

# M Mountain State Sierran

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## The Ohio River Restoration Listening Sessions

**The federal government, state agencies, environmental groups, and private individuals may finally be coming together to develop an overall plan to clean up the Ohio River.**

As some of our Eastern Panhandle readers are well aware, there is an ongoing effort to clean up the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. With an area covering 64,000 square miles in six states, and centuries of degradation due to agricultural and urban runoff, sedimentation, polluting industries, and loss of natural habitat, the project initially seemed daunting.

Presently and through various agencies, the

federal government funds Chesapeake Bay restoration to the tune of \$500 million to \$600 million per year. That is half a billion of our tax dollars each year reinvested in those communities to promote and renew a clean and healthy environment into the future. Now, 40 years after the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement, you can see real and tangible improvements in the water quality and ecosystems of the bay and the rivers that feed it.

On the other side of the mountains and just to our north, there is a similar effort happening in the states surrounding the Great Lakes. Since 2010 the federal government has allocated

over \$3.8 billion to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to support local groups and governments in addressing similar legacy and ongoing pollution and habitat loss in that region.

So, how much is being spent on the Ohio River? Zero. The federal government has allocated a big fat goose egg on an overall



**BY ALEX COLE**

*Above: Ohio River View. PHOTO BY ALEX COLE.*

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# VIEW FROM THE CHAIR: React to Discouragement with Action

**It's been a mind-numbing summer. By the time this newsletter is in your hands, it'll almost be over. What a relief! We've seen mass shootings and bitter political fights. In the background, COVID-19 continues to play havoc with our lives.**

In my corner of West Virginia, we've suffered from unbearably hot weather and hazy, dirty air. All summer, going outside has been something I've done as briefly as possible early in the morning or late in the evening. Most of my efforts at exercising outdoors have brought on shortness of breath.

And yet, I see construction continue out by I-81—construction of another huge but nameless facility. The name will be made public when permitting is complete, after it's too late to comment on the project. Will it be another factory? Another trucking warehouse? How much carbon will it dump into Earth's atmosphere? What new contaminants will be added to the gray air that fills the space between my home and North Mountain? How much oil and road dirt will run off that new parking lot and into Hoke Run? Or will this filth be directed into an injection well and delivered into the aquifer that supplies our drinking water?

West Virginia has been in the news all summer because one of our senators has spent months playing now-you-see-me-now-you-don't with his colleagues. Congress is finally working on legislation that would mitigate "the worst effects of climate change," as one news report phrased it. Right now, he's in. This bill is being hailed as the greatest climate deal in the history of the world, but the draft currently under discussion requires any renewable energy development to be tied to new oil and gas leases on public lands. [At time of publication, the Inflation Reduction Act had been passed by the Congress and signed into law.]

If all goes well, we'll achieve a 40 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2030. That year, my oldest grandchild will celebrate his thirty-second birthday. It's likely that he'll be a father by then. Will he spend his birthday worrying that his children will succumb to heat, drought, famine, or floods brought about by corporate greed and our unchecked appetite for fossil fuels?

One of my favorite t-shirts bears a quote from Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Our children's future depends on folks like you and me taking one step at a time, supporting and encouraging each other along the way.

West Virginia needs you. Sierra Club needs you. You may be exhausted, discouraged, and out of fresh ideas for making the world a better place. So are we. But what is the alternative? To toss our future in the trash?

Our call for volunteers this month offers several opportunities, including a few short-term commitments (see page 9). The West Virginia Chapter is comprised of a small, thoughtful group of committed citizens. We welcome you to join us as we change the world. 🌱



**BY AILEEN CURFMAN**

## West Virginia Sierra Club Chapter Directory

Email contact for all officers and staff: [sierraclub.wv@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclub.wv@gmail.com)

*Term ends at first meeting of indicated year.*

### CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

<b>Aileen Curfman, Chair</b>	( <sup>'23</sup> )	304-314-2709
<b>Kevin Campbell, CCL Delegate</b>	( <sup>'23</sup> )	304-613-4099
<b>Robert Griffith</b>	( <sup>'24</sup> )	
<b>Jonah Kone</b>	( <sup>'24</sup> )	720-639-1777
<b>Maura Ross</b>	( <sup>'24</sup> )	
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<b>Mel Waggy, Secretary</b>	( <sup>'23</sup> )	304-497-4358

### MONONGAHELA GROUP EXCOMM

<b>Adrienne Epley Brown, Chair &amp; Outings</b>	( <sup>'23</sup> )	
<b>Michael Attfield, Vice Chair</b>	( <sup>'24</sup> )	
<b>Jim Kotcon, Chapter Delegate</b>	( <sup>'24</sup> )	304-594-3322
<b>Betsy Lawson, Secretary, Membership</b>	( <sup>'24</sup> )	304-983-2980
<b>James Lamp, Political</b>	( <sup>'24</sup> )	304-244-9257
<b>Sally Wilts, Treasurer</b>		304-379-7567
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<b>Maggie Loudon, Secretary</b>	( <sup>'23</sup> )	
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### OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS

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<b>Jim Kotcon, Political &amp; Conservation</b>	304-594-3322
<b>Chris Craig, Newsletter &amp; Outings</b>	304-433-1260
<b>Mel Waggy, Public Lands</b>	304-497-4358
<b>James Lamp, WVU SCC</b>	304-244-9257
<b>David Sturm, Treasurer</b>	304-612-0024
<b>Maura Ross, Webmaster</b>	304-724-7612
<b>Karen Yarnell, Wilderness Coalition</b>	
<b>OPEN, Membership Chair</b>	
<b>OPEN, Gas Committee</b>	

### REGIONAL SIERRA CLUB ORGANIZING STAFF

<b>Bill Price, Eastern Region Senior Organizing Mgr</b>	304-389-8822
<b>Karan Ireland, Senior Campaign Representative</b>	304-356-8774
<b>Alex Cole, Senior Organizer, Beyond Dirty Fuels</b>	304-767-8687

# Marcellus Academy 2022

**Eleven years ago—2011—is when the Marcellus shale boom exploded in West Virginia. Rural areas were flooded with prospectors looking to buy up mineral rights, followed by thumper trucks with metal plates to help oil companies find the best places to drill. Then the fracking began, with a long list of environmental and health problems for the many people unlucky enough to live in the way.**



*Marcellus Academy, 2022. From left to right: Maury Johnson, Kevin Campbell, Dave Sturm, Jim Kotcain, Maryanne Hughes, Eugene Breza, Mary Deskins, Russell Chisholm, Bill Price, and Alex Cole.*

PHOTO BY BETSY LAWSON.

