

M Mountain State Sierran

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NATIONAL OLD GROWTH AMENDMENT: An Opportunity to Save Eastern Trees

