to deal with the battery technology available at that time. So, I'm connected to the grid, but my monthly electric bill has been \$20-\$35 a month, depending on the season. Now that there is net metering, I thought I might pay for the extra electricity to run baseboard heaters with solar panels.

It turns out that solar installers don't want to deal with small systems. You would think that someone in a green business would appreciate someone who has been conserving energy. Those I contacted insisted on estimating for twice the power I believe I will need. The installer chosen by the co-op I joined had a minimum number of panels and seemed to favor nearly flat sites (Ha!). They also kept telling me about the tax savings I would get, but since I don't pay income taxes anymore, that is a moot point for me. I am willing to pay for the same time and travel to install a larger system, but not for expensive equipment that is wasted. So I don't have a solar setup yet.

However, I did get baseboard heaters, and I have disconnected the chimney and thoroughly cleaned it and the cookstove. By next spring I will have a record of what my electricity usage will be over the winter with baseboard heaters, and I can go shopping for a solar installer again. I might even get the add-on for charging an electric car. 🍃



A small house (not the author's) whose owners were able to incorporate solar power into the mix to meet their energy needs.

PHOTO BY SERENETHOS / ISTOCKPHOTO

What Can One Person Do? Speak Out!

Over the past several months I've introduced readers to fictional characters who are faced with various situations that they try to approach with concern for our planet. Each of these characters sprang to life from an experience of mine. You have probably had similar experiences. There is one more vitally important thing many of us have done: advocacy.

Some of you have picked up the phone countless times to call public officials on behalf of environmental priorities. Some of you have commented at so many public hearings that you know how many words to write for a two-minute comment. You may be so familiar with a particular environmental issue that you can deliver your thoughts with no rehearsal.

However, the rest of us get stage fright. Or we dread the thought of people in our community learning of our testimony. Childhood lessons may have taught us to keep a low profile and

avoid rocking the boat. Or maybe advocacy leaves you feeling angry and depressed. Who doesn't hate thinking about corporate greed and its effect on our planet? We are already busy and stressed enough.

I want to reassure you that your thoughts about speaking out are completely normal. It can be rewarding, but it's not nearly as much fun as planting a pollinator garden or observing wildlife. Please remember that our elected representatives can't represent us well if we haven't told them our priorities. Political appointees need to get acquainted with real people who must live with the policies that their agencies create and enforce. Without our input, our legislators and the Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) would only hear from the industries that pollute our state and bring about climate change.

Going on the record with an opinion can be daunting. The first time I called an elected official, my voice was shaking as I left my recorded message. The first time I commented

at a public hearing, I thought I was either going

to faint or lose my breakfast. Unsure which would be more humiliating, I forged ahead and completed my two-minute speech without incident. At my next public hearing, I had to speak into a microphone for the first time in my life. I survived. Speaking out has become easier for me, but I can't say I look forward to making public comments or contacting my elected officials. It's not a pleasure. It's a necessity. And because it's a necessity, I keep doing it. I urge you to do it too.

Remember, when you call your elected representative, you are helping inform them on how to do the job they have been elected to do. When you speak at that WVDEP hearing, you are protecting your own corner of the world. Can one person do anything more worthwhile? 🍃



BY AILEEN CURFMAN

EPSC Updates

The Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club (EPSC) continues to meet monthly by Zoom on the fourth Tuesday of each month. If you are interested in attending these Executive Committee meetings, please email kohlhorst@comcast.net. (We request that only Sierra Club members attend.)

This summer we offered a \$1000 grant to municipalities to plant trees in the Panhandle but had no takers. Next spring we plan to reach out to local organizations with a similar offering.

Our annual picnic at the Poor House Farm in Berkeley County was held in August, and it was great to see folks in person again! We wore masks and practiced distancing, each bringing our own dinner to keep things safe. After dinner members enjoyed a walk around the Poor House pond.

BY GAIL KOHLHORST

The group continues to work with the Jefferson County Foundation, providing financial support and sharing news of efforts to monitor air and water quality in Jefferson County near the Rockwool plant. Several lawsuits and requests for action from the WV Department of Environmental Protection are in progress. The EPSC plans to work with the Foundation early in 2022 to sponsor a community meeting to discuss water quality in the area. Please check our website: www.easternpanhandlewvsierraclub.org and Facebook page.

Thanks to Chris Craig, our hiking program here in the Panhandle stays very active and frequently has to limit numbers for safety. See information elsewhere in the newsletter and sign up to receive the latest information on www.meetup.com.

