

Mountain State Sierran

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May / June 2012

FOSSIL FOOLS DAY — April 1, 2012

Activists Picket Marcellus Conference at The Greenbrier

Fossil fools are those who would sell out a sustainable clean energy future in order to serve the fossil fuel industry. Political leaders who epitomize this concept include Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and Senator Joe Manchin.

Campaign finance records show that Governor Tomblin accepted \$2,000 from EQT, \$3,616 from Chesapeake, and \$10,000 from Waco Oil & Gas. The oil and gas sector alone donated over \$21,000 to Tomblin during the special election campaign last year. And just weeks after the election, Tomblin gutted proposed legislation to regulate gas drilling.

After months of meetings and public hearings, the WV Legislature's Select Committee on Marcellus had proposed a compromise bill, but major sections were dropped by Tomblin in December. Among the needed protections dropped or weakened by Tomblin were requirements for regulating air emissions, public notice requirements, stringent rules for karst areas, drilling waste disposal, and setbacks for homes, streams or drinking water supplies.

"The Marcellus boom in the natural gas industry is a perfect example of why we have an economic crisis, why our economy is broken," said Beth Little of Eight Rivers Council in Pocahontas County. "Not only is the price of natural gas (at \$2.12 per million BTUs on March 31, 2012) way below the cost of production, but when you factor in the costs of suffering — the health problems, lost property values, loss of productive farmland, and destruction of natural resources like clean water — you see that the people making money from it are stealing from the rest of us, from our future, from our children and grandchildren. The value of the energy produced does not begin to equal the value of what we are losing."

While the gas industry conference was the primary target, oil and coal industry contributions were also criticized. Governor Tomblin received over \$163,000 from all fossil fuel industry sectors combined, and even more from lawyers and lobbyists, many of whom represent fossil fuel industries, according to campaign finance reports from FollowtheMoney.org.

The vast majority of coal mining and electric utility contributors was from out of state, or worked for out-of-state companies.

Senator Manchin also received numerous contributions from fossil fuel industries for his 2012 election campaign. According to reports at OpenSecrets.org, Manchin has received over \$896,000 from fossil-fuel-related industries. He led every other member of the US Senate in campaign contributions from coal mining and from electric utilities.

Better regulations are needed to solve many of these problems and to begin transition from fossil fuels.

"We know that America cannot switch off fossil fuels immediately, but we are calling on our elected officials to begin the transition away from fossil fuels, not keep promoting increased development. It is no longer acceptable to ignore climate change if you want to be an elected leader," said Jim Kotcon, Chair of the WV Chapter Energy Committee. "And WV needs a Moratorium on Marcellus permits until the regulations and enforcement programs are in place to do it safely. Every well permit that is issued without adequate provisions is a well that we know won't be done right. Let's stop issuing bad permits until we know we get it right. Other states and countries are doing this, why not West Virginia?"



To raise awareness, citizens from the WV Sierra Club, Eight Rivers Council, Pocahontas Nature Club, Greenbrier River Watershed Association, WV Environmental Council, WV Highlands Conservancy, and Christians for the Mountains traveled from Monongalia, Preston, Pocahontas, Roane, and Greenbrier Counties to picket The Greenbrier during the first day of The Marcellus and Utica Shale Conference and Expo 2012.

This pro-industry conference blatantly announced its focus as profits over people. Notice the language in the conference promotion: "Navigating Regulatory and Environmental Landscapes Towards Making a Profit." Not "Understanding How to Comply with Regulations and Protect the Environment" but "navigating" as in steering the ship to avoid obstacles, i.e. regulations and environmental protections.

Citizens prepared skits, banners, and chanting to greet Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and Senator Joe Manchin, who were featured speakers. One major focal point was the number of campaign contributions from polluters.

Governor Tomblin and Senator Manchin (AKA Chuck Wyrostock and Jim Sconyers) put in an appearance at the protest.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Sierran going Electronic

This could be your last paper *Sierran*

If the WV Chapter has your e-mail address, this may be the last paper copy of the *Mountain State Sierran* that you receive. Unless you have already notified the editor (or do so by June 10) that you wish to continue receiving the paper version of our newsletter, the **July-Aug 2012** issue will go out to members with e-mail addresses only in electronic form.

Members with e-mail addresses who prefer to continue receiving the paper copy will be able to indicate that preference at any time by replying to any of the e-mail reminders they receive. Members without e-mail will see no change and will continue to receive their regular paper copies as before.

The Chapter ExCom made the decision in January to switch to an "opt in" system, rather than having members "opt out" of the paper version. We anticipate an annual savings of at least \$3000 by implementing this change. That is money we can use for our effective lobbying campaigns and for more educational opportunities for members.

Advantages of receiving the newsletter electronically include getting your news faster, viewing the content in color, saving resources, and saving the Chapter printing and mailing costs.

Nevertheless, we realize that there are also advantages to having a hard copy on hand for easy reference, so anyone who still wishes to be on the "slow" mailing list need only send the editor a request to that effect.