Air and water pollution, diminished property owners' rights, heavy truck traffic, pipelines, soil erosion, noise, compressor stations, cracker plants—there are so many ways the industry has profoundly diminished the quality of life in our state and negatively impacted local ecologies. It has been essential that people in the line of fire speak up and fight back. Our West Virginia voices have power.

So, in 2011 the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club launched the Marcellus Academy for people who wanted to do something about the problem but didn't know where to start. Becoming better informed, learning how to effectively speak out and how to lobby legislators was (and remains) the focus. The Academy became an annual two-day event at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon until 2015. It returned this summer with an event organized by Jim Kotcon, along with Dave Sturm, Kevin Campbell, and Alex Cole. The nine presentations described specific issues and how to take action. Pipelines, abandoned gas wells, leaking methane, and bond money were the particular topics covered this year.

**John King**, the Environmental Advocate for the WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), gave a power point presentation on how to access information on the DEP website, like permit applications, locations of gas wells, and notices of

violations. Knowing how to access data is key to presenting a sound argument. Facts are power.

**Dave McMahon**, chair of the Surface Owners Rights Organization (SORO), discussed bonding. Currently, companies post \$5000 as a bond to plug a well, although the cost to do so is \$100,000. Why would a driller plug a well when it is so much cheaper to forfeit the bond? McMahon suggested plugging insurance would be a more sensible process, in which the driller pays into a fund as the drilling progresses.

**Maury Johnson** and **Russell Chisholm**, of Protect our Water, Heritage and Rights (POWHR), came from Monroe County, WV where the Mountain Valley Pipeline will slice through the steep terrain. They witnessed whole sections of pipeline sliding down steep hillsides, confirming the insanity of running a pipeline through such terrain, where it will never be stable. Soil erosion is the biggest source of stream pollution in WV.

**Jim Kotcon** discussed the final report (MSEEL—Marcellus Shale Energy and Environment Laboratory) of the five-year WVU study of the gas wells fracked by Northeast Natural Energy in the Morgantown Industrial Park. In particular, he mentioned the salt and radium content of the water produced from those fracked wells.

**Alex Cole** described the millions of unplugged



**BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON**

or abandoned wells in the U.S. that leak methane and the cost to plug them properly. Bonding covers less than 1% of that cost. The Infrastructure bill passed by Congress last year allocates \$16 billion to plug wells while creating 100,000 jobs.

Jim spoke about Del. Evan Hansen's (D-Monongalia) proposed bill, the Orphan Well Prevention Act, where drilling companies put money in an escrow account up front to cover the cost of plugging wells when completed. The intention is to prevent abandoned wells in the future. Getting this bill passed is where the rest of us come in.

**Lucia Valentine** of the WV Environmental Council described how ordinary people become lobbyists. Our legislature won't know what we are thinking if we don't tell them. Knowing which legislators to approach, setting up appointments and presenting strong talking points are all part of a successful campaign to get bills like Evan's passed. It does make a difference. Building this campaign was the goal of the weekend.

On Sunday there was further discussion about how to identify and report leaking gas wells. Alex later talked about the Hydrogen Hub, carbon capture sequestration and storage, and hydrogen as an energy source, both the good and the bad. After lunch, Kevin Campbell took several of us on a tour of Doddridge County, an area with several fracking sites, to witness directly how fracking infrastructure impacts rural communities.

Each of these topics begs for its own article. The takeaway for the weekend was building the campaign to reach legislators about these issues through lobbying, letters to the editor, and getting more people involved. Sixteen people participated in this year's academy. We need more voices to speak up. If you feel moved—even just a little bit—to participate, contact Jim Kotcon or any of the people listed in the directory of this newsletter. 🍀



# Taxpayers Should Not Foot the Bill for Failing Coal Companies

**In March 2022, the legislature passed SB1, a bill that creates a mining mutual insurance company to provide bonds to failing coal companies that cannot get insured through the private sector. The Legislature allocated \$50 million in taxpayer dollars for seed money for the new insurance company. Legislators testified that this initial earmark could be just the beginning in what could be a long-term taxpayer bailout of the coal industry.**

In 1977 the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) was established, requiring that coal operators reclaim their mine sites as mining is completed. Because reclamation occurs after the coal is removed, mining companies need regulation to assure mines are reclaimed. So SMCRA requires coal operators to post a bond adequate to cover the cost of reclamation as part of their mining permit.

In West Virginia, however, the required bond does not cover the cost of reclamation. To make up for the shortfall, the state created a “Special Reclamation Fund” (SRF) to cover the cost of reclamation for sites that went bankrupt or forfeited their bonds. The SRF is funded by a tax of 27.9 cents per ton of coal mined. As less coal is mined here, current reclamation liabilities far exceed the money available in the SRF. The underbonding of West Virginia reclamation sites and the pending bankruptcy of the SRF could end up costing state taxpayers over \$1 billion.



**BY LUCIA VALENTINE**

*Lucia Valentine is the outreach coordinator and lobbyist for West Virginia Environmental Council.*

## **FACTS FROM THE 2021 WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATIVE AUDIT REPORT**

- A 2021 WV Legislative audit report on the SRF identified hundreds of millions of dollars in reclamation liabilities. It showed that the cost of reclamation exceeds \$6,000 per acre while the average bond set by the WV Department of Environmental Protection is only \$2,882 per acre.
- Only 7.6% of total reclamation liabilities are covered by forfeited bonds. Over 90% of reclamation liabilities are covered by the 27.9 cents/ton reclamation tax for the SRF.
- As mining continues to decline, there will be less money coming in but higher reclamation costs.
- The report also showed that we have over \$500 million “at risk” bonds, but only \$190 million in state reclamation funds.
- A single company in West Virginia, Indemnity National Insurance Company, holds 67% of mining bonds. Most of the bonding companies are at risk for bankruptcy, further threatening the reliability of bonds.
- The report recommended that bonding rates be increased or limits imposed on insurer risk or taxpayer liability. SB 1 did not include any of the recommendations.