Solar Energy Update

In October the Jefferson County Planning Commission proposed amendments to the county's Comprehensive Plan to include solar energy installations as a permitted use in rural and residential growth zones. These changes were requested by the County Commission following the Circuit Court's invalidation of a zoning ordinance that allowed these large-scale utility installations in rural, agricultural zones.

A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for December 7 for public comments.

Check www.jeffersoncountywv.org for more information.

Pandemic Pause Brings New Focus: Your Help Needed!

BY AILEEN CURFMAN

The Sierra Club has a long-standing commitment to environmental justice, but too often we fail to keep that commitment. While the pandemic paused our chapter's usual activities, we took a look at our priorities. The West Virginia Chapter is keeping our focus on the urgent need to reduce climate change, while also prioritizing the needs of West Virginia's people.

Chemicals, gas, and coal have always been the bread and butter of West Virginia's economy. Now our communities are struggling. Some fear the Sierra Club will shut down the industries that provide whatever jobs remain. Instead, we must support communities as they reinvent themselves in a new, green economy.

We will keep our successful existing programs. However, we hope new projects will help people see that Sierrans are their neighbors, and that we care about their well-being right now and in the future. Here's the lineup for the next few months:

LEGAL

We are continuing with legal actions to hold businesses to their responsibility to the communities where they operate and to the Earth.

LEGISLATIVE

We plan to expand our outreach to West

Virginia legislators, especially concerning the issues related to orphan gas wells and the need for adequate bonding to cap existing and new wells.

CITIZEN REPORTING

We will hold a training session for volunteers to learn how to identify and report leaking gas infrastructure. The WV Department of Natural Resources is understaffed, and they welcome this assistance from residents.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We will be reaching out to people who aren't familiar with the Sierra Club or have a distorted understanding of our work. Our outreach will begin by supporting projects that local communities have identified as important as they struggle with a morass of environmental justice issues. Sierra Club cares about our neighbors, and we will not leave them behind as we seek climate solutions.

INITIATIVES FOR NEIGHBORS

- In one of our first outreach projects, we will contribute to a fund that will provide sleeping bags for those who have no winter shelter. If you have ever spent a frosty night in a campsite, you will understand what a fundamental need this meets.
- Another project will provide financial support for rafting trips for young people of color. Outdoor recreation has not really been an option for many who fear racial harassment or worse. In this small way we will begin to address the racism that has existed in the Sierra Club since the early days.
- The third new initiative will recognize a community in our southern coalfields. We will support a local union on a project they are undertaking with Friends of Blair Mountain. They hope to create a memorial at a historic church to mine workers who organized against exploitative conditions. By supporting these projects, we affirm the sacrifices that miners made to provide America energy. We hope to form lasting bonds as we all work toward a strong economy with clean jobs for displaced workers.

If you're thinking all this sounds ambitious, you're right! If you would like to help out with any of our planned initiatives, or simply want to learn more, drop us a note at sierraclub.wv@gmail.com.

Wanted: Chapter Secretary

The WV Chapter of the Sierra Club needs a new secretary. Volunteering for this position would make you a voting member of the Executive Committee, and you would take minutes of quarterly meetings, currently held virtually.

The most important requirement for the position is enthusiasm; however, experience with Word software and email is helpful. If you are someone who:

- Is unsure of the issues, procedures, and policies of the Sierra Club;
- has limited free time but would like to support your local chapter's work; and/or
- would like to contribute directly to protecting our environment

this is a great opportunity for you!

For more information contact Mel Waggy at sierraclub.wv@gmail.com.

Of her past six years as secretary, Mel has this to say:

“Being Chapter Secretary has been a rewarding experience. Not only has it given me the opportunity to learn more about environmental issues important to West Virginians, it has also allowed me to see first-hand how our Chapter's ExComm functions. This is a group of wonderfully knowledgeable volunteers who work hard to protect those things we love most about West Virginia—community, wild places, mountains, rivers, clean air and water, and wildlife. As Secretary I was able to support their efforts in a meaningful way with a limited time commitment.”

Sierra Student Coalition Works for Sustainability in the Mountain State



As a land grant university in the Appalachian region, West Virginia University is a unique place. We are surrounded by beautiful nature and a welcoming community. However, there are certain environmental issues that greatly affect our home. Plastic waste and the petrochemical industry have negatively impacted West Virginia. As the Sierra Student Coalition (SSC), we have decided to push for change at WVU. By helping set up infrastructure for plastic waste reduction on campus, we are trying to make the goal of a zero-waste campus a reality. With this goal, we are working for a reusable to-go container program, a pilot compost system, reduction of styrofoam on campus, and recycling education. Last spring, the SSC launched a Break Free from Plastic Pledge petition. The petition is calling on the president of West Virginia University, Gordon Gee, to sign the Break Free from Plastic Pledge, which would indicate the university's commitment

to reduction of single-use plastic production and distribution.

