



Mountain State Sierran

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Wins and Losses IN THE 2020 ELECTION BY JIM KOTCON

Election night, November 3, produced some significant wins for the environment, and a lot of heartbreaking losses. Overall, while the Sierra Club's endorsement of the Biden-Harris ticket in the race for the White House was an important win nationally, here in West Virginia, Republicans had a very good night.

Republicans swept all statewide and congressional races, and gained seats in both chambers of the WV Legislature. For the 2021 legislative session, the WV House of Delegates will have 24 Democrats and 76 Republicans. The WV State Senate will have 11 Democrats and 23 Republicans. There will be some new leadership, but with Republican super-majorities, it is clear that they will control the agenda. They will also control re-districting from the 2020 census and seem likely to establish single-member districts statewide for the 2022 election, which may help them retain their majorities.

It is not clear that environmental issues were on voters' minds as they went to the polls. The race was dominated by the Presidential election, and West Virginia saw a surge in support for Donald Trump; in fact, Trump received more votes and a higher percentage in West Virginia in 2020 than he did in 2016. The economy, jobs, health care, and COVID-19 were top issues, and the pandemic restrictions made campaigning difficult, especially for challengers.

The lesson for environmentalists is that we will need to identify and work to develop environmental leaders among Republicans. While everyone insists they want clean air and clean water, it is rare to find them listening to anyone except polluters, and that has to change.

The WV Environmental Council will again take the lead on legislative lobbying. Please contact Jim Kotcon, Chapter Conservation Chair, to learn more about this rapidly evolving situation. 📧

Chapter Endorsed Candidates

WINS

HOUSE OF DELEGATES
District/County/Candidate

- 16th/Cabell/Sean Hornbuckle
- 35th/Kanawha/Kayla Young
- 55th/Monongalia/Barbara Fleischauer, Evan Hansen, Danielle Walker, John Williams
- 67th/Jefferson/John Doyle

LOSSES

US SENATE

- Paula Jean Swearingin

2ND DISTRICT HOUSE OF REP.

- Cathy Kunkel

STATE SENATE

- 3rd District, Robin Wilson
- 16th District, Pete Dougherty

HOUSE OF DELEGATES

- 10th/Wood/Trish Pritchard
- 16th/Cabell/Dakota Nelson
- 35th/Kanawha/Kathy Ferguson
- 49th/Taylor/Mike Manypenny
- 55th/Monongalia/Rodney Pyles
- 53rd/Tucker/Cory Chase
- 65th/Jefferson/Sammi Brown
- 66th/Jefferson/Storme Frame

Inside this Issue

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 2 | Chapter Directory | 6 | Jefferson Solar Ordinance | 11 | Prospects of Green New Deal |
| 2 | From the Co-Chair: Climate Stability | 6 | Book on WV Water Crisis | 13 | News from Outings & Groups |
| 3 | Mountain Valley Pipeline | 7 | Gas Warnings to EP Residents | 15 | Group Ballots/Allegheny Trail |
| 4 | Greenhouse Gas Rules in WV | 8 | Recharging Our Activism | | |
| 5 | Longview II | 10 | Raising Awareness | | |

SIERRACLUB.ORG/WEST-VIRGINIA

A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIR

A Renewed Chance at Climate Stability



After a long and arduous election cycle, Joe Biden was declared the 46th President-elect of the United States, and Senator Kamala Harris was declared the 1st Madam Vice President-elect.

The Biden/Harris ticket was endorsed by the Sierra Club because these candidates acknowledged the global climate crisis and put forth a plan to address it. It's incredibly satisfying to know that our climate crisis will again be taken seriously at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. However, our work has only just begun. As with any elected official or head of state, we must hold the Biden administration accountable to its climate commitments and much more.

It is going to take major systemic and institutional change on a global level to address the anthropogenic climate catastrophe we face. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned us in 2018 that we must reduce CO₂, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, and other dangerous emissions 45% globally by 2030 and have zero net emissions by 2050. And now, we even need to see net negative emissions, wherein we actually remove excess CO₂ from the atmosphere.

This means renewable energy must replace fossil fuels, agriculture and development must become regenerative and sustainable, and energy efficiency must be maximized.

We need a circular, zero-waste global economy; electrified transportation on land, air, and sea; fossil-free industrial processes (e.g. making cement and steel without fossil fuels); worldwide reforestation; and massive conservation and preservation efforts.

These measures, however formidable, are just the technical aspects of preventing further biodiversity loss, keeping our earth habitable, and avoiding our own extinction. First must come the political will to act! And

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

West Virginia Sierra Club Chapter Directory

Term ends at first meeting of indicated year

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Mountain Valley Pipeline: Forest Service Approval May Be Last Hurdle

The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) is a 42-inch high pressure pipeline slated to carry gas fracked in West Virginia south through 11 counties and into Virginia. The gas would be sold to customers in other markets, with none remaining in West Virginia for use here. The pipeline has been under construction since 2018. The company building the pipeline, Equitrans, originally announced that the project would be completed in 2018, but there have been many setbacks and cost overruns. Completion is now set for 2021.