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

To address this problem, we need to seek new legislation that will implement the recommendations of the Legislative Audit:

- Raise bond limits for mining bonds
- Require more stringent bonding authority
- Take the liability away from the taxpayers

## **HELP US IN THIS EFFORT BY PARTICIPATING IN OUR CALL TO ACTION:**

- Go to <https://wvecouncil.org/call-to-action>
- For more information contact [info@wvecouncil.org](mailto:info@wvecouncil.org)

# Plugging Orphaned Oil and Gas Wells

BY LUCIA VALENTINE  
AND JIM KOTCON

**West Virginia has over 6,500 orphaned oil and gas wells. These and other examples of fossil fuel infrastructure are major contributors to climate change, because methane gas is up to 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide in warming the planet.**

An abandoned well is defined as one that has not produced oil or gas in twelve months. An orphaned well is one that no longer produces and whose driller has gone out of business. With no operator, the expense and effort to plug them falls to the landowner or the taxpayers. The cost of plugging these wells is estimated to be around \$125,000 but can depend on depth, age, condition, and location.

The orphaned wells left behind by the oil and gas industry drive down property values, because they often leak dangerous emissions, pollute groundwater, pose a threat to public health, and contribute to climate change. One study showed that 53 percent of a



sampling of conventional wells were leaking at least nine cubic feet an hour. Plugging these wells would significantly reduce the amount of methane emitted in West Virginia.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed by Congress in Fall 2021 includes historic funding allocated to West Virginia. The Department of the Interior has granted up to \$142 million to West Virginia to “plug, remediate, and reclaim orphaned oil and gas wells” across the state.

To fully address and take advantage of the funds granted to the State, the Legislature must pass legislation to prevent more wells from becoming orphaned in the first place.

*Not all WV orphan wells are as attractive or utilitarian as this one in Betsy Jaeger Lawson’s back yard—now holding up a grape arbor and a clothesline! However, this one—like many—leaks methane, creating environmental hazards and contributing to climate change. PHOTO BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON.*

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Addressing the issue of preventing and plugging orphaned wells is a top priority for the West Virginia Environmental Council, the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club, and other environmental and citizen groups across the state. HB 4054, the Orphan Well Prevention Act, introduced by Delegate Evan Hansen (D-51), will likely be reintroduced in 2023. It would require drilling companies to put enough money away up front to cover the cost of plugging their wells should they orphan them, and as a result prevent taxpayers from footing the bill.

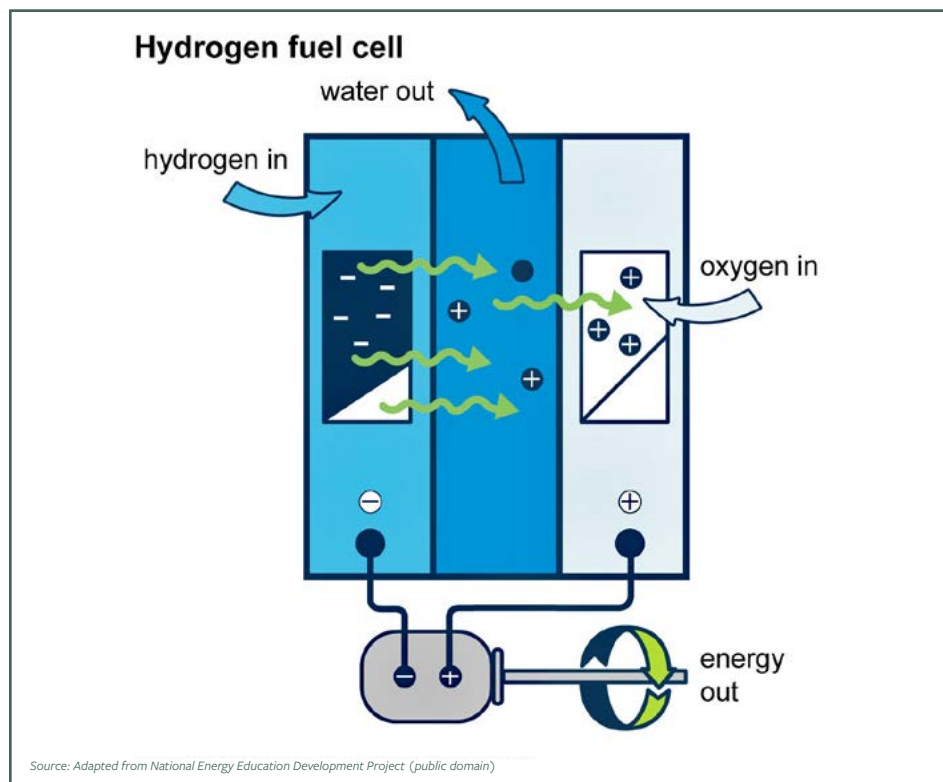
- **Let your legislators hear from you.** Ask them to support an Orphan Well Protection Act. Go to <https://wvecouncil.org/call-to-action-2/>.
- **Host an in-district meeting.** Invite your delegates and state senators for a meeting with local neighbors and activists to discuss the problem, and ask for their support. This is a key opportunity to get to know them, as well as to educate them on this issue. Legislators are much more likely to act on an issue if they have heard about from their constituents before the next session begins.
- **Read the entire text** of HB 4054 at Bill Status - Complete Bill History ([wvlegislature.gov](http://wvlegislature.gov)).

For more information, contact [info@wvecouncil.org](mailto:info@wvecouncil.org) or [jkotcon@gmail.com](mailto:jkotcon@gmail.com). We can provide fact sheets, tips for a successful meeting, and ideas on how to pull it off.

# Hydrogen Energy – What it Means for West Virginia

BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON

As concerns about climate change make the world look for ways to stop relying on fossil fuels, hydrogen has become a new buzz word in energy production. It is the most abundant element in the universe—our sun is mostly made of it—and, as  $H_2$ , it is highly flammable. But it mostly exists on earth as water ( $H_2O$ ) and methane ( $CH_4$ ), among other compounds.



Hydrogen as an energy source has been around since the 1800s but has not been efficient or economically advantageous, because a lot of energy is required to separate the hydrogen from oxygen or carbon atoms. There are several different ways to do so: High temperatures will break the chemical bonds, as will electrolysis. Several different color designations are used to classify the resulting pure hydrogen, depending on the carbon footprint needed for production.

About 90% of all hydrogen energy produced today is called **grey hydrogen**, which uses a process called **steam methane reforming**, the reaction of methane or other hydrocarbons with steam in the presence

of a catalyst (usually nickel) to form carbon oxides and hydrogen.

If the carbon is captured and stored underground, the result is **blue hydrogen**, which sounds like a more environmentally benign process. However, because not all the carbon is necessarily captured, and much of it likely leaks from the pipelines en route to where it will be pumped underground, it could have an even bigger carbon footprint than grey hydrogen. Robert Howarth of Cornell University thinks that the carbon footprint for blue hydrogen could be worse than burning natural gas directly.