Recently, SSC helped participate in WVU's Sustainability Week. A program of the Office of Sustainability, the week's activities helped promote sustainability through in-person events and informational outlets. Among the on-campus activities were a campus clean-up, tree planting, Halloween costume swap, and campus sustainability walking tours. The office encouraged students to measure their ecological and carbon footprints, complete a personal waste audit, and learn about recycling in Morgantown. It also posted recommendations for a healthy and sustainable diet. Holding the world's biggest polluters accountable cannot be ignored, but it's also important to recognize our individual responsibility in living sustainably. The SSC continues to promote those actions on campus and in our community.

**BY DANIELLE WITT,
SAMANTHA SPECTOR, AND
ANTHONY MARMORELLA**

The SSC also partnered with the WV Climate Alliance in planning a Halloween Climate Rally. This took place in Charleston on October 30, at the Robert C. Byrd Courthouse Plaza. West Virginians attended the event from all over the state to prove to Senator Manchin that we care about the environment. The rally was planned after Senator Manchin told the media that he "has not been hearing from" West Virginians on the climate bill, and we wanted to let him hear from us loud and clear. The Halloween Climate Rally featured live music from local performers, phone banking, postcard writing, and a "Climate Crisis Costume Contest." Through rain and sunshine, West Virginians held their ground at the rally to let Joe Manchin know what the people truly want: a green and healthy environment for generations to come. 🌿



Executive Committee Candidates Needed

The West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club is looking for candidates to run in the annual election for Executive Committee. This opportunity allows Sierra Club members to participate more actively in our organization as we set our priorities and plan our projects.

ExComm members attend quarterly meetings, normally on Saturdays. Those meetings are currently virtual. As the pandemic recedes, we look forward to resuming our hybrid meetings, which are held at locations around the state with Zoom access for those who cannot attend in person. Between meetings, we communicate via email to discuss our priorities and resolve issues. The rewards include satisfaction in knowing you are making a difference, and regular contact with a statewide circle of environmentalists.

Three seats are up for election. According to our bylaws, we need a candidate for each seat, plus two additional candidates so that members will have choices when casting their ballots. If you are interested in serving, please email the West Virginia Chapter at sierraclub.wv@gmail.com, or call Aileen Curfman at 304-314-2709 or Abby Minihan at 304-208-3063.

On October 30, West Virginians, some in Halloween garb, came out to show their support for climate action in Charleston.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WV CLIMATE ALLIANCE.

Mon Group's *Distributed Organizing* Campaign for Change



BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON



Jack Taylor, Jim Kotcon, Betsy Lawson, Adrienne Epley Brown with son Fox Holliday, Michael Attfield in front of Senator Capito's Morgantown office for the Clean Water and Infrastructure Rally, August 19. PHOTO BY RYAN BROWN.

To encourage more people to become personally engaged with climate activism, the Sierra Club launched *Distributed Organizing* this past summer to get more people involved in convincing our senators that we need action to address climate change, especially because the August 2021 congressional recess in West Virginia was the time and place where action was especially needed. The idea was to provide training webinars and activities to attract a wider range of involvement in lobbying, press events, and phone banking to convince our senators to vote for the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill.

The Monongahela Group chose to hold a press event with the theme of water infrastructure and clean energy as the focus. Held on August 19, the day after classes started at WVU, we planned a rally outside Senator Shelley Moore Capito's Morgantown office at noon, thereby facilitating coverage by the local press before their late afternoon filing deadlines. We joined forces with the Green New Deal Coalition and West Virginia Working Families Party. About 15 people turned out along with photographers from the *Dominion Post* and Getty Images. We provided signs, an acid mine drainage banner, a big jar of acid mine drainage (AMD) water and AMD-covered rocks.

The *Dominion Post* covered our rally on the front page of the next day's edition with two photos and a story. But they gave the last word to Senator Capito, who predictably responded to our rally with the comment that "a \$3.5 trillion expenditure would place too great a burden on our children."

Her comment provoked the theme for a second rally two weeks later, that climate change is the ultimate burden on our children. The second rally, on September 2 and again in front of Capito's office, urged her to support the \$3.5 trillion plan. The 15 people who attended each spoke of how environmental concerns became real and

personal for them. This generated a longer article the next day in the *Dominion Post* with extended quotes from Jim Kotcon and Adrienne Epley Brown, among others, explaining the importance of this bill to the future of life in our state. Capito's response to the second rally remained the same. Her vote against the bill is unlikely to change but, as we read to excess in all the news outlets, Senator Manchin remains the lynchpin.