Questions, comments, or concerns about this change? Please contact the Editor at:

celliot2@comcast.net

2012: Bad Year for Environment at WV Legislature

Jim Kotcon

The Regular session of the WV Legislature ended March 10, and there is not much good news. Most of the bills we supported, including improvements to Marcellus gas regulations and support for Energy Efficiency rules were not taken up.

A Green Buildings Act, SB 76, which we had sought for several years was largely gutted, and a very weak version passed. It now mandates that state-funded buildings meet current energy efficiency codes, not exactly the significant reform we wanted.

A Solar Energy Bill of Rights, HB 2740 was also substantially revised. Instead of guaranteeing access for homeowners to install solar panels, the bill now allows Home Owners Associations to establish restrictions or prohibitions on solar energy.

The Legislature also gutted the state's existing greenhouse gas inventory law.

The Legislature adopted SB 497 allowing defendants to file

claims for all costs incurred if a mining appeal is deemed "for the purposes of harassment." A similar bill SB 562, directs WV-DEP to establish rules for interpreting narrative water quality standards related to biological components of streams. Finally, SB 615 also establishes that "Notwithstanding any rule or permit condition to the contrary, ..., compliance with a permit issued pursuant to this article shall be deemed (in) compliance...(with)...the federal Water Pollution Control Act." If a permit condition contradicts an established state rule or standard, the permit condition overrules the state regs. These could have a chilling effect on citizen suits provisions and our ability to enforce mining laws, because we are constantly challenging the industry-friendly DEP interpretation.

The Special Reclamation Tax to fund abandoned mine clean-up was increased, but even the WV Coal Association supported this one.

ExCom meets April 28 in Flatwoods

The next Sierra Club Executive Committee meeting will be held on Saturday, April 28, 9:30am to 4:30pm, at the Days Hotel in Flatwoods, WV. Members interested in participating in the decisions of the Chapter are encouraged to attend. There is plenty of room in the Days Hotel meeting hall to accommodate all interested members.

On Sunday, April 29, our Chapter Chair will lead a family-friendly outing to the WV State Wildlife Center near Buckhannon (see *Outings* on p.4 for more details).

A special room rate of \$80/night has been arranged for Sierra Club members wishing to stay over on Friday or Saturday nights. Please call [1-866-700-7284](tel:1-866-700-7284) for reservations.

Watch For It

Citizen Gas Well Workshop

We are in the planning stages of a workshop for citizen volunteers to become gas well watchers. Goodness knows, there are enough of them to watch — thousands, in fact, as old as early 20th century or as new as present day. This project will apply to any completed gas well — Marcellus, or not.

Working with George Monk and Molly Schaffnit, the West Virginia Chapter is developing a common-sense online experience suitable for all. The workshop will be organized into three sessions, each with a target date. Each session will include George and Molly's *YouTube* videos, as well as text items. Workshop participants will be able to view and read the material on a flexible schedule. A session will be followed up by a free conference call for participant discussion and questions-and-answers with project leaders. Conference calls are free to callers, and there will be two date/time options for the conference call for each session.

Most of the training is simple and observational. The training will show what to look for, how to "see" a well site, and so on. There is one element that involves an actual scientific test, using materials similar to litmus paper. That session shows clearly how-to-do-it. And we provide the required test materials to participants at no cost.

Once volunteers register for the workshop, they will receive the link to the project website, where all necessary information will be available. In addition, participants will receive the call-in number and code for all the conference calls.

In case a person is interested but unable to access *YouTube* videos, we can provide alternatives suitable for slower connections.

We expect the workshop to "go live" in early May — just in time for the outdoor well-watching season! We will do our best to spread the word far and wide when the time comes, via email, website postings, and *Facebook*.

For more information, contact Jim at: jimscon@gmail.com or [304-698-9628](tel:304-698-9628).



Security at The Greenbrier explains demonstration restrictions to Fossil Fools activists. (see story, page 1)

Mon Group Meetings

Saturday, May 5

Migratory Bird Day

The Sierra Club invites everyone to come to Coopers Rock State Forest for Morgantown Migratory Bird Day, sponsored by the Avian Conservation Center of Morgantown. The festival will be in coordination with International Migratory Bird Day, which is celebrated by parks, zoos, and environmental organizations throughout the Americas.

Coopers Rock State Forest is ideal because the location is an important migratory fly-way. This will be a great opportunity to enjoy and learn about our local and transient birdlife.

7am & 8:30am — Bird Walks
9am–3pm — Education Displays by local bird and environmental groups in the pavilion near the overlook. Family activities all day!

11am — Live birds of prey presentation in the pavilion by the group "Flying Higher"

12:30pm — Nature Story Time, followed by a Family Hike

Ongoing Activities in the Pavilion:

How to use binoculars
Make your own binoculars
Owl pellet dissection
Scavenger Hunt

Educational materials and information from local groups will be available, including the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, Mountaineer Audubon, Brooks Bird Club, Coopers Rock Foundation, Friends of Decker's Creek, Flying Higher, WV Botanic Garden, and others.