**Turquoise hydrogen** uses methane

pyrolysis, which heats hydrocarbon above its decomposition temperature, producing hydrogen and solid carbon. This carbon has practical uses, so there is no need for capture and storage. But methane pyrolysis is still in the experimental stage.

**Electrolysis** uses electricity to separate the atoms of water to produce pure hydrogen. If only renewable energy is used, the result is called **green hydrogen**, because it has no carbon footprint. This is currently an expensive process, but that will change as electrolyzers get bigger and cheaper, and as renewable energy becomes more abundant. The process also acts as energy storage, transforming excess solar and wind power, when available, into hydrogen power that can be used when these other renewables are not available. This storage might be green hydrogen's most valuable application.

**Once you have  $H_2$** , you can either burn it directly or combine it with oxygen in a fuel cell, which is like a battery. The reaction in the fuel cell produces electricity and heat, and the only waste product is water. Because hydrogen fuel cells are energy-dense compared to lithium-ion batteries, vehicles can go further, fuel cells take up less space than batteries, and they can be refueled more quickly. Currently, however, it takes more energy to produce a fuel cell than the amount it releases.

Most hydrogen produced today is used by industry for refining petroleum, treating metals, and producing fertilizer. As the production of green hydrogen increases and its price falls, it will become a viable alternative to petroleum, especially for airplanes, container ships, and long-haul trucks, whose long distances make the use of batteries impossible. Most of this technology is still in the developmental stage, but investment in green hydrogen infrastructure will wean us off fossil fuels

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# Mountain Valley Pipeline Attempts to Stay Alive by Circumventing Rules

## **The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) was in trouble.**

After consistently violating water quality standards during prior construction, generating hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines, losing repeatedly in court over attempts to get permits, and running years behind schedule and billions of dollars over budget, MVP asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to extend its construction permit an additional four years. But investors were getting worried, with some raising questions about whether it would ever be finished.

One might hope that this rogue company would finally get the message and do it right. Instead, MVP worked with Senator Joe Manchin on a deal. Manchin would agree to support President Biden's climate legislation if Congress took up a measure to "streamline" rules for energy infrastructure. While these rules would help expedite renewable energy projects, they also would waive roadblocks for MVP.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) would include billions for renewable energy and would be the most significant climate bill ever. The Sierra Club supports the IRA, but the MVP deal is a bitter compromise for West Virginians. It will require continued activism by members to protect our air, land, and water.

*Editor's note: At time of publication, the IRA had been signed into law with MVP provisions as described.*



**BY JIM KOTCON**

## **OHIO RIVER** | [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1](#)

plan to clean up the Ohio River.

Why is that? We all know there is a need; the Ohio River watershed includes the vast majority of our state. The river is simultaneously the drinking water source for over 5 million people and is regularly cited as the most polluted inland waterway in the United States. So why is there no money coming into our communities to help make the environment we live in safer, healthier, and cleaner?

Well, a big part of the reason is there is no plan, and we haven't asked for one yet. But that is changing, and this is where you come in. We need your help. We need your input.

Right now, with the help of the National Wildlife Federation, and some of the very people who created the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, people are coming together from communities all around the Ohio River Basin to identify threats to the river, assess the needs of our communities, and formulate a plan to address them. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to steer future federal funding and ask for long-standing issues to be addressed directly in our communities.

In coalition with WV Rivers, Energy Efficient WV, and the National Wildlife Federation, we already hosted the first three in-person listening sessions along the part of the river that borders WV in Wheeling, Marietta, and Huntington. But that is just the start. We will hold the next listening session and first solely for West Virginia residents digitally at 3-4:30 pm, Wednesday, August 24th.

If you are interested in participating in the listening sessions or in the plan-writing process, please contact me at [alex.cole@sierraclub.org](mailto:alex.cole@sierraclub.org) for more information. I would love to connect you with the registration information and get you in the room with the amazing group of people who have already come together to get this process off the ground. 🍀

## **HYDROGEN** | [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6](#)

and will eventually become more cost effective.

**As for West Virginia...**The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that passed in Congress last November dedicated \$8 billion for the development of four regional hydrogen hubs to improve clean hydrogen production, processing, delivery, storage, and end use. In a joint press release issued on March 21, WV Senators Manchin and Capito, Representative McKinley, and Governor Justice announced their proposal to the US Dept. of Energy to locate one of the hubs in West Virginia.

Of course, producing green hydrogen from renewable energy is not the intention of these politicians, but rather to turn the Marcellus shale basin along the Ohio River into one of the new hubs, thereby keeping

the Marcellus gas flowing. The infrastructure bill stipulates that at least two of the U.S. hydrogen hubs must be in regions rich in natural gas, using carbon capture and utilization storage (CCUS).

The Ohio River Valley Institute calls this plan a boondoggle in the making, saying *"retrofitting coal and natural gas-fired power plants to produce hydrogen, capture greenhouse gas emissions and pump those emissions through pipelines and underground would be more costly than transitioning to clean energy sources, such as solar and wind."*

Once again, the Mountain State stands at crossroads leading to a clean energy future or a soon-to-be obsolete CCUS infrastructure, thanks to politicians forever in thrall to the fossil fuel industry.



# Why Environmental Volunteering is Good for Your Health and Happiness



BY SANDI SCHWARTZ

**As environmentalists fighting to improve our planet, we are attuned to the multiple crises we are facing, whether it be climate change, single-use plastics, species extinction, overdevelopment, and more. It can be quite the uphill battle to try to save the planet, and this can sometimes cause us to feel negative emotions like stress, anxiety, anger, and even despair.**

However, the good news is that by getting involved and volunteering, we can feel happier, healthier, and calmer. And there's science to prove this!

When we volunteer in our community, we can experience a physiological change called a “helper's high.” This euphoric sensation happens when our brain releases endorphins, making us feel elated and excited. Giving back also stimulates the vagus nerve, which is linked to the production of oxytocin, a hormone that soothes us. As a result, we experience positive health changes including less stress and a boost in happiness.

Volunteering can also help us stay healthy and live longer, improving physical health such as lowering blood pressure. According to research, volunteers are happier and healthier than non-volunteers, and volunteering later in life can have a bigger impact on health than even exercising or eating well. Other benefits of volunteering include experiencing more compassion, feeling more connected to our community, gaining confidence and personal satisfaction, feeling empowered, having a purpose, being more grateful for what we have in life, and viewing the world from a broader perspective—all linked to greater joy and reduced stress.