Public opposition to the pipeline has been strong. Opponents include landowners—especially farmers whose livelihood is impacted—and people who question the need for this gas and who voice concerns about local, regional, and national environmental harm. The Yellow Finch Tree Sit is one such group. This group of activists, now in their second year, have continually occupied platforms in trees on privately owned land that are slated to be cut down. Builders of the pipeline have sought an injunction to remove the protesters, but due to the prevalence of COVID-19, the hearing was delayed until November 12. By the time you read this, a decision may have been made.

To date, the MVP has been cited for at least 300 water quality violations, and they have paid over \$2 million in fines. Such pollution often results from the steep, rugged terrain: Trees are cut, the soil is dug up, and rain washes soil from the construction sites into streams, killing what lives there. Terrestrial species are also affected.

A stop-work order was recently lifted, and construction has resumed. In August MVP settled a dispute with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy by offering up to \$19.5 million to support the Conservancy's work in return for the right to cross the Trail.

Permitting is now complete, except for a 3.5-mile section through the Jefferson National Forest (JNF) on the border of West Virginia and Virginia. The Environmental

Impact Statement was rejected because the disturbance described was not compliant with the JNF's Forest Plan. A new, Supplementary Environmental Impact Statement was drafted, along with a revised Forest Plan. While the revisions offer improved methods for stream crossings, the main change was to rewrite eleven rules to specify that MVP is exempt from each one. The Forest Service must now choose whether to allow the pipeline construction to resume or to refuse to allow construction and require Equitrans to complete restoration within an acceptable time frame.

Several organizations, including Sierra Club's Beyond Dirty Fuels Campaign, have created action alerts that made it easy to send a comment to the Forest Service. In addition, many concerned individuals have written original letters. The public comment period closed on November 9. Over 2400 letters were received, including over 200 original, individual letters. Comments must be considered during the decision-making process. The decision is not expected until December at the earliest.

For more information, search for Mountain Valley Pipeline on the following websites: appvoices.org, powhr.org, wvnews.com, and Roanoke.com. 🍃



The proposed path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline. COURTESY OF APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN ADVOCATES (WWW.APPALMAD.ORG)



Goodbye, and good riddance! Pipes intended for the now-defunct Atlantic Coast Pipeline leave the storage depot in Morgantown, bound for Pittsburgh.

PHOTO BY DUANE NICHOLS (TAKEN POINT MARION, PENNSYLVANIA, NOV. 12).

Greenhouse Gas Rules to Face WV Legislature in 2021

In 2015 the Obama Administration adopted the Clean Power Plan, an effort to rein in greenhouse gas emission from coal-fired power plants. These EPA rules would have encouraged renewables and energy efficiency as cost-effective ways to reduce emissions. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court put a stay on the rules in 2016, and the Trump Administration began efforts to repeal them in 2017.

The EPA finalized the misnamed Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) rule in 2019, which merely requires that power plants evaluate equipment to increase their efficiency. The rule was adopted, even though the EPA admitted that pollution would increase and that more deaths from power plant pollution would occur. Nationally, the Sierra Club, numerous other organizations, and 20 states have filed legal challenges to the ACE rule.

With the election of a new administration, it seems likely that EPA will repeal the ACE rule. But in the meantime, the WV Legislature passed HB 810 in March 2020, directing the WV Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) to adopt a state rule to implement the ACE rule. The rule (45-CSR-44) was the subject of a public hearing this summer and will be up for approval by the WV Legislature in the 2021 session, beginning in February.



At Deckers Creek on an autumn day.
PHOTO BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN

HB 810 also directed WVDEP to approve a greenhouse gas permit for power plants that want to apply before the rule is even finalized, as is occurring for the Longview plant in Monongalia County.

What Does the Rule Say?

45-CSR-44 specifies that coal-fired power plants must evaluate “Heat Rate Improvements” to get more electricity from each pound of coal. While this was included as a component of the Obama Clean Power Plan, it is widely acknowledged that this approach is sorely inadequate to meet the greenhouse gas reductions required to mitigate climate change. While increased efficiency is useful, by relying on this approach only, the rule could allow power plants to increase, rather than decrease, their emissions of greenhouse gases.

Importantly, the rule fails to define the minimum emissions reduction levels that must be achieved. The proposed rule ignores co-firing with less-emitting fuels (e.g. mixing wood or other biomass with coal to fuel boilers), carbon capture and sequestration technologies, and reductions in use of higher-emitting facilities; indeed, the rule explicitly prohibits emissions averaging or co-firing as emissions reduction approaches. The proposed rule, like ACE, wrongly omits any regulation of gas and oil-fired power plants. This is particularly egregious

BY JIM KOTCON



given that gas has replaced coal as the largest source of electric power generation in the U.S.