Several WVU Fisheries and Wildlife graduate students and faculty will set up displays about their ongoing research projects, featuring bird species such as Cerulean Warbler, Golden Eagle, Double-crested Cormorant, and more.

Thursday, June 14

Annual Ice Cream Social

Join us at Coopers Rock for our annual summer potluck and homemade, hand-cranked ice cream. Come find out how to become more involved in our Chapter and meet other like-minded people.

We have reserved Shelter 1 near the Overlook. Please bring a dish to share. Plates, bowls, and eating utensils will be provided. This event takes place rain or shine.

To recommend which flavor(s) of ice cream we make, please contact Candice Elliott at celliot2@comcast.net or [304-594-3322](tel:304-594-3322).

View from the Chair

“Why Isn’t Anyone Doing Anything About It?” — Jim Sconyers

I dropped in on my ex-aunt-in-law Irene, who we call Rene, and ex-uncle-in-law Glenn yesterday (it’s early April as I write this). It was her 90th birthday; he’ll be 96 in June. Glenn flew bombers over Europe in World War II. Rene was his English war bride.

I was eager to visit so I could wish Rene a happy birthday and use “nonagenarian,” a word difficult to work into chit-chat.

We talked about this and that, and naturally the weather came up. We had just finished a non-winter by Preston County standards. Then there were the two weeks of 70s and 80s in early March, followed in late March and early April by night after night of hard freeze. Wacky weather.

Rene broached the subject before I did. She and Glenn may be old, but they’re intelligent and well informed.

“Why isn’t anyone doing anything about it?” she wondered aloud.

We talked more, and the subject was obvious — climate change.

“Do you remember what Al Gore said?” she asked. I assured her, yes, I have the DVD at home. Rene knew very well what Gore said, now a decade ago.

I was almost taken aback by Rene’s awareness, at her age, and her concern and disgust for those who should be doing something but aren’t.

The true irony is that Rene and Glenn, and you and I, and Barack Obama and Joe Manchin, all know what the problem is, and what to do to solve that problem in order to avert the worst of the looming climate catastrophe.

But knowing is not doing. Our political leaders lead us blithely along, pursuing business as usual. The president advocates a senseless “all of the above” so-called energy policy. The Tea Party screams “Drill Baby Drill.” Both of these routes move us closer to disaster with their failure to stop burdening the atmosphere with the carbon pollution that is *The Problem*.

As the best environmental journalist in West Virginia characterizes our leaders’ response, it is basically “Let’s bury our heads in the sand.” Maybe if we ignore the problem it will go away — riiiiight

Here in West Virginia our top leaders — Governor, U.S. Senators, Congressmen and Congresswoman — kiss King Coal right square on the lips, no matter the changes happening and the greater changes needed. With leaders like this

The New WV Civics: A Fable

Jim Sconyers

As the legislative season winds down, it is time for a primer for citizens of our fair state. It’s *The New Civics* — same as the old civics?

Think back to your school daze, when you learned all about how democracy works in America — purportedly the same model in use in the states. We have three branches of government, remember? They’re called the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judicial. Let’s review how they function.

The **Executive Branch** is made up of the Governor and the Lobbyists. Lobbyists are the uber-Cabinet who advise and guide the Governor. When important matters must be decided, the Lobbyists call the Governor into the Inner Sanctum, a secure location far from the meddling eyes and ears of the citizens and the media. The Governor asks how to respond to the issue at hand, and the Lobbyists tell him what they will allow.

The **Judicial Branch** is our court system. Matters of the utmost importance work their way up the food chain to the highest arbiters of all, the Supreme Court of Appeals, fondly known as “The Supremes.” Wealthy individuals and corporations vie with one another to buy one or more of the seats on this bench. The Supremes are “the court of last resort,” unless of course the U.S. Supreme Court finds it necessary to reprimand them for becoming too obvious in their service to their buyers.

And finally, we have the **Legislative Branch**, which meets officially every winter in the gold-domed edifice overlooking the coal barges on the Kanawha River. The Legislative Branch, or more simply the Legislature, is made up in turn of two “houses,” which we call a bicameral arrangement. These are the House of King Coal and the House of Big Gas. We will now follow two recent bills to see how the democratic process that is the cornerstone of our way of life works.

The Mine Safety Bill

Following one tragedy after another in our coal mines, culminating in Upper Big Branch, the worst mine disaster in forty years, our leaders vowed “Never again!” This is the required mantra in all such situations. Some brave soul wrote a bill that would do much to save lives in the mines. The leaders of the two Houses (remember them?) then took the bill to the Governor. The Governor convened the Lobbyists in the famous Inner Sanctum, where they handed him a new bill. The new bill was a nicer bill, because like a dog that might otherwise bite, it had had dental surgery and was rendered toothless. “Take this bill to your Houses and pass it,” they said. And the Houses made it so.