Additionally, spending time in and around nature is beneficial to our health and well-being. The natural world offers solace and comfort, calming us when we are stressed and uplifting our mood when we feel down. In fact, spending time outdoors volunteering enhances positive emotions and increases general health. Much of this is due to nature's many healing attributes, such as vivid colors, invigorating

scents, attractive patterns, soothing sounds, fresh air, and awe-inspiring scenes.

Sierra Club provides a positive outlet to make a difference and feel better at the same time. Whether you participate in a local cleanup, planting, or trail maintenance or create your own Team Sierra initiative to raise funds to support Sierra Club's work for climate, wildlife, and wild places, there are endless opportunities for environmental volunteering through our organization. You might also have a local Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) program to get involved with, which empowers youth from communities with limited access to connect and reconnect to the outdoors. ICO helps create the next generation of environmental justice and social justice leaders through building community and increasing exposure to outdoor recreation, advocacy, and leadership training.

What other ways can you and your group get involved with environmental volunteering to feel happier and calmer? To discover additional ideas and to learn more

about why nature is so healing, check out the book *Finding Ecohappiness*, by Sandi Schwartz.

*Sandi Schwartz is an author, journalist, and editor of her Sierra Club Group newsletter in Florida. As the founder and director of the Ecohappiness Project, her mission is to inspire and educate families to build a nature habit to feel happier and calmer. Her book, Finding Ecohappiness, is available now. Learn more at [www.ecohappinessproject.com](http://www.ecohappinessproject.com).*





# One person CAN make a difference: Get Involved!

## WV Environmental Summit: September 24–25

The 2022 Environmental Summit will bring together local and state environmental organizations, activists, and citizens to facilitate conversation around the opportunities and challenges facing the state's environmental movement. Sponsored by the WV Environmental Council, the event will be held at the WVU Natural Resources Center at Coopers Rock State Forest, near Morgantown.

Coalition building will be the theme on Saturday, 9/24. On Sunday, 9/25, the summit focus will be on legislative strategy and outdoor activities. There will also be the chance to zip-line, hike, and more.

Help shape the future of West Virginia's environmental movement by attending the summit. It will be a weekend of discussion, networking, food, music, bird-watching, zip-lining, and more!

Registration is free and includes meals and communal lodging at the yurts at the venue, but donations are welcome. To register, or for details and directions, go to: Eventbrite: [www.tinyurl.com/WVECsummit](http://www.tinyurl.com/WVECsummit).

## Call for Volunteers

Are you looking for a way to get a little more involved with the West Virginia Sierra Club? Several opportunities are available now!

If you're not able to take on a long-term commitment of serving on the chapter executive committee (see Call for Nominations), you might be interested in helping with the election. The nominations committee assists with finding suitable candidates and receiving nominations. The elections committee requests candidate statements, prepares and sends out the ballot, and tallies the vote. If you're interested in either of these committees, contact Aileen Curfman at [acurfman@gmail.com](mailto:acurfman@gmail.com) or Jim Kotcon at [jkotcon@gmail.com](mailto:jkotcon@gmail.com).

**Membership Committee**—We still need a couple of volunteers to greet new members with a letter filled with information about our chapter. Any postage expenses will be reimbursed. Contact Aileen Curfman at [acurfman@gmail.com](mailto:acurfman@gmail.com).

**Gas/Beyond Dirty Fuels**—Are you frackin' tired of drilling activity in your neighborhood? P.O.'d about pipelines? Jim Kotcon is looking for agitators to fight for better legislation. Contact [jkotcon@gmail.com](mailto:jkotcon@gmail.com).

## 2022 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR Eastern Panhandle Group Executive Committee

The Eastern Panhandle Group of the Sierra Club has four ExComm seats up for re-election this year. Incumbents are welcome to run for another term, but new faces are also welcome! This committee meets monthly by Zoom, with an in-person component when safe. If you are a Sierra Club member in good standing and live in Morgan, Jefferson, or Berkeley County, this opportunity might be for you. If you aren't able to serve, you may know someone who would be perfect in this role. Contact Aileen Curfman at [acurfman@gmail.com](mailto:acurfman@gmail.com).

## 2022 CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR Chapter Executive Committee

Do you know someone who would like to work with the team that drives the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club? The Chapter is looking for six members to compete for four vacant positions on its Executive Committee (ExComm).

The four who are elected will join a committee of nine members. The ExComm meets quarterly, usually by Zoom. When Covid numbers and travel conditions permit, the group may have in-person meetings with a Zoom component. Occasionally, there may be additional meetings to work on a special project. In between meetings, members stay connected via email.

To be eligible, the nominee must be a member of the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club and must remain an active (dues paid) member throughout their two-year term.

Although you may nominate a person whose seat is up for re-election this year, we are always looking for new faces and fresh ideas. If you are interested, or if you know anyone who might be interested in joining this team, please contact Aileen Curfman at [acurfman@gmail.com](mailto:acurfman@gmail.com).

# JCF's Legal Challenge of Rockwool's Tax Abatement Deal Produces Positive Precedent



BY LYNN DELLES

**Advocacy organizations in West Virginia will want to review the recent opinion issued by West Virginia's highest court in *Jefferson County Foundation Inc. v. West Virginia Economic Development Authority* (find at <https://law.justia.com/cases/west-virginia/supreme-court/2022/21-0235.html>). In this June 8 opinion the Supreme Court of Appeals addressed the issue of standing and held that a nonprofit advocacy organization has standing to pursue legal action on behalf of its members and the public.**

Jefferson County Foundation Inc. (JCF) had challenged the legality and constitutionality of a "sale and leaseback" agreement involving the WV Economic Development Authority (WVEDA) and heavy industrial manufacturer Rockwool's insulation factory in Ranson. In such arrangements, which are regularly used in the state to provide tax breaks to corporations, the corporation "sells" its land and factory to the state with the right to buy back for a minimal amount (here, \$1.00) after a number of years (here, after ten years). During the time the corporate property is owned by the state, the corporation enjoys substantial tax relief. In its legal challenge JCF asserted among other things that the arrangement violates the fair and equal taxation clause in the state constitution (Article X, § 1).

One of the arguments that the WVEDA

made in its motion to dismiss at the lower court was that JCF lacked standing to bring such a case. While the lower court did not address that argument, the Supreme Court directly analyzed the issue and found that JCF has standing to bring such a legal and constitutional challenge on behalf of its members.

The court began its analysis by explaining that "[g]enerally, standing is defined as '[a] party's right to make a legal claim or seek judicial enforcement of a duty or right'" (The opinion of the court at p. 10).