The rule limits the definition of “greenhouse gas” to carbon dioxide, and omits methane, nitrous oxide, ozone, and other relevant greenhouse gases. As such, this definition is scientifically indefensible, and will not achieve the reductions in greenhouse gases needed to protect human health and the environment.

The WV rule allows the applicant to propose a compliance schedule, and it does not impose any firm deadlines, other than the provision that WVDEP adopt “increments of progress.” And the rule allows WVDEP to consider the remaining useful life of a unit, which may be as much as five years, as a way to avoid adopting even these minimal efficiency improvements.

What You Can Do

Now is the time to begin talking to your local legislators to advocate for clean, breathable air and a stable climate. The Greenhouse Gas Rule, 45-CSR-44, must be strengthened. For more information on how you can help, contact WVEC (<https://wvecouncil.org>) or the WV Sierra Club Conservation Committee (<https://www.sierraclub.org/west-virginia>). 🌿

A Renewed Chance at Climate Stability | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

along with the will and the action must come the acknowledgment that marginalized and oppressed communities—those who have suffered the most—must lead the way. Justice and equity for all must be at the center of our efforts.

It's a relief to know that we'll have a president, and perhaps a Democratic majority in both houses of Congress, who will listen. But this is no time to relax. The THRIVE agenda (Transform, Heal, and Renew by Investing in

a Vibrant Economy—go to thriveagenda.com) is the kind of bold public policy we need, inspired by the Green New Deal. The Sierra Club is a sponsor of the THRIVE agenda, and we hope you'll learn more and contact your senators and representatives about its goals.

We acted as climate voters to help win important elections. Now let's make climate stability a reality! 🌿

Longview II: Beneficiary of Tax Giveaways and Secrecy in Mon County?

BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON



A View of Longview I. Will a Longview II make for double trouble in the region? PHOTO BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON.

Longview II, a proposed gas-fired power plant north of Morgantown near the state line, would be adjacent to Longview I and Fort Martin, both coal-fired power plants. The proposal also contains a solar facility, most of which would be built in Pennsylvania. Like Longview I, its predecessor, the new plant would be a wholesale electricity producer for the PJM (Pennsylvania, Jersey, Maryland) markets, a regional transmission organization that markets and manages electricity in 14 states.

Besides a Payment in Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) agreement with the Monongalia County Commission (MCC), Longview II had to get a siting certificate from the Public Service Commission, which was granted on April 3 of this year. On April 14 Longview I declared bankruptcy for the second time in seven years. On May 22 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved a reorganization plan for Longview I, clearing the way for the PILOT agreement for Longview II. An air permit from the WV Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) is still needed. Longview II won't happen in the state without the PILOT agreement, so influencing the MCC's decision has been a focus for Mon Group Sierra Club members through hearings, letters, and phone calls.

Update:

On August 5 Duane Nichols, Marge Batton (residents of the Fort Martin community), Jim Kotcon, and I attended a work session to discuss the Longview PILOT agreement with Monongalia County Commissioners Tom Bloom, Ed Hawkins, and Sean Sikora. (Everyone wore masks.) At the meeting we learned that the PILOT agreement seems certain. Bloom in particular believes it will benefit the county and sees a gas-fired power plant as the latest and cleanest technology. He seems unconcerned about the negative impacts of greenhouse gas emissions from natural gas plants, of truck traffic and noise in the Fort Martin community, and of fracking's impacts in the western part of the county.

When Jim asked about climate change and carbon capture, the commissioners indicated that those issues are "not in our jurisdiction" and did not seem inclined to make them an

issue for the PILOT. Further, Jim questioned the wisdom of investing in another fossil fuel plant, noting that Longview has had a history of underestimating the cost of fossil fuel facilities, whereas the cost of solar continues to decline each year. The MCC had not discussed the PILOT in several months because of more pressing concerns brought on by the pandemic.

On November 1, in a *Dominion Post* article comparing the views of the two candidates running for the Mon County Commission, both Hawkins and Jeff Arnett indicated that they favor the PILOT. Hawkins states that because the PILOT remains confidential at this point, he couldn't discuss it, but "the commission is looking forward to an announcement soon about the PILOT, and the agreements that we've been working on, I think, most people are going to find have been very beneficial." Beneficial to whom? Why the secrecy?

Meanwhile, Longview I, the coal-fired plant, applied for an air quality permit under the Affordable Clean Energy Rule, a Trump EPA revision of Obama's Clean Power Plan. (See page 4.) This would allow Longview I to increase its CO₂ emissions. This permit is not required, and the ACE rule has yet to be finalized. So how or why would WVDEP make a decision on it? This could be the first test of the unfinished rule and could set a poor precedent for limiting greenhouse gases.