The Forever Fund

Our new century has brought new wealth, seeming to pop right out of the ground. It’s as if Jed Clampett was out shooting some food, and up from the ground came — not Texas tea — but gas ... lots of gas. All of a sudden we had a new vocabulary and arithmetic. No longer were millions big enough, instead now we have to wrap our heads around billions and even trillions. Somebody is going to make a lot — a LOT — of money here.

Time for someone with vision to enter. Here’s an idea: How about we capture some of that bonanza in a Future Fund, to benefit all the people and the state, far into the future, paying off even after the gas is gone? Is this a radical idea? Hardly — other states and most foreign countries use this model. Do we need it? Think roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and more. Talk about forward-looking! And the outcome? “What? Are you crazy? Get that cockamamie bill out-a-here!” And the Houses made it so.

Class? Are you still with me? Any questions? No? OK then — quiz on Monday. Class dismissed ... sorry, I meant dismissed.

New Power Plant Carbon Standards Are Exactly What Americans Want

The US Environmental Protection Agency has proposed new rules to protect Americans from carbon pollution emitted by new electric power plants. The rules limit carbon dioxide emissions to 1000 pounds per MWh, a standard that can be met by natural gas generators, but would require carbon capture and sequestration on coal-fired power plants.

EPA found that these rules would have very little effect on electric power costs because natural gas is already cheaper than coal, and virtually no new coal-fired power plants are being proposed anyway.

As expected, West Virginia political leaders are complaining about EPA’s rules, but a new public opinion survey from the American Lung Association shows that tougher pollution standards are exactly what American voters want, with 72 percent agreeing with the EPA’s new carbon-pollution limits.

The survey also found that a 2-to-1 majority believes these first-ever limits will create lower electricity prices and slow the coal industry. Survey results are available at lung.org.

The public sees this as a health issue, and the Sierra Club is urging that approach as the right way to look at it. While carbon dioxide does not directly harm human health, other emissions from coal-fired power plants kill thousands every year. In addition, the long-term effects of climate change do affect people’s health, increasing disease and death. The combination of air pollution and raising the air temperature, which carbon dioxide does, leads to more smog — which can be deadly.

What You Can Do

The Club urges members to participate in the 60-day comment period on the rules. Watch for messages on how to participate, or visit www.sierraclub.org.



For that very special person...

This Mother’s Day, give a Sierra Club Membership to say “Thank You” for a lifetime of caring.



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 Email _____

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 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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 Card Number _____ Exp. Date ____/____
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Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
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Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club, P.O. Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041 or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

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Political Endorsements

The Chapter Political Committee plans endorsements in the upcoming May Primary. These will be posted on the Chapter web page, but how does the Chapter decide who to endorse?

The Political Committee has very specific rules and procedures on endorsements. These are based on three criteria, including responses to environmental questionnaires, past voting records, and input directly from members. A two-thirds vote of both the Chapter Political Committee and the Chapter ExCom are needed for state and local endorsements, and approval of the National Political Committee is also required for federal races. This means that only really good candidates meet these thresholds, and this requires active participation by Chapter members.

Please contact us if you know of candidates worthy of our endorsement, or races we should know about. And please help support the candidates who support the environment.

Perspectives on Outings

Rail Trails: A Great Idea — Dan Soeder, Outings Chair

As human civilization has evolved, so have the forms of basic transportation. In the United States, passengers and freight transitioned from ship, stagecoach, horseback and Conestoga wagons in the early 1800s to canal boats following major rivers, and then to railroads in the years before the Civil War. The Conestoga wagons and canal boats that hauled freight for a young nation no longer exist, replaced by semi-trucks, freeways and jet aircraft. The railroads are still around, but services are much more limited than a century ago, and many rail lines and spurs have been abandoned. The legacy of these old transportation corridors lives on, however, with the idea of the rail-trail.

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the oldest and largest advocacy group for rail-trails in the U.S. (www.railstotrails.org/index.html). Based in Washington, DC, they advocate nationally for turning abandoned railroad rights-of-way, canal boat towpaths, and other old, unused infrastructure into recreational hiking, biking and rollerblading trails. Beginning in 1986, when there were fewer than 200 rail trails nationwide, the Conservancy has worked tirelessly to grow the number of preserved pathways to more than 1600, with the goal of linking communities, states and eventually the nation with a network of safe, multi-use trails. The long, narrow strips of land that make up old railroad rights-of-way could not have been put to a better use, and just in the nick of time. Once an abandoned right-of-way is lost to new development, it is extremely difficult to reassemble.

West Virginia, Ohio, western Maryland, and western Pennsylvania are blessed with a number of these trails, several of which are featured on our current outings calendar. The history is there for the taking. Most were built as railroads in the 19th or early 20th Centuries to serve specific markets, and were no longer needed as times changed. Two former canal towpaths in the area have also been turned into trails: the C&O Canal from Cumberland to Georgetown, and the Ohio & Erie Canal trail fea-

tured in our Cuyahoga Valley National Park outing. As far as I know, the canals are the oldest pieces of infrastructure in the region that have been turned into recreational trails. I have often wondered what the immigrant laborers and slaves who dug these canals by hand, and physically carried every bucket of dirt that makes up the towpaths would have thought of the present-day use of their product. Recreation, leisure time and exercise for fun would have been very foreign concepts to the working classes back then.