The court then explained that "An organization has representative standing to sue on behalf of its members when the organization proves that: (1) at least one of its members would have standing to sue in their own right; (2) the interests it seeks to protect are germane to the organization's purpose; and

(3) neither the claim asserted nor the relief requested requires the

participation of individual members in the lawsuit" (p. 10). The court found that JCF satisfied (2) and (3). WVEDA argued that JCF did not meet the first criteria because it was not a party to the sale/leaseback agreement and therefore lacked standing. However, the court found that, "For standing under the Declaratory Judgments Act, it is not essential that a party have a personal legal right or interest" (p. 12), and that "When significant interests are directly injured or adversely affected by governmental action, a person so injured has standing under the Uniform Declaratory Judgments Act, W.Va. Code s 55-13-1 et seq. (1941) to obtain a declaration of rights, status, or other legal relations" (p. 12).

The Court noted that JCF had challenged contracts to be entered into by a public entity, alleged that those contracts violate both statute and the West Virginia Constitution, and sought a declaration regarding the impact of that public contract on members' interests that arguably fall within those protected by

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



## WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

Ensure your environmental legacy by naming Sierra Club or your favorite Sierra Club Chapter in your will or trust. These gifts cost you nothing now. You can hold on to your assets for as long as you need them and you can change your beneficiaries at any time.

*If you have named Sierra Club or your Chapter as a beneficiary or would like to discuss doing so, please contact us today*

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[gift.planning@sierraclub.org](mailto:gift.planning@sierraclub.org)  
[myplan.sierraclub.org](http://myplan.sierraclub.org)



# Wilderness Act Celebrates 60 Years

BY VICKY HOOVER

**The sixtieth anniversary of the Wilderness Act that established America's National Wilderness Preservation System is just around the corner in 2024!**

This September 3 we hail the 58th anniversary of President Lyndon Johnson's signing of the Wilderness Act. That gives us just over a year to prepare. How will we take advantage of public attention to get the word out about how vital wilderness protection is for local ecologies—and the world as a whole?

In 2014, many Club chapters conducted outings in honor of wilderness, held joint events with one or more federal wilderness-managing agencies or state wilderness organizations, and wrote up descriptions of trips to wilderness areas in their state.

The six states that have no federal wilderness can promote their wild natural places—in many cases, state lands. Or, they can schedule hikes into neighboring states with wilderness areas. The Maryland Chapter has done especially well in assuring their wild state lands get managed as protectively as federal wilderness. ([www.sierraclub.org/maryland/natural-places-committee](http://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/natural-places-committee).)

We now have ten more years to reflect how far we have come since 1964, when the original Act brought into being 54 wilderness areas in 13 states—places that had already been protected by the Forest Service. But administrative protection was temporary and haphazard, and defenders of wildlands saw that a national law was needed to protect wild, natural land from development—by federal law.

New awareness that preserving nature can combat the climate crisis and fight the world's species extinction crisis gives us even more reason to fight to protect nature—in our national 30 by 30 campaign. (<https://addup.sierraclub.org/campaigns/protect-30-of-lands-and-waters-by-2030>) Let's start by celebrating what we have achieved. Today, our country has 803 wilderness areas in 44 states plus Puerto Rico—with stewardship by all four federal land agencies. These provide plenty of reasons to celebrate—and to work for even more.

To join the Sierra Club's nationwide effort in the West Virginia Chapter, contact Vicky Hoover, Wildlands Team Sixtieth co-coordinator, [vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org](mailto:vicky.hoover@sierraclub.org).

*Editor's Note: Wilderness areas in West Virginia comprise 116,090 acres of Monongahela National Forest, including the popular Dolly Sods area.*

## ROCKWOOL | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Article X, § 1 of the West Virginia Constitution (p. 12-13). Comparing these findings to the precedent set in *Shobe v. Latimer*, the court found that the JCF had standing to bring this case. The court's decision confirmed the precedent of *Shobe* and applied it to an organization representing the public interest.

In summary, the standing precedent established in Jefferson County Foundation

v. WVEDA should be reviewed by, and may be helpful to, other public interest organizations that seek to challenge the actions of public entities in West Virginia. And this is good news for all of us.

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

## Summer for Eastern Panhandle Sierrans

Summertime tends to be a quiet time for the Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club Group, but our outings program continues to be popular.

On May 26 the Group planted a Brandywine maple at North Jefferson Elementary School in memory of Mary B. Reed, a Sierra Club member and dedicated activist in the fight against the Rockwool facility and the lax permit process that brought this polluting factory to Jefferson County. Students joined Sierrans for a brief dedication ceremony.

Our annual potluck picnic will be held at 6 pm, August 23, in the Kester Pavilion at Poor House Farm Park, Berkeley County. A brief hike may precede the picnic, and we will conclude the evening with a stroll around the lake. Check the event listing on the Meetup page for Sierra Club (<https://www.meetup.com/sierra-club-eastern-panhandle/events/286524230/>).

We plan to resume our program meetings as soon as Sierra Club guidelines permit. Stay tuned!



EPSC volunteers gathered with staff and students at North Jefferson Elementary School, Jefferson County, in May to dedicate a tree planted in honor of environmental activist Mary B. Reed.

PHOTO BY AILEEN CURFMAN



# WV TRAIL Charts a New Path for WV's Trails



BY KENT SPELLMAN

**A new statewide organization has emerged to provide a collective voice for non-motorized trails of all types in the Mountain State, including water trails, rail-trails, mountain bike trails, equestrian trails, primitive trails, bike lanes, accessible trails, and more.**

WV TRAIL (West Virginia's Trail & Recreation Advocacy & Information Link) began as an informal group of organizations exploring how best to advance trails as economic and community development drivers in West Virginia. The group evolved over the course of more than 18 months of meetings into a non-profit corporation governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Organizations associated with WV TRAIL and its work include the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA), Mon River Trail Conservancy, WVU Outdoor Economic Development Collaborative, Mountain State Trail Alliance, Mountaineer Trail Network Recreation Authority, WV Land Trust, City of Huntington, WV Connecting Communities, and more.

"WV TRAIL fills a void in our state trail community by providing a collective voice in support of trails of all types," said Nathan Hilbert of the NPS RTCA. "It's also a tool for sharing best practices, funding opportunities, and policy ideas."