So, the trillion-dollar question is: How will Manchin vote on the reconciliation bill? How much sway will our rallies, lobbying, and letters to the editor have on his thinking? I've always believed that change comes from the bottom up, not the top down. While our rallies may not have a direct impact on Manchin's vote, a big photo of our rally on the front page of the *Dominion Post* does influence the people who see it, and groundswell happens.

Today, the first day of autumn as I write, I got into a conversation with a conservative neighbor. He commented on the still hot, muggy weather and how green the trees still were, and he asked me if I believed in climate change. When I said of course, climate change is happening now, he agreed with me. Big surprise! And he further agreed that Manchin should vote for the full \$3.5 Trillion bill to bring jobs and clean energy to West Virginia. This is a guy who welcomed a

strip mine in our neighborhood nine years ago. He saw our rally photos and articles in the *Dominion Post*, and maybe it got him to thinking about the now abandoned strip mine in front of his house and all the AMD flowing from it.

The groundswell is happening. Let's hope our so-called leaders are paying attention. Meanwhile, I believe our actions for the climate, at any level, do make a difference. 🌱

Postscript at press time:

It is now November 7, and a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill has been passed, leaving the bigger \$1.85 trillion social welfare and climate change legislation bill [Build Back Better] sitting in limbo. Passing the two bills together was a key priority. Senator Capito has betrayed the people of West Virginia by not supporting the second bill. Senator Manchin's actions will reveal whether West Virginians or his corporate contributors are more important to him. Regardless, we will continue the fight. If we don't win, everyone loses.

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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DEADLINE FOR THE 2022 SPRING ISSUE: FEBRUARY 5, 2022

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

Acid Mine Drainage vinyl banner, 48" x 30", displayed at the rally.

BANNER AND PHOTO BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON.

THE LEGACY OF COAL MINING IN MONONGALIA AND PRESTON COUNTIES

Cheat River, March 8, 2021 after the Muddy Creek Blowout

Bull Run, north of Masontown before it drains into the Cheat River

Dents Run, which drains into the Mon River at Granville

Morgantown Lock and Dam

The Monongahela River was ranked ninth in the "America's Most Endangered Rivers: 2010 Edition," by American Rivers, in Washington, D.C.

ASK SENATOR CAPITO TO CLEAN UP OUR STREAMS!

Outings

Sunday November 28, 2021

Day Hike: White Park Urban Ecotherapy Walk, Morgantown, WV

This hike is open to all. We will take this simple walk and discuss practices to deepen our connection with the natural world. We will take the Lakeshore Trail (1,622-feet) that connects the White Park parking lot with the Woodland Trail. The moderate trail is relatively level, with only a few steep inclines and declines throughout. The Woodland Trail (3,632-feet) takes hikers along the Cobun Creek Reserve, around the southern edge of White Park. A viewing point over the Cobun Creek Reserve can be accessed at the western end of this trail. We will break at the waterfall and return the way we came.

Distance/ 2 miles

Difficulty: EASY

Duration: 90 minutes

Bring: snack, water, and shoes or boots for the varied terrain, gloves, hat and coat are advised

Meet: 1pm, at Morgantown Ice Arena Parking Lot, 1001 Mississippi St, Morgantown, WV 26501

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Cancellation policy: We will cancel in significant rain or snow.

Additional information: This 170-acre park provides five miles of wooded trails for mountain biking and winter hiking. The park is also home to the Morgantown Ice Arena, an indoor ice skating rink open to the public Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. For hours call 304-292-6865. Take I-68 Exit 1, continue on US-119 North. Take Green Bag Road to Hite Street. White Park is located on Mississippi Street in Morgantown. Park trails are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

There are bathrooms in the vicinity, but not on the trail itself.



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/ 6 miles

Difficulty: MODERATELY DIFFICULT

Duration: 3.5 hours

Bring: water and lunch, shoes appropriate for water and mud, hiking poles may be helpful. and shoes for the varied terrain

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

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

Nearest town: Harpers Ferry, WV

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

Additional information: We aim to keep everyone healthy. Please do not attend if you are ill or have recently tested positive for COVID-19. Masks are welcome but not required, and we will practice reasonable distancing.