The Western Maryland Rail Trail follows the path of the old B&O Railroad along the banks of the Potomac River. During the Civil War, this was an important Union transportation corridor for moving troops and supplies out of the Port of Baltimore and into the hinterlands. Confederate artillery shelled the tracks on a regular basis from fortifications in the hills across the Potomac River from the town of Hancock, MD. Significant parts of the town got taken out by the guns as well.

The Great Allegheny Passage or GAP trail runs from Cumberland, MD, to Pittsburgh (all the way down to the Point if you care to go that far). We have a bike ride scheduled in July on the GAP up the Allegheny Front from Frostburg to Meyersdale, and we will hike another piece of it along the Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle. Come on out and join us for some fun, exercise, scenery and history.

One product hauled west by the Conestoga wagons was fresh cigars rolled in Lancaster, PA. The green tobacco was supposed to dry out and cure inside the wagons during the long trip to St. Louis along the old National Road (Route 40). Some of the drivers couldn't wait, however, and would occasionally try to smoke a raw, green cigar. The smell was reportedly pretty bad. To this day, a stinky, cheap cigar is called a "stogie," after the Conestoga wagons. And that is a true story.

See you outside!

OUTINGS

Sun, Apr 29

WV Wildlife Center

not rated — The West Virginia State Wildlife Center on French Creek near Buckhannon is a modern zoological facility displaying native and introduced state wildlife. Operated by the Wildlife Resources Section of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, the Wildlife Center is dedicated to presenting visitors a realistic and factual understanding of our state's wildlife. Woodland wildlife can be viewed along a wheelchair-accessible interpretative trail 1.25 mile through a mature hardwood forest. The spacious enclosures allow the animals to interact with their environment and they therefore exhibit more natural behavior patterns. Interpretive signs help the visitor to learn more about each animal's life history, biology and its relationship with humans. Animals exhibited range from groundhog to otters, elk and bison. Join us for an enjoyable and educational family-friendly outing. We will meet at the Center at 10 AM. Admission is \$3 adult, \$1.50 child. Contact the Outing Leader for directions and to register.

Leader: Jim Sconyers, 304-698-9628, jimscon@gmail.com

Nearest town: Buckhannon, WV

Web info: www.wvdnr.gov/wildlife/wildlifecenter.shtm

Sat-Sun, May 5-6

Cuyahoga Valley National Park, OH

rated moderate — Alternate dates are May 19-20 in case of bad weather. Enjoy one of the newest and nearest National Parks, tucked away in the Cuyahoga (Huron Indian word for "crooked") River valley in Ohio between Cleveland and Akron. Meet at the historic Stanford House hostel near the small village of Boston, OH, on May 5 at 10 AM. We will take our bicycles aboard the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, and ride the train south to the Northside Station in Akron (cost to ride with bike is \$3). The bicycle ride back to Boston will be about 15 miles on the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail. From Boston, we will hike the Buckeye Trail to Peninsula for dinner at the Winking Lizard Tavern, a local hot spot, and return to Boston along the Towpath Trail, about 7 miles round trip. Overnight options are to tent camp on Stanford House grounds or stay in the lodgings at the Stanford House (www.nps.gov/cuva/planyourvisit/lodging.htm). On Sunday, we will pack up after breakfast and hike to scenic Brandywine Falls (about 2 miles roundtrip) from the campground. Paul Turner, a former WV Chapter member living in Ohio will help lead this. The park is about a 3-hour drive from Morgantown. Sierra Club requires that helmets be worn on all bicycle outings. Preregister with leader; spaces are limited.

Leader: Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164, Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org

Nearest town: Peninsula, OH

Web info: www.nps.gov/cuva/index.htm

Sat, May 12

Sugarloaf Mountain, MD

rated moderate — Located in Comus, MD off I-270, this will be a 7 mile loop hike with rocky outcroppings and sweeping views. The trail is mostly gently rolling with a few steep uphill climbs. The area is privately owned, so there is a nominal entrance fee. Pre-register with the leader. Meet at 10 AM; a meeting place will be determined so that we can carpool to the park.

Leader: Pam Peitz, 240-818-6554, pampeitz@comcast.net

Nearest town: Comus, MD

Web info: www.sugarloafmd.com

Sat, May 19

Spruce Knob/Seneca Creek Backcountry

rated moderate — Enjoy a scenic 8-9 mile loop hike atop the tallest mountain in West Virginia. The hike will start at 10:00 AM on the Lumberjack Trail near the crest of Spruce Knob, and then take the Huckleberry Trail down to the Seneca Creek Trail



Please contact the Editor for submission guidelines or advertising rates.

Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to the Editor at

celliot2@comcast.net
414 Tyrone Avery Rd.
Morgantown, WV 26508

**Deadline for
Jul/Aug issue
June 7**

Opinions expressed in the **Mountain State Sierran** are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Sierra Club. This newsletter is published bimonthly by the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club and distributed to all paid members.

Sierra Club Liability Policies For Chapter Outings

Sierra Club outings are open to everyone, members and non-members alike. Each outing is intended to be a wholesome, safe, and enjoyable experience in the outdoors. Participants must have suitable clothing, gear, and stamina, and are encouraged to select activities that match their individual abilities for outdoor adventures.

The Club offers a variety of outings from "easy" to "moderate" to "strenuous" that suit all activity levels. The difficulty of each outing is clearly designated in the announcement. Reservations are generally not required unless noted, but the outing leader may be contacted in advance for questions about the terrain, the difficulty and recommended gear.

Activities are normally held "rain or shine," but may be postponed at the leader's discretion for safety reasons in the event of inclement weather. Participants are reminded that all outdoor activities carry a degree of risk, and some take place in locations where professional emergency medical aid may be two or more hours away. People with health concerns should consult a physician to determine the advisability of participating in these or similar activities. The leader is responsible for the safety of all participants, and has the final authority to decide whether or not an individual may participate on a specific outing. Sierra Club safety policy requires that helmets be worn on bicycling outings, and a personal flotation device (PFD) be worn when using personal watercraft such as kayaks or canoes.

Unless noted in the announcement, Club outings are intended for adults. Children and

dogs are not normally permitted, unless an outing is so designated. Minors (under 18 years of age) must be accompanied by a parent or a legal guardian, or they must have both 1) a signed permission slip, and 2) the leader's prior consent to participate in the Club outing. Sierra Club outings officially begin and end at the trailhead.

Travel to the official starting point and back, even from an advertised meeting place, is the sole responsibility of each participant. While the Club encourages car-pooling, such arrangements are strictly between the riders and the drivers, and are not a part of the outing. Participants assume full responsibility and liability for all risks associated with such travel.

All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver, which can be viewed on the web at www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms or by calling 415-977-5630.

The Sierra Club does not charge for chapter outings, although payment of park entrance fees, a share of campsite rental costs, permit fees, equipment rental charges, etc. may be required from the participants. The Sierra Club practices "leave-no-trace" trail techniques, including hiking and camping on durable surfaces, minimizing campfire impacts, packing out all trash, respecting wildlife, being considerate of other visitors, and leaving the environment as it was found.

The Sierra Club's California Seller of Travel identification number is CST 2087766-40. Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California.

Upcoming Outings — Spring / Summer

and return. Lumberjack and Seneca Creek trails are fairly level and easy trails; the Huckleberry section has a moderately steep downhill grade with rocky areas. Hike is okay for beginners. Participants should bring rain gear, lunch and water, and wear sturdy footwear. Camping is available nearby at Spruce Knob Lake. Please pre-register with the leader.

Leader: Brent Carminati, 304-567-2865, brentcar1@frontiernet.net

Nearest town: Whitmer, WV

Web info: Search Google for Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks to get Forest Service websites.

Sun, May 20

Valley Falls Day Hike

rated moderate — This hike loops about 7.5 miles through the park, with stops at waterfalls along the trail. There are a few steep/rocky sections that can be a bit tricky. Bring snacks and water; trekking poles can be helpful. Group will meet at noon in the parking lot nearest the main waterfalls.

Leader: Aaron Vedock, 540-805-0019, amvedock@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Grafton, WV

Web info: www.valleyfallsstatepark.com

Sun, May 27

Ohiopyle State Park, PA

rated moderate — Enjoy an early summer ramble on the rail-trail along the Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle, with a loop through the park to see some great scenery, and an optional loop back into town by way of Cucumber Falls. This park has a terrific campground for overnight stays. Meet at the old depot (now the visitor center) in the town of Ohiopyle at noon. Contact leader for details.

Leader: Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164, Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org

Nearest town: Ohiopyle, PA

Web info: www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/ohiopyle.aspx

Sun, Jun 3

Paddle on Cheat Lake

rated easy — Bring your canoe or kayak down to Cheat Lake for an easy, flatwater paddle in several sheltered coves. The big powerboats usually stay out of these, but they are fine for paddlecraft. Launch at noon from the ramp in the small park at the end of Morgan Run Road. Participants must supply their own watercraft, and personal flotation devices (lifejackets) are required on all Sierra Club watercraft outings. Rain or high wind cancels. Contact the leader for details.