## THE GOALS OF WV TRAIL INCLUDE:

- Building a vibrant statewide network of trail users, advocates, and managers
- Creating a Legislative Trail Caucus
- Hosting a statewide non-motorized trail conference each year
- Updating and expanding WV's 20-year-old Statewide Trail Plan
- Identifying policy changes that would have a positive impact on trail acquisition, development, and maintenance
- Providing information and training to local trail groups

Outdoor recreation is increasingly seen as the most immediate and affordable economic development strategy available to West Virginia communities. In addition, the state is rich in outdoor recreation assets, and almost every one of those assets is touched by a trail of some kind. Trails have been shown to have measurable economic impact on communities. A study of the economic impact of the Mon River Trail system on Morgantown showed an annual impact of over \$6 million.

But as Ella Belling, executive director of the Mon River Trail Conservancy points out, "Trails don't build themselves. Communities



*The Spruce Pine Shelter made for a nice stop on this May 2022 hike on the Tuscarora Trail in Morgan County, WV. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG*

must want them and be willing to invest in them. Our state must support them and invest in them. And volunteers must step up to advocate for their trails and help improve and maintain them."

With the recent passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, increased federal funding is available to the hundreds of trail organizations and communities in West Virginia who manage, build, and maintain trails, providing more opportunities for trail development to create lasting impact to communities and regions across the state. In a survey of trail managers across the state, WV TRAIL found that improving and speeding up the award and implementation process for the two federal pass-through grant programs managed by the WV Division of Highways is a top priority. The organization believes that by promoting best practices in trail planning at the community level and assisting to build a path forward for state policy, improved and new trails can be used to promote and increase community vitality.

The first statewide trail conference was held virtually in November 2021. It included more than 30 presenters, with more than 250 people registered. This year's conference will be in person at Glade Spring Resort, October 28-29. Information about WV TRAIL and the conference is available at [wvtrail.org](http://wvtrail.org).

*Kent Spellman is the Board Chair of WV TRAIL. He co-founded the North Bend Rail-Trail in 1988, was the founding executive director of the WV community Development Hub, and worked as a consultant for Rails to Trails Conservancy prior to 2022.*



# Outings

BY CHRIS CRAIG

## Sunday August 21, 2022

### DAY HIKE: Quebec Run Mill Run Trail

Join us on this woodland walk through ferns, rhododendrons, and hemlock. There will be a few areas that could require some scrambling. The Quebec Run Wild Area is located along the eastern slope of Chestnut Ridge in Fayette County. This heavily forested, 7441-acre area of land extends eastward to Big Sandy Creek. Nearly all of the Quebec Run and Tebolt Run watersheds are within the Wild Area. No development of a permanent nature is permitted in the area, in order for it to remain "wild." Hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, and the pursuit of peace and solitude are allowed. Big Sandy Creek and Mill Run are stocked with trout, and the lower reaches of Quebec and Tebolt Runs contain native trout. The forest is mixed mesophytic, with sugar and red maple, yellow poplar, mixed oaks, rhododendron, hemlock, and more. The forest is mostly third growth, resulting from extensive timber harvesting by the Summit Lumber Co. of Uniontown around 1938-40. Many of the old logging roads and tram roads are in evidence, along with dark brown sawdust piles that give mute testimony to the once-active portable sawmills.

**Distance/** 2.5 miles  
**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 2 hours

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

**Meet:** 10 am. Mill Run Parking Lot (39°45'49.7"N 79°39'49.1"W), off Quebec Rd, near Farmington, PA. Contact the trip leader for detailed directions.

**Leader:** Adrienne Epley Brown  
adrienne\_epley@yahoo.com  
702-465-9119

**Nearest town:** Farmington, PA

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

**Additional information:** Detailed area map can be found at <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateForests/FindAForest/Forbes/Pages/Hiking.aspx>

## Sunday, September 17, 2022

### DAY HIKE: Cranesville Swamp, Terra Alta, WV

A mix of dirt trails and boardwalk, these trails offer one-of-a-kind views of one of West Virginia's most unique ecosystems. This area is managed by the Nature Conservancy and is home to rare species. Cranesville Swamp is a frost pocket that is a mix of coniferous trees and wetland shrubs. We will meet at the boardwalk and begin on the Blue trail that is half a mile long. There are multiple shorter trails through different parts of the preserve that we will also explore if time permits.

**Distance/** 1 mile

**Difficulty:** EASY

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Bring:** insect repellent, snack, water, sunscreen, and shoes for the varied terrain. Sandals are not recommended.

**Meet:** 10 am. Blackburn Center, 34899 Appalachian Trail Road, Round Hill, VA. From VA Route 9 between Hillsboro, VA and the WV line, turn south on VA 751 (Cider Mill Road) for 1.5 miles, then right on VA 719 (Woodgrove Road) for 2 miles. Turn right on VA 713 (Appalachian Trail Road). Park at the first parking area within the Blackburn Center, about 2 miles up the hill from Woodgrove.

**Leader:** Adrienne Epley Brown  
adrienne\_epley@yahoo.com  
702-465-9119

**Nearest town:** Terra Alta, WV

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

**Additional information:** Additional information and an audio tour of the site can be found at [www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/cranesville-swamp-preserve](http://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/cranesville-swamp-preserve).

PHOTOS FROM TOP: Adrienne Epley Brown's daughter cooled off with the help of West Virginia water at Audra State Park. PHOTO BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN. The now-closed Burnt Mill Bridge over Sleepy Creek provided a scenic backdrop on this May 2022 Tuscarora Trail hike in Morgan County, WV. PHOTO BY JULIE MCFADDEN. After a July climb up from the Potomac River, Sierrans were rewarded with the fabulous view from Weverton Cliffs, near Brunswick, Maryland. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG. Ten Sierrans didn't let the July heat or threat of rain stop them from a hike on both the Appalachian Trail and the C&O Canal Towpath at Weverton, Maryland. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG. A cool breeze provided a welcome reprieve from June's high temperatures during this Appalachian Trail hike along the WV/VA line south of Harpers Ferry. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.



## Saturday, September 17, 2022

### DAY HIKE:

#### Appalachian Trail, Snickers Gap to Rocky Knoll

Our exploration of the AT in Northern Virginia and WV continues with this out-and-back hike north from Snickers Gap. Six miles of our hike will be along the famed Rollercoaster section, with steep and challenging grades. We will be rewarded with several good views and areas of geological interest and southern forests. Be prepared for changing weather, with possible intense heat. This hike is suitable for adults in good shape. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance/** 9.2 miles  
**Difficulty:** DIFFICULT  
**Duration:** 6 hours

**Bring:** Lots of water, a packed lunch, and some snacks. Bring or wear protection from bugs, especially ticks.

**Meet:** 9:30 am. VDOT Commuter parking lot at southwest corner of the intersection of VA Routes 7 and 601. (Access from eastbound 7 or from 601 south of 7.)