WVDEP held a virtual public hearing on October 27. As usual, it was stacked with coal industry leaders and pro-coal politicians. Jim Kotcon, Duane Nichols, and Evan Hansen were the only commenters to address the relevance of the permit. Evan asked, "Why now, and what's the hurry?" We are all interested in the response. WVDEP accepted comments until 5 pm on November 9. Contact your Mon Group leaders for updates and to get involved. 🍀

Solar Installations Allowed in Jefferson County

BY GAIL KOHLHORST



Jefferson County recently adopted a revised county zoning ordinance that allows solar power companies to build large-scale solar installations on farms and elsewhere in the rural district, which includes most land in the county. The process for review and adoption of the ordinance was transparent and allowed for public comment and participation during two workshops and two public hearings.

Prior to the ordinance's adoption, the Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club (EPSC) submitted written and oral comments to the County Commission. EPSC expressed support for the zoning change but felt large installations should be subject to conditional permitting, which would allow public review of each project. The revised ordinance did not include that change, but it did include EPSC's suggestion that setbacks be increased to 200 feet from roads and historic structures. Additional ordinance requirements for projects include a storm water management plan and the use of vegetative or opaque buffers. Decommissioning plans and bonding will ensure the elimination of health and safety hazards once an installation no longer functions. The entire ordinance may be found at <http://www.jeffersoncountywv.org/home/showdocument?id=18991>.

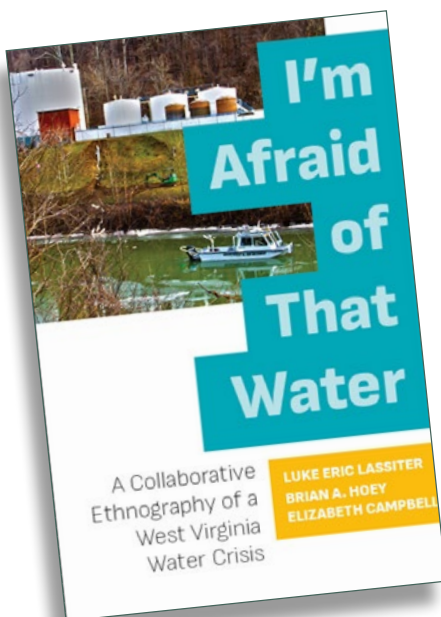
Jefferson County's new ordinance combined with West Virginia's new utility-scale solar law and the approval by Raleigh County of a new solar farm near Beckley make the Mountain State a friendlier place for renewable energy. 🍃



PHOTO BY AMERICAN PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION ON UNSPLASH

New Book Tells Stories from 2014 Water Crisis

BY JIM HATFIELD



I'm Afraid of That Water: A Collaborative Ethnography of a West Virginia Water Crisis was published this spring by West Virginia University Press. It's a collection of oral histories collected in interviews by Luke Eric Lassiter, Brian A. Hoey, Elizabeth Campbell, and others following the 2014 Elk River chemical spill. The spill became a nationally recognized disaster when it polluted the largest public drinking water system in West Virginia. The book evolved over four years with the collaboration of more than fifty people, most of whose drinking water became unsafe to drink within hours of the spill. The primary goal of this work was to record how a cross-section of the citizenry experienced and interpreted this drinking water disaster.

Other chapters explore how this disaster fits into a larger framework of disaster studies, how its aftershocks inspired a sweeping new state code to minimize future drinking water crises, and how commercial interests have continued to persuade successive legislatures to roll back significant portions of the 2014 law. Essential components of a "safe" water system that can protect the public from such spills are also discussed. Angie Rosser, executive director of West Virginia Rivers Coalition, and an advocate for safe, clean water for our ecosystem and citizenry, provides further context of the crisis and its lessons in her afterword.

EP Residents Informed of Potential Risks in Their Neighborhood

BY DR. CHRISTINE WIMER
PRESIDENT, JEFFERSON COUNTY FOUNDATION

The Jefferson County Foundation and the Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club have been collaborating to educate residents that may be affected by Mountaineer Gas' staging sites for Rockwool.

Mountaineer Gas (MG) has promised to deliver natural (fracked) gas to a new insulation plant, Rockwool, in Jefferson County. To do so, MG had to construct 4.8 miles of new gas line. However, MG does not have an adequate supply of gas for the new line to fulfill Rockwool's needs and those of MG's current customers.

MG originally planned to have the gas supplied by the Potomac Pipeline. That project of Columbia Gas would deliver natural gas from Pennsylvania to the Eastern Panhandle. However, in January 2019 the Maryland Board of Public Works denied Columbia Gas a right-of-way permit under the Western Maryland Rail Trail. A federal court later upheld the denial, and Columbia Gas is appealing. The project is currently on hold.

In the meantime, Rockwool plans to start operating sometime next year. To do so they will need a supply of gas at least three times that of the amount currently used by all customers in the Eastern Panhandle. To accommodate that need without the Potomac Pipeline, MG needs another source of gas.