Leader: Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164, Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Sun, Jun 10

Cheat River Leisure Float/Paddle

rated easy — We will put in at Holly Meadow in Tucker County, for a leisurely float-and-paddle down the Cheat River to St. George. Enjoy the riverine scenery of forest, farm fields, summer wildflowers, possibly wildlife (bald eagle last year), and more, with the mountains as a backdrop. The trip is generally flatwater, with a few riffles providing brief excitement here and there. Expect to spend about 4 hours on the river. It is suitable for beginners. Boat rentals are available. Kayaks and sit-on-tops are recommended for their shallow draft. The outing depends on warm weather and adequate water level. Personal flotation devices (lifejackets) are required on all Sierra Club watercraft outings. Optional late lunch/snack at local Parsons bistro afterwards. Rain or high wind cancels. Please pre-register with leader.

Leader: Jim Sconyers, 304-698-9628, jimscon@gmail.com

Nearest towns: St. George; Parsons, WV

Sat, Jun 30

Evening Bike Ride

rated moderate — Join us for a bike ride along the Morgantown Waterfront. Length of bike ride will depend on the desires of the group, but expect a ride of about 10-15 miles. Bring along some water, don't forget your helmet, and make sure your tires are properly inflated. Meet at 6 PM at Ruby McQuain Park.

Leader: Aaron Vedock, 540-805-0019, amvedock@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV.

Sat, Jul 7

Adopt-A-Trail Clean-up at Coopers Rock

not rated — This will be the summer trail clean-up on our "adopted" Intermediate Cross Country Ski Trail at Cooper's Rock State Forest. Volunteers seeking community service are encouraged to participate. Much of the work will be cutting back vegetation, cleaning out and restoring drainage ditches/culverts and general trail clearing. The work is meant to be rewarding and at a pace to enjoy each other's company; however, some moderate intensity work will be necessary, using shovels, rakes, pruners, and moving reasonably sized rocks. Volunteers should wear sturdy boots and carry work gloves, water, snacks. Contact leader for more details.

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

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: www.coopersrockstateforest.com;http://coopersrock.org/

Sun, Jul 8

Great Allegheny Passage, MD/PA

rated moderate to strenuous — Bicycle this delightful and challenging rail-trail up the high Allegheny Front from Frostburg, MD, to Meyersdale, PA, returning downhill for a round trip of about 30 miles. The packed-gravel trail is built along an old railroad grade, complete with spectacular views, viaducts and tunnels, including a cool 3300-footer under Big Savage Mountain. Mountain bike tires are helpful but not needed. Sierra Club requires that helmets be worn on all bicycle outings. Meet in Frostburg at noon in the trail parking area on New Hope Road. Heavy or steady rain cancels. Contact leader for details and directions.

Leader: Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164, Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org

Nearest town: Frostburg, MD

Web info: www.atatrail.org/index.cfm

Sat Jul 14

Coopers Rock Hike

rated easy to moderate — We'll do an out-and-back hike of about 6 miles along the "Goodspeed Highway Trail" on the Chestnut Ridge Park side of the forest. Contact leader for information on parking. Meet at 9 AM.

Leader: Aaron Vedock, 540-805-0019, amvedock@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: www.coopersrockstateforest.com;http://coopersrock.org

Sun, Jul 22

Spruce Knob/Seneca Creek Backcountry

rated moderate — Escape the summer heat with a scenic 9 mile loop hike atop the tallest mountain in West Virginia. The hike will start at the Seneca Creek Trailhead, walk up the road to the Lumberjack Trail near the crest of Spruce Knob, follow the Lumberjack to the Huckleberry Trail, and loop down to the Seneca Creek Trail and return. Lumberjack and Seneca Creek trails are fairly level and easy trails; the Huckleberry section has a moderately steep downhill grade with rocky areas. Hike is okay for beginners. Rain gear, lunch and water, and sturdy footwear are necessary. Camping is available nearby at Spruce Knob Lake. Step off at 10 AM. Please pre-register with the leader.

Leader: Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164, Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org

Nearest town: Whitmer, WV

Web info: Search Google for Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks to get Forest Service websites.

Sat, Jul 28

Washington Monument State Park, MD

rated moderate — Hike from the Appalachian Trail parking lot on Route 40 along the AT up to the monument at Washington Monument State Park. This is a 6-mile hike out and back with just one short, steep section. This is a good summer hike because the trail is well shaded. There is a great view at the monument and the wild raspberries may be ripe as an added bonus. Meet at 9:30 AM; pre-register with leader.

Leader: Pam Peitz, 240-818-6554, pampeitz@comcast.net

Nearest town: Boonsboro, MD

Web info: www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/western/washington.asp

Sat, Aug 4

Blueberry Picking: Dolly Sods Wilderness

rated easy — Family and pet friendly activity. This will be a 4-mile hike in Dolly Sods at a very leisurely pace to allow for wild blueberry and huckleberry picking. The meeting place will be just off Freeland Road in Canaan Valley and we will caravan up to the parking area nearest the wilderness area. The hike begins at the trailhead in the Canaan Institute at 9 AM. There is no shade in Dolly Sods or protection from rain, so be prepared for both. Bring sun protection, water, rain gear, snacks and a container for your berries. Group size is limited; please pre-register with the leader.