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

**Nearest town:** Bluemont and Round Hill, VA

**Cancellation policy:** We will cancel in heavy rain.

## Saturday, October 8, 2022

### DAY HIKE:

#### Harpers Ferry/Bolivar Trails and Towns

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has some of the best and most popular trails in the Mid-Atlantic region. But even some of the local residents don't know that the park's towns, Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, have networks of trails and public land that offer quiet encounters with nature and some nice views in any season. This walk will include trails and walkways in both the Park and the towns. It will range from Harpers Ferry's busiest district during the busiest month of the year, to little-known trails that we'll likely have to ourselves, to one short, narrow county roadway. This hike has a couple of steep hills, one with uneven steps, but it is otherwise flat or rolling terrain. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance/** 4.5 miles  
**Difficulty:** MODERATELY EASY  
**Duration:** 2.5 hours

**Bring:** water and a snack.

**Meet:** 9 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 town:** Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, WV

**Cancellation policy:** We will cancel in heavy rain.

## Sunday, November 6, 2022

### DAY HIKE: Virgin Hemlock Trail, Coopers Rock State Forest

Located in Coopers Rock State Forest, this trail travels through a mixed hardwood forest. The canopy is mature hemlocks, and the forest floor is carpeted with ferns, offering amazing scenery year-round. A portion of the trail runs alongside the Little Laurel Run. The trail passes a large hemlock grove that is over 300 years old.

**Distance/** 1.2 miles. EASY, but somewhat  
**Difficulty:** steep in parts  
**Duration:** 1.5 hours

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

**Meet:** 10 am. Virgin Hemlock Trailhead. From Morgantown, take Interstate 68 to Exit 15 Coopers Rock. Turn left off the exit, then right at the stop sign onto County Route 73. The Virgin Hemlock Trailhead is on your left in 2.4 miles. There is a small parking lot on the opposite side of the road.

**Leader:** Adrienne Epley Brown  
adrienne\_epley@yahoo.com  
702-465-9119

**Nearest town:** Morgantown, WV

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

**Additional information:** There is no bathroom.

## 2023 SIERRA CLUB CALENDARS



### ORDER FORM

ITEM	COST	QTY	TOTAL
Wilderness Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> \$13.00	_____	_____
Engagement Calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> \$14.00	_____	_____

Please make checks payable to "WV Sierra Club" and mail to:

Sierra Club Calendars  
c/o Candice Elliott  
414 Tyrone Avery Rd  
Morgantown WV 26508

OR email for more options: [candice.k.elliott@gmail.com](mailto:candice.k.elliott@gmail.com)

Subtotal: \_\_\_\_\_

Sales Tax: \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping: \$9.00

GRAND TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_



## Saturday, November 12, 2022

### DAY HIKE: Tuscarora Trail and Third Hill Mountain, Morgan County, WV

We will continue our exploration of the Tuscarora Trail and nearby lands in West Virginia on this stretch with plenty of climbs, rocks, and mud. Autumn color should be good as we follow the Tuscarora south and return on ATV trails on Third Hill Mountain. This hike will be suitable for adults and children (accompanied by adults) in good shape. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance/** 6 miles  
**Difficulty:** MODERATELY DIFFICULT

**Duration:** 4 hours

**Bring:** Bring: water, lunch, protection from bugs, including ticks.

**Meet:** 10 am. Small parking lot at the end of Audubon Road, near Hedgesville, WV. From WV Route 9 (10.6 miles west of I-81) turn south on Mountain Lake Rd for 1.5 miles. Turn right on Audubon Rd. and continue through sharp turn for 3 miles to small parking lot at dead end.

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

**Nearest town:** Hedgesville, WV

**Cancellation policy:** We will cancel in heavy rain.

## Saturday, December 10, 2022

### DAY HIKE: Appalachian Trail – Snickers Gap to Sam Moore Shelter

We continue our exploration of the AT in Northern Virginia with this early winter walk in the Roller Coaster section just south of Snickers Gap (VA Route 7). There will be plenty of ups and downs but also some nice winter views. Sam Moor Shelter will provide a good lunch spot as well as a turnaround point, and we'll likely have to admire the exterior of popular Bears Den Hostel during its winter closure. This hike will be suitable for adults and children (accompanied by adults) in good shape. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance/** 7.2 miles  
**Difficulty:** MODERATELY DIFFICULT

**Duration:** 4 hours

**Bring:** Water and lunch. Wear layered clothing for a wide range of temperatures.

**Meet:** 10 am. VDOT Commuter parking lot at southwest corner of the intersection of VA Routes 7 and 601. (Access from eastbound 7 or from 601 south of 7.)

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

**Nearest town:** Bluemont and Round Hill, VA

**Cancellation policy:** We will cancel in substantial precipitation and if trails are icy.



PHOTO TOP RIGHT: *Lady slipper orchids on one of the summer outings near Morgantown.*

PHOTO BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN.

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 WINTER ISSUE:  
NOVEMBER 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.

## Pre-order your 2023 Sierra Club calendars by September 25

The WV Chapter is once again offering Sierra Club calendars, featuring beautiful nature photographs, at discounted prices to our members. To be assured of receiving the items you want, please email your request to [candice.k.elliott@gmail.com](mailto:candice.k.elliott@gmail.com) no later than September 25. Payment is not due until items are ready for delivery, likely to be late October or early November.

We are selling the monthly Wilderness wall calendar for \$13.00 (retail: \$14.95) and the weekly Engagement desk calendar for \$14.00 (retail: \$15.95). Those who can arrange in-person pick-up near Morgantown may forego paying postage; all others should expect to add a flat \$9.00 shipping fee to their total.

If you have other questions about ordering your 2023 Sierra Club calendars from the WV Chapter, feel free to contact Candice.



## Sierra Club

West Virginia Chapter

PO Box 4142

Morgantown, WV 26504

[sierraclub.org/west-virginia](http://sierraclub.org/west-virginia)

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# FALL 2022



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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, October 22.**

Email [sierraclub.wv@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclub.wv@gmail.com) or  
call 304-314-2709 for more information  
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[manchin.senate.gov](http://manchin.senate.gov)

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[capito.senate.gov](http://capito.senate.gov)

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[mckinley.house.gov](http://mckinley.house.gov)

#### The Hon. Alex Mooney (R, 2nd)

(202) 225-2711  
[mooney.house.gov](http://mooney.house.gov)

#### The Hon. Carol Miller (R, 3rd)

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