According to media reports, MG is planning to use truck delivery of gas to offsite staging stations from which gas will be piped to Rockwool to meet the demand of the new insulation plant. MG has requested permission from the Berkeley County Solid Waste Authority to build such a station at a disused landfill. This capped landfill finds itself surrounded by communities now, and the gas line to Rockwool travels through these neighborhoods. The Berkeley County Solid Waste Authority rejected this proposal.

We believe MG may seek other sites along this relatively short stretch of pipeline to put in one or more of these sites, which is concerning for several reasons. These sites would increase the heavy truck traffic in these neighborhoods. Worse yet, these delivery trucks pose significant risk when they are involved in traffic accidents. These trucks typically leak natural gas, requiring evacuations of surrounding areas and specialized mitigation. In some cases, the wreckage is damaged such that the leak cannot be safely stopped and must be allowed to slowly leak off until it is exhausted and can safely be removed.

EPSC and JCF have partnered to inform the residents of these neighborhoods about what is happening, the risks involved, and how they can express their concerns to their representatives.

Enabling this short-term increase in the supply of gas from Berkeley County to Jefferson County will also further dependence on fossil fuels in the Eastern Panhandle. Jefferson County does not currently have a large dependency on natural gas, and a very limited portion of the county is serviced by the fuel. Rockwool's proposal could drive up the demand for natural or fracked gas in Jefferson County, and the increased demand would drive up support for the Potomac Pipeline, which has significant environmental implications—affecting 10 wetlands, 19 streams, and the Potomac River. Building such infrastructure for a necessarily declining commodity does not make sense and is not worth the environmental impacts.

For more information on this matter, please visit the webpage bit.ly/gashazard.

EPSC has also supported Jefferson County Foundation's other legal work. Find out more at jeffersoncountyfoundation.org.

This card was delivered using COVID safety measures (masks and gloves).

DANGER
FLAMMABLE
GAS

SLOW
CHILDREN
AT PLAY

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Mountaineer Gas is looking to build a Compressed Natural Gas injection site in your community.

Mountaineer Gas, the only distributor of fracked gas in West Virginia, needs to find a way to supply gas to Rockwool, the insulation plant in Jefferson County. They are seeking 2-3 locations in your community to build injection stations. The gas would be either decompressed and injected to the pipeline or stored on site. **What does this mean for your family?**

Heavy Truck Traffic
The trucks carry highly compressed natural gas (CNG). When these trucks are involved in accidents, the tanks leak natural gas and become a major explosion risk.

Storage On Site
Mountaineer Gas could store the CNG on site, which would be a risk of leaks or explosion and mean potential injury, death, property damage, and prolonged evacuation.

Ratepayers Foot the Bill
The PSC increased the rates for household customers across the state to pay for the pipeline to Rockwool. What is Rockwool contributing to the building of the pipeline? \$0.

What Can You Do?
Your family's safety matters. Get informed and help spread the word. Let your representatives know your concerns. Go to bit.ly/gashazard to find out how you can protect your neighborhood and your family.

SIERRA CLUB
Eastern Panhandle Group

EASTERN PANHANDLE
PROTECTORS

Jefferson County Foundation, Inc.

These doorhangers were recently distributed in neighborhoods at risk from gas delivery to Rockwool.

Recharging Ourselves as Activists



All of us have been affected on some level by COVID-19.

Even if we or our loved ones have not had the disease, we may experience isolation, limitations on hobbies, uncertainty, mental fog, boredom, or existential dread due to the pandemic. Added to this, we have been bombarded during this election year by negativity and division. Now that the elections have passed, we face uncertainty about how to move forward. For Sierra Club members, that includes moving forward as environmental activists.

How do we move forward, though, when we are drained, disappointed, or grieving? How do we continue our momentum after setbacks? How can we keep calm and focused through chaos? Many of us turn to nature to feel a sense of connectedness and relief from stress. I have seen many ingenious coping skills utilized by others during the COVID-19 crisis. Here, I will share one that has worked well for me: The Spiral.

We are approaching the time of year when we reflect on the things we are thankful for.

However, it isn't always easy to be grateful through some of our worst days. The Spiral is a technique that can help guide us through the process of experiencing gratitude.

Joanna Macy is an eco-philosopher and creator of *The Work That Reconnects*. (Explore Macy's work by reading her 2014 book *Coming Back to Life*, published by New Society.) Macy suggests that rather than immediately switching over to gratitude to ease our emotional pain, we face fears directly and fully grieve for what we have

lost in order to pursue a path forward. This does not seem intuitive in a culture that values constant happiness — or the appearance of it. Macy believes that only by fully experiencing our emotions do we achieve the clarity to fully embrace our situation. Her guideline, *The Spiral*, outlines four steps: gratitude, honoring our pain, seeing with new eyes, and going forth.

When working with *The Spiral*, gratitude is the first step toward activism. This means reflecting on the things that that we are grateful for in all aspects of our lives. I often take five deep breaths to clear my mind before reflecting on everything that I am grateful for. We can experience gratitude for the smallest of things. In my busy life, for instance, I am grateful when I have a minute to pause and be present in the moment. I close my eyes, and I am grateful for the sun warming my skin, the smell of wet leaves that have fallen, and to be alive to witness another change of season.

BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN



The next step is to honor our pain. For me this can reflect the collective sadness for the greed that pollutes our earth, the loss of normalcy during COVID-19, inequality in its many forms, or existential dread. I also grieve for personal challenges, such as the weight of responsibility that I am carrying at this time. Allowing ourselves to grieve is cathartic. At times it can be easier to say that we are angry, outraged, or defeated. These responses are symptoms of grief. If we do not honor our pain we risk becoming numb and disconnected from our goals and from each other. Acknowledging and releasing this pain gives us the strength to continue.

Macy calls the next step seeing with new eyes. Our grieving catharsis enables us to move forward from our negative emotions and connect with a greater sense of direction and purpose. For instance, without fully realizing the extent of our climate crisis, we cannot advocate accordingly. Many avoid

acknowledging existential dread such as this pandemic or climate crisis in order to avoid the pain associated with the unknown. However, unknown outcomes can also give us hope that we can make a difference and change the course of our future. Only by addressing what is can we enact change on what could be.

Going forward we are able to proceed into the final stage of The Spiral. There is so much work to do that it can seem overwhelming. Where do we start? What actions will align with our greater purpose? What is the intention of our activism? What unique gifts do we possess that might be useful in our goal of being change makers? Can we contribute as an artist? A teacher? An innovator? A politician? A philanthropist? Take an opportunity to explore and align with your values. Do you value community, family, equality, honesty, justice? How will you proceed, responding to needs and values? While this is the last stage, The Spiral

is a dynamic process. We can revisit any of its stages as needed.

When I began this year as Chair of the Mon Group, my intention was to connect members through increased outings and hiking. I was grateful for that opportunity and still am. But as COVID-19 progressed, many of the group's planned activities became impossible due to both Local and Sierra Club National Guidelines. Despite my disappointment that such gatherings could not take place as planned, I found that by reaching out to members in other ways—including by writing this article—I could embrace the uncertainty of the changing situation and begin to move forward with our shared vision for a stronger community and healthier planet. 🌿

From top left: The Labyrinth at the West Virginia Botanical Gardens; At Deckers Creek on an autumn day.

PHOTOS BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN.

What Can One Person Do? Find a Teachable Moment

BY AILEEN CURFMAN



Inspired by a recent visit to a regional state park, Aileen Curfman imagined this encounter to illustrate how we can raise environmental awareness among those we meet.

Needing to clear his head with a change of scene, Derek headed for the campground at Pine Grove Furnace State Park near Aspers, Pennsylvania. Taking a walk through the campground, he saw a rope thrown through the fork of a tree at an amazing height—maybe 70 feet. Jokingly, he asked the man at the campsite if he thought he would be able to pull his food high up enough to protect it from bears.

“Hi, my name’s Jake,” replied the man. “I’m a tree climber. I just moved here from California, and I climbed a lot of redwoods out there.”

“I broke a bone climbing a tree when I was a kid,” said Derek, “so I wouldn’t enjoy that hobby.”

“Oh, I don’t do it as a hobby. I was working on a crew that cuts down redwoods that have tree sitters in them. My job was to go up and remove the sitters.”

Thinking of the tree sitters who are fighting the Mountain Valley Pipeline, Derek was speechless. The silence must have made Jake uncomfortable. He looked at the ground and said, “Those trees contained thousands of board feet of lumber. Someone paid a lot of money for them. The tree sitters were illegally preventing the purchaser from taking possession of his rightful property.” Abruptly, he added, “Well, anyway, I’m out here, now. The woods around here sure are beautiful, too.”

“Yes,” Derek said, “we’re lucky to have them. A little over a century ago, there was an iron furnace here. This was an industrial site. There were no trees because they were all cut down to fuel the iron furnace. The trees you see were planted after the iron furnace shut down. Most of them were planted by the CCC in the 1930s.”

Now Jake was incredulous. “What, really?”

Derek followed up with, “California is lucky to have so many stands of old growth. We lost most of our old trees a hundred years ago. In some places, like Dolly Sods, West Virginia, the soil washed away, creating

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



Second-growth forest (top) and educational presentation at Pennsylvania’s Pine Grove Furnace State Park. PHOTOS BY AILEEN CURFMAN

Bringing the Green New Deal to Reality

BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON



The Shale Insight Conference, an annual fossil fuel pep rally in late September, is organized by the Marcellus Shale Coalition, the WV Oil and Natural Gas Association, and the Ohio Oil and Gas Association. Mark Mills, a keynote speaker from the Manhattan Institute think tank, spoke at the recent virtual conference about the cost of a transition to a Green New Deal (GND), comparing it to our mobilization for World War II, and claimed that the GND would make huge demands on economies and natural resources. Mills argued that such a transition is physically impossible if we are to maintain life as we know it. Of course he failed to mention that life as we know it will come to an end if we don't stop burning fossil fuels.