Sunday December 19, 2021

Day Hike: December De-stress, WV Botanical Gardens (for Sierra Club Members and WVBG Hiking Club members only)

December can be a stressful time. While it can be full of joy, it can also bring chaos in the form of increased hustle and bustle. December can make you feel sad, lonely, or overwhelmed. Fall is ending and we are two days away from the shortest day of the year. The natural world is resting at the WVBG. Let's tap into the calm and beauty of this transitional time with nature as our guide. We will explore the WVBG primarily using the Reservoir Loop and the Woodland Trail.

Distance/ 2 miles

Difficulty: EASY

Duration: 90 minutes

Bring: snack, water, and shoes or boots for the varied terrain, gloves, hat and coat are advised

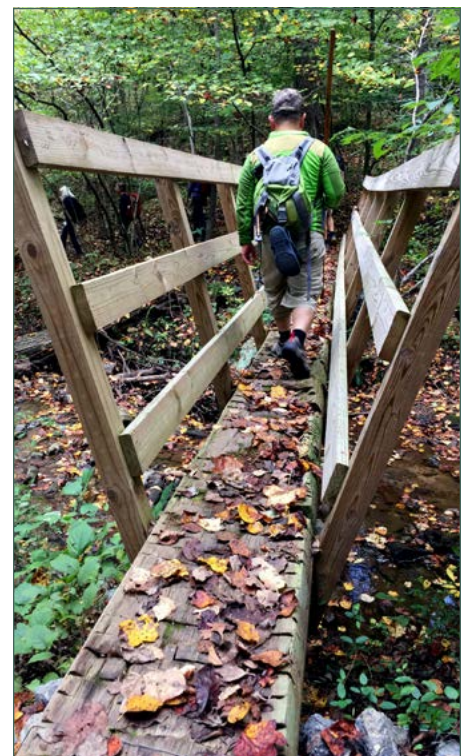
Meet: 1pm, at the WVBG Visitors center, 1061 Tyrone Rd., Morgantown, WV.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Cancellation policy: We will cancel in significant rain or snow.

Additional information: Directions, trail map and amenities can be found at www.wvbg.org.





MEMBERSHIP COUPON

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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Check enclosed, made payable to **Sierra Club**. Mail to:
Sierra Club • P.O. Box 7059 • Merrifield, VA 22116-7059

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CARDHOLDER NAME _____

CARD NUMBER _____

EXP. DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____

Contributions, gifts, and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Annual membership dues of \$25 or more include \$7.50 for a one-year print subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1.00 for your chapter newsletter.



MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$49
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1,250

F94Q **W 5700** -1

EXPLORE, ENJOY, AND PROTECT THE PLANET

From left: In September, over 20 Sierrans enjoyed a guided nature hike at Tom's Run Preserve, near Morgantown.

PHOTO BY MIKE KAROLCHIK.

Eleven Sierrans hiked the Appalachian Trail along the VA/WV border in September. The David Lesser shelter provided a comfortable and lovely picnic spot.

PHOTO BY ED WHEELLESS.

Twenty Sierrans came out on early autumn day for a hike at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship near Harpers Ferry.

PHOTO BY MARLEN MERTZ.

Six Sierrans met in George Washington National Forest (VA/WV) on a steamy August day for a hike to the unparalleled views at Big Schloss.

Along the way they encountered oak and laurel-lined paths, the babble of Little Stony Creek, pre-Civil War charcoal hearths, and a timber rattlesnake who appeared unprepared for company.

PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.

Saturday, January 1, 2022

Day Hike: Antietam Aqueduct to Mountain Lock (37), C&O Canal NHP

After a two-year hiatus, once again join Sierra Club friends in bringing in a New Year with a walk along the Potomac River on the C&O Canal Towpath. We will meet at historic Antietam Aqueduct and walk downstream to Mountain Lock and back, enjoying winter views of the river and its birdlife along the way. The hike is open to adults and children (accompanied by adults) ready for a winter walk on a level path. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are also welcome. There is no charge for the hike.

Distance/ 4 miles

Difficulty: EASY

Duration: 2.5 hours

Bring: water and a snack. Dress appropriately for the winter weather.

Meet: 10 am. Antietam Aqueduct, Canal Road, Sharpsburg, MD (3 miles downstream from the Rumsay Bridge over the Potomac). Parking is available along Canal Road.

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

Nearest towns: Sharpsburg, MD and Shepherdstown, WV

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

Additional information: We aim to keep everyone healthy. Please do not attend if you are ill or have recently tested positive for COVID-19. Masks are welcome but not required, and we will practice reasonable distancing.