Leader: Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164, Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org

Nearest town: Davis, WV

Web info: www.patc.us/hiking/destinations/dolysods.html

Sat, Aug 11

Coopers Rock Hike

rated moderate — Join us for an out-and-back hike along the "Raven Rock Trail" at Coopers Rock. This is a short hike of about 3.5 miles with some moderately steep sections. Beautiful view of the Cheat River Canyon will await us at the end of the Raven Rock Trail. Bring your camera, as there are some great photographic opportunities. Contact leader for information on parking. Meet at 9 AM.

Leader: Aaron Vedock, 540-805-0019, amvedock@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: www.coopersrockstateforest.com;http://coopersrock.org

Sun, Aug 19

Allegheny Highlands Trail

rated moderate — Meet at the Hendricks, WV, parking area at noon for a bike ride on the Allegheny Highlands Trail through Parsons and onward toward Elkins for a circuit of about 20 miles. Most of this rail-trail is paved with a few short stretches of well-packed dirt. Mountain bike tires are helpful but not required. Bring water and snack. Potential to refill water jugs at natural spring outside of Parsons. Sierra Club requires that helmets be worn on all bicycle outings. Heavy or steady rain cancels.

Leader: Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164, Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org

Nearest town: Parsons, WV

Web info: www.highlandstrail.org/trailmap.html

Sun, Sep 2

Endless Wall Trail, New River Gorge

rated easy to moderate — Family and pet friendly activity. Hike along the edge of West Virginia's most spectacular canyon. Meet at the National Park Service Canyon Rim visitor center on Route 19 near Fayetteville, on the north end of the famous bridge pictured on the back of the WV state quarter. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Pets must be well-behaved and on a leash (children must also be well behaved, but a leash is optional). Step off at noon for a 3.5-

mile circuit hike. Heavy or steady rain cancels. Please pre-register with the leader.

Leader: Dan Soeder, 304-568-2164, Dan.Soeder@sierraclub.org

Nearest town: Fayetteville, WV

Web info: www.midatlantichikes.com/id191.html

Sat, Sep 15

Coopers Rock Circuit Hike

rated strenuous — This challenging hike will loop through about 13 miles of forest. Starting at the Overlook Area, we'll hike down to Cheat Lake, and then back up by looping out to the front gate, and returning to the Overlook Area. The trail is very steep in places, rocky and uneven. This hike is for EXPERIENCED hikers only, will take 5-6 hours to complete, and is not recommended for beginners. Participants should carry plenty of water and snacks, wear proper footwear, and trekking poles are highly recommended. Contact leader for information on parking. Meet at 9 AM.

Leader: Aaron Vedock, 540-805-0019, amvedock@hotmail.com

Nearest town: Morgantown, WV

Web info: www.coopersrockstateforest.com;http://coopersrock.org



Maryland Chapter Outings

Our neighboring chapter to the east has an active outings program, with many trips coming into West Virginia or western Maryland. These outings, by highly experienced leaders, range from easy to strenuous, and are open to everyone. Join an outing by checking out their calendar at

maryland.sierraclub.org

Allegheny Group Outings

Sierra Club members in the Pittsburgh area belong to the Allegheny Group. They have a moderately active outings program as well as links to other local outdoor activities. Visit their website for an outings calendar and more details at

alleghenysc.org

Potomac Region Outings (PRO)

This is an activity section of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, with an extensive outings program run by leaders who live in and around the Washington, D.C., area. A calendar of activities, information and updates can be found on their website at

www.sierrapotomac.org

West Virginia Chapter Outings

For updated listings of outings sponsored by the West Virginia Chapter, check our Chapter website at

westvirginia.sierraclub.org

Abbreviations Used

AMC	Appalachian Mountain Club
AT	Appalachian Trail
GWNF	George Washington National Forest
JNF	Jefferson National Forest
MG	Monongahela Group
MNF	Monongahela National Forest
NPS	National Park Service
NRA	National Recreation Area
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
PFD	Personal Flotation Device (lifejacket)
SF	State Forest
SP	State Park
SNP	Shenandoah National Park





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May / June 2012



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cglagola@mail.wvnet.edu
(Put name of recipient under subject)

Messages for legislators can be left at:
1-877-565-3447 or 304-347-4836

Mail address:
Member, WV Senate or
House of Delegates
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website: www.legis.state.wv.us
has contact information for all state
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Inside this Issue

1

Fossil Fools Day: Activists Picket Marcellus Conference at The Greenbrier on April 1

2

ExCom To Meet April 28 in Flatwoods • 2012 a Bad Year for Environment at WV Legislature • Watch for Citizen Gas Well Workshops • **Mon Group Meetings**

3

View from the Chair: *Why Isn't Anyone Doing Anything About It?* • The New WV Civics: A Fable • Americans Want New Power Plant Carbon Standards • Political Endorsements

4

Perspectives on Outings— *Rail Trails: A Great Idea* • **OUTINGS** Spring 2012 • Outings Liability Policies

5

OUTINGS Spring / Summer 2012 (continued)

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