The GND resolution submitted by Senator Ed Markey and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in February 2019 calls for the U.S. to use 100% zero-emission energy sources within ten years, as well as to increase state-sponsored jobs, support poor and vulnerable communities, increase the minimum wage, provide universal health care, and end monopolies. The cost of this broad proposal varies from a conservative \$10 trillion (Ocasio-Cortez' estimate) up to \$93 trillion (American Action Forum) over the next decade.

With regard to clean energy technology, the cost of a green transition is upfront. Once the infrastructure for renewable energy is in place, the cost of wind and sunshine is free. Fossil fuel use comes burdened with continual extraction costs, reclamation costs, environmental damage costs, and healthcare costs for people who live in the extraction areas. Further, contrary to Mills' assessments, Forbes Magazine (June 15, 2019) states that renewable energy is now the cheapest option, even without subsidies. The GND is an investment that pays dividends. Cleaning up after weather disasters does not.

Wind and sun generate electricity, which presently accounts for roughly 20% of energy consumed. Transport (personal, commercial, public), heating and cooling



PHOTO BY MARKUS SPISKE ON UNSPLASH

buildings, manufacturing, food production, and other energy uses depend on gas, oil and coal. Can all this go electric? Wind and sun are intermittent, so battery technology is critical. Even among the many people who support the GND, there is much disagreement on how to accomplish these goals, the complexities of which are enormous.

Should carbon capture and storage, carbon and emissions trading and capture, biomass energy, and nuclear power be part of the equation? The MIT Technology Review states that if these options are not even on the table for consideration, there may be no feasible technical means to reach the necessary climate goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C. Left-wing critics claim that the GND greenwashes capitalism and that continuous growth and consumerism must come to an end.

The Green New Deal is not just about reducing carbon emissions; it is an overhaul of society—the way we think about our material world and comforts. It is a restructuring of society so that everyone has a better life. How do all these broad ideas become a real working plan? How do we get the American public on board when we can't

get consensus on wearing masks during a pandemic?

Clearly, leadership from the top is essential. Lots of individuals, environmental groups, local and state governments and institutions are moving forward with great ideas on climate policy and technology, but we need legislation from Washington to see real change happen. President Obama's 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act invested \$90 billion to promote clean energy as part of an economic stimulus plan to recover from the bank crash. But when Republicans took control of Congress in 2010, they put an end to his plans, and the Democrats went on defense instead of offense.

Much has changed in the subsequent ten years. The GND, which addresses real and immediate problems, is achievable: the money is there, the complex policies are being formulated, and the technology is getting better and cheaper every day. But political challenges remain. As well as securing leadership buy-in from the top, ordinary citizens need to remain engaged and active in advocacy efforts so that the GND has a chance to hit its ambitious goals. 🌱



Teachable | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

almost a moonscape. What's there now is beautiful. You should go see it. But when you do, think of the hemlock trees—12 feet in diameter—that once stood there. Think of the explorers who could only travel three or four miles a day because they had to climb over those huge fallen logs.”

“I’ll have to check it out,” Jake murmured. “I’ll ask my girlfriend where it is.”

A chance encounter may provide an opportunity to expose a stranger to new information or an unfamiliar point of view. Try to understand their story as well as your own. Remember that your goal is to educate, not to blame or shame. Keep yourself centered and project positive energy. Communicate your hopes and goals. And remember, there are no guarantees. If nothing else, you’ve had a stimulating exchange of ideas.

Some more helpful suggestions are at www.judyringer.com/resources/articles/being-heard-6-strategies-for-getting-your-point-across.php.

Pennsylvania’s Pine Grove Furnace State Park.
PHOTO BY AILEEN CURFMAN



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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, Saturday, January 16.**

Contact Co-chair Aileen Curfman at acurfman@gmail.com for an invitation and the link.

Outings on Hold...Still.

BY CHRIS CRAIG



A little snow didn't stop this 2018 Sierra group on a hike at Maryland Heights, Harpers Ferry NHP. PHOTO BY ED WHEELLESS

Sierra Club's COVID-19-related ban on group outings and in-person meetings continues through at least February.

In the meantime, many trails and rivers in state parks and other public and private lands remain open. Plan to get out on a personal or family adventure that is COVID-safe and appropriate to your abilities. The Mountain State has beautiful places in every region and in every season, and enjoying them on a hike, paddle, or bike ride can help your physical and emotional well-being. If you need suggestions or have questions, contact me at ccraig@laurellodge.com, and I'll do my best to offer help.

And if you have interest in becoming a Sierra Club outings leader in the future, when gathering is more safe, let me know. We expect a pent-up demand for outings once we can safely gather for adventures again!