From left: Hikers at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship. The Center provides a home for horse and hiking trails, an organic farm, and educational programs.

PHOTO BY ED WHEELLESS

August hikers make their way to Big Schloss in George Washington National Forest.

PHOTO BY ED WHEELLESS

Next page, from top: Hikers at Tom's Run Preserve, near Morgantown find forest surprises including a red eft and fungus-covered logs.

PHOTOS BY MIKE KAROLCHIK.

On the Appalachian Trail, Sierrans found a nice view at Buzzard Rock, that included—appropriately enough—buzzards!

PHOTO BY ED WHEELLESS.

Saturday, January 22, 2022

Day Hike: Fort Duncan, C&O Canal NHP

Fort Duncan is one of the best-preserved and least-known earthen Civil War fortifications in the Harpers Ferry area. Reaching the site will involve walks through the historic town, a stretch of the C&O Canal towpath rich in engineering heritage, and a stretch of untrailed hill through an early iron mine. Hikers must be prepared for two steep hills and surfacers ranging from town sidewalks to rough fields. Winter provides dramatic vistas and the chance to spot eagles and other wildlife along the way. This hike is open to adults and children (accompanied by an adult) capable of handling the varied terrain and distance, but numbers will be limited. It will not be suitable for dogs. There is no charge for this hike, though contributions will be welcome.

Distance/ 6.5 miles

Difficulty: MODERATELY DIFFICULT

Duration: 3.5 hours

Bring: water, a bagged lunch, and a snack if desired. Wear footwear and clothing appropriate for a winter hike on varied terrain.

Meet: 10 am. Old Shipley School parking lot, 850 Fillmore Street, Harpers Ferry. (Note, this is not Shipley Elementary School on US340. Instead, it is the old school building in the historical town on Camp Hill.)

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

Nearest towns: Harpers Ferry, WV

Cancellation policy: We will cancel or postpone in case of ice or heavy snow. Marginal weather may result in avoiding the climb to the Fort and staying on the Canal towpath.

Additional information: We aim to keep everyone healthy. Please do not attend if you are ill or have recently tested positive for COVID-19. Masks are welcome but not required, and we will practice reasonable distancing.



Saturday, February 19, 2022

Day Hike: Tuscarora Trail, Morgan County, WV

The Tuscarora Trail was developed as a bypass of the Appalachian Trail in the mid-Atlantic region. It varies in its terrain and proximity to development. With this hike we will explore the northernmost stretch of the trail in West Virginia, with minimal elevation changes and a path ranging from forest trail to paved country roads. The hike is open to adults and children (accompanied by adults) capable of a winter hike on uneven terrain. Attendance will be limited, so reservations are needed. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. There is no charge for this hike, but contributions are welcome.

Distance/ 7 miles

Difficulty: MODERATELY EASY

Duration: 3.5 hours

Bring: water, lunch, and a snack if desired. Wear footwear and clothing appropriate for a winter hike on varied terrain.

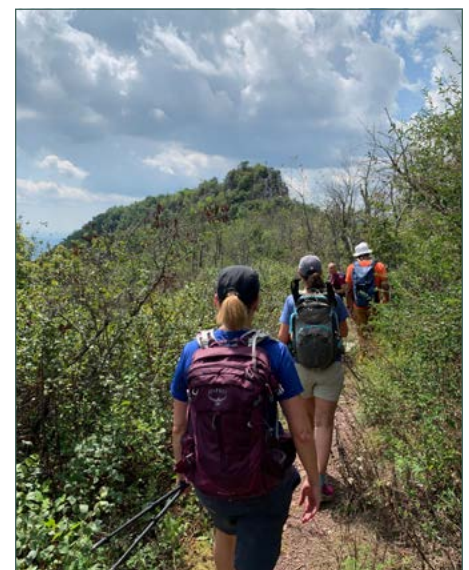
Meet: 10 am. The intersection of Potomac Road (CR 8) and Jim West Road (CR 6), Morgan County, WV. Potomac Road runs between WV 9 and River Road (CR 1) about 8 miles east of Berkeley Springs, WV. Parking will be along these quiet backroads.

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

Nearest towns: Berkeley Springs, WV and Hancock, MD

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

Additional information: We aim to keep everyone healthy. Please do not attend if you are ill or have recently tested positive for COVID-19. Masks are welcome but not required, and we will practice reasonable distancing.



Saturday, March 19, 2022

Day Hike: Appalachian Trail, Keys Gap to Loudoun Heights, VA/WV

Our series of AT hikes in Northern Virginia continues with this ridgetop hike along the VA/WV border to the edge of Harpers Ferry NHP. Late winter will allow for some views, but it is mainly a reasonably level walk in the woods—a good introduction to America’s premier trail. The hike is open to adults and children (accompanied by adults) capable of a winter hike on uneven terrain. Attendance will be limited by NPS regulations. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. There is no charge for this hike, though contributions are welcome.

Distance/ 6.5 miles

Difficulty: MODERATE

Duration: 3.5 hours

Bring: water, lunch, and a snack if desired. Wear footwear and clothing appropriate for a winter hike on varied terrain.

Meet: 10 am. Keys Gap AT parking lot at the VA/WV state line on Route 9. Note that this line is limited in space, so park closely to others. Additional parking may be available along the highway nearby. 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: Harpers Ferry, WV and Hillsboro, VA

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

Additional information: We aim to keep everyone healthy. Please do not attend if you are ill or have recently tested positive for COVID-19. Masks are welcome but not required, and we will practice reasonable distancing.



CARBON | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Storage Hub, which would have turned (and still may turn) the entire region into one big processing center for plastics and petrochemicals, driven by ever more fracking. Now some of these same folks are advocating more pipelines and storage facilities for carbon sequestering processes that don’t work at scale and are incredibly expensive.

Sean O’Leary discussed what we really need here, which is referred to in an ORVI

report as “The Centralia Model for Economic Transition in Distressed Communities.” The report “described how an old and long-suffering coal town in Washington state, which lost its mine and is in the process of losing its power plant, has nonetheless prospered economically.” As Sean states, “The strategy developed in Centralia is replicable to Southwest Pennsylvania and throughout the coal and gas regions of Appalachia. For \$10 billion, we could

implement Centralia-scale transition programs in every one of Appalachia’s major coal and gas counties and avoid the increases CCUS would require in our electric bills and taxes.”

The Ohio River Valley and all of Appalachia deserve better than more fossil-fueled exploitation. Let’s hope our officeholders don’t fall for this nonsense or allow it out of their own self-interest. 🍀

Ecotherapy: Reconnecting with Nature

What does it look like when mental health and nature come together? As a child growing up with an attention deficit it was the perfect prescription. As an adult, I find that this is still the case. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor and an Ecotherapist. Spending time outdoors can reduce stress and increase attention spans for folks with difficulty maintaining focus. When I was young nature provided everything that I needed to remain grounded, energized, curious, and focused—generally happy.

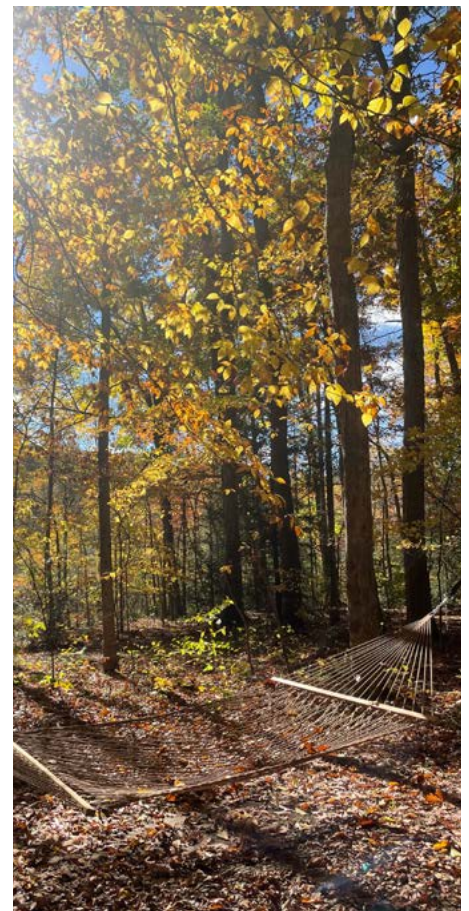


There are many reasons why nature is uplifting. We receive vitamin D from the sun and serotonin-producing microbes from the soil. We are more mindful and less overwhelmed in nature. It inspires feelings of awe. Above all, in nature we feel connected. Our increasingly busy lifestyles and dependence on technology have created a gap between humans and the natural world. When I first heard about the emerging discipline of ecotherapy I knew it could bring additional relief to many individuals who are missing a connection with nature in their lives. I believe that this loss of connection to the earth has dulled human awareness of the environment around them and fueled apathy toward the climate crisis.

Ecotherapy has many branches, including but not limited to art, gardening, adventure therapy, and animal-assisted therapy. I enjoy being in the woods most of all. As the outings coordinator for the Mon Group, I hope to sprinkle an Ecotherapy flavor into some of our hikes. It seems more important now than ever. Counselors are seeing an influx of clients who report what is becoming known as “climate anxiety.” Our warming climate is the existential crisis of our time as well as a social justice issue, since it disproportionately impacts disadvantaged communities. The American Counseling Association has recently created a climate change task force to address the mental health of those struggling with climate anxiety and those who are most affected by the climate crisis.

The Climate Psychology Alliance has also developed tools and resources for counselors to be prepared to assist their clients suffering from climate anxiety. The organization has created online climate cafés with climate-aware therapists facilitating discussions for those who want opportunities to discuss their feeling about the climate crisis. I am a climate-aware therapist and am relieved to see professionals address this fear that many feel but rarely discuss. I believe that connecting with nature, talking to others about climate anxiety, and becoming involved in activism can help to bring meaning during this existential crisis. What better place to bring these passions together than Sierra Club? I hope to see other members join me on the trail this winter to reconnect and recharge in nature. 🍃

BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN



A hammock offers an invitation to relax at the West Virginia Botanical Gardens in Morgantown. Above: Betsy Jaeger Lawson's climate change scarecrow sending a message at the Botanical Gardens in Morgantown.

PHOTOS BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN.



2022 Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club Group Ballot

FOR MEMBERS FROM BERKELEY, JEFFERSON, AND MORGAN COUNTIES ONLY

Excomm Candidates (vote for up to 3)

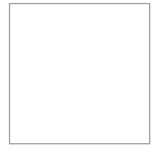
_____	Chris Craig	_____	Write-in
_____	Aileen Curfman	_____	Write-in
_____	Gerald Hatcher	_____	Write-in

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS:

Each individual member from Morgan, Berkeley, or Jefferson County may vote for up to three (3) candidates. Single members should use only one column; Joint members may use both columns. The address label on the reverse side of this ballot shows your membership number and type. To count as a valid ballot, the membership data must remain visible. (You may blacken out your name and address, if desired.)

**BALLOT MUST BE RECEIVED
BY JANUARY 4, 2022.**

FOLD HERE



**Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club
Elections Committee
c/o Maggie Louden
PO Box 1704
Hedgesville, WV 25427-1704**

FOLD HERE

2022 Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club Candidate Statements

CHRIS CRAIG

HARPERS FERRY (JEFFERSON COUNTY)

I became a Sierra Club member and later a life member years ago after outdoor adventures convinced me I needed to work with others to protect this wonderful planet. Today the threats of climate change make that cause ever more urgent. The pandemic has interrupted our fledgling local group's programs and volunteer involvement, but I remain committed to environmental action in the Panhandle. I am currently the WV Outings Chair and editor of the Mountain State Sierran.

AILEEN CURFMAN

SHEPHERDSTOWN (JEFFERSON COUNTY)

I currently serve as Chair of West Virginia Sierra Club's Executive Committee. In that role, I participate in strategic planning and frequently contact the Department of Environmental Protection concerning proposed permits and changes in regulations. I have served as Treasurer of Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club since the group's formation in early 2019. If appointed, I will continue to serve in that capacity. If elected to EP Sierra Club's Executive Committee, my familiarity with the statewide and national Sierra Club organizations will benefit our local group as we work to keep the Eastern Panhandle a green place with a great quality of life.

GERALD HATCHER

SHEPHERDSTOWN (JEFFERSON COUNTY)

I grew up in Loudoun County, Virginia, just across the Shenandoah River. I spent much of my youth fishing in both the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers with my dad and grandad. We took our kids fishing in these rivers when they were young. After the last of my kids left for college, my wife and I day-hiked much of the Appalachian Trail in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. Once we were informed of the potential hazards of the Rockwool plant coming to Jefferson County, we attended many protests and fought to protect the people and natural beauty of our area. At that point we became aware of the tremendous activity of the Sierra Club, joined, and have supported the club ever since.

STAPLE OR TAPE HERE



Sierra Club

West Virginia Chapter

PO Box 4142

Morgantown, WV 26504

sierraclub.org/west-virginia

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

WINTER 2021

**EASTERN PANHANDLE MEMBERS:
VOTE!** SEE PAGE 19



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Chapter ExComm Meeting

The next meeting of the WV Chapter of Sierra Club Executive Committee will be held online at

10 am – 3 pm, Saturday, January 15.

Email sierraclub.wv@gmail.com for more information or to receive the link.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

A Will is a Way

Make a commitment to the next generation by remembering Sierra Club in your will. Your support will help others preserve the intricate balance of nature

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