Rockwool and the Election Keep EPSC Busy

BY GAIL KOHLHORST

The Eastern Panhandle Sierra Club (EPSC) has had a very busy fall. Issues surrounding the Rockwool insulation factory currently under construction continue to occupy our time, including challenges to the factory's PILOT agreement (Payment in Lieu of Taxes), storm water drainage, gas pipelines, sinkholes, and permits. We have been working with and supporting efforts of the Jefferson County Foundation (JCF) on legal challenges to Rockwool permits and irregularities. In addition to those, JCF has found that over 700 projects around West Virginia are operating without valid permits. The WV Department of Environmental Protection has responded by issuing a permit request with the EPA.

EPSC's water-testing team is making sure that we get credible testing of wells near Rockwool to provide a baseline before the plant begins operation. We are also working with area environmental groups to establish a pre-factory baseline for air quality.

EPSC's work on the new Solar Ordinance for Jefferson County is described elsewhere in this issue. (See page 6.)

EPSC is working with the WV Environmental Council on statewide legislative priorities. We are pursuing a legislative agenda with the goal to protect karst formations. We are hopeful that this will pass, because several regions within West Virginia would benefit from the protection.

In September EPSC held a political forum on Zoom, featuring candidates endorsed by the WV Chapter. Cathy Kunkel, Pete Dougherty, John Doyle, Sammi Brown, and Storme Frame all took part. It was an interesting discussion, bringing both state and federal environmental issues to light.

Election of EPSC board members is underway, and EPSC members will find ballots in their newsletters. If you live in Jefferson, Berkeley or Morgan Counties, please vote!



Mon Group Joins in Garden's Art Show

The Mon Group created this scarecrow for the West Virginia Botanical Gardens' Scarecrow Spectacular. The scarecrow and its web symbolized the interconnected of all living beings. PHOTO BY ADRIENNE EPLEY BROWN



Allegheny Trail— West Virginia's Longest Trail

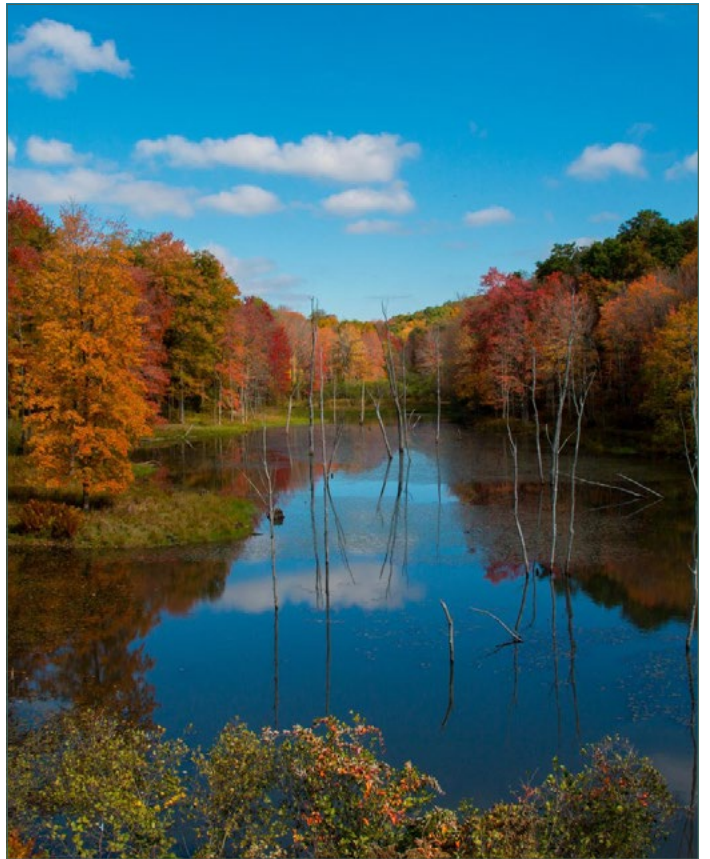
BY CHRIS CRAIG



Running 288 miles, from the Mason-Dixon Line near Bruceton Mills to Peters Mountain near the Virginia/WV border, the Allegheny Trail is the longest trail running totally within the Mountain State and links many great public lands in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia. It was one of five WV trails designated as Millennium Trails in 2000 by the White House Millennium Council.

Hikers on the Allegheny Trail follow yellow blazes painted by volunteers, who also—along with staff from the U.S. Forest Service and WV State Parks—build and maintain the trail. The trail is currently continuous other than a break in the I-64 area that requires a shuttle or a 33-mile walk along roads.

The West Virginia Scenic Trails Association (WVSTA) coordinates routes, volunteer efforts, and promotion of the Allegheny Trail. It also publishes a hiking guide to the trail that features maps, detailed directions, elevations, and trail amenities. For more information about the Allegheny Trail and WVSTA, or to support its work, go to www.wvscenictrails.org.



Scenes along West Virginia's Allegheny Trail.

POND PHOTO BY GARY BISHOP.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA SCENIC TRAILS ASSOCIATION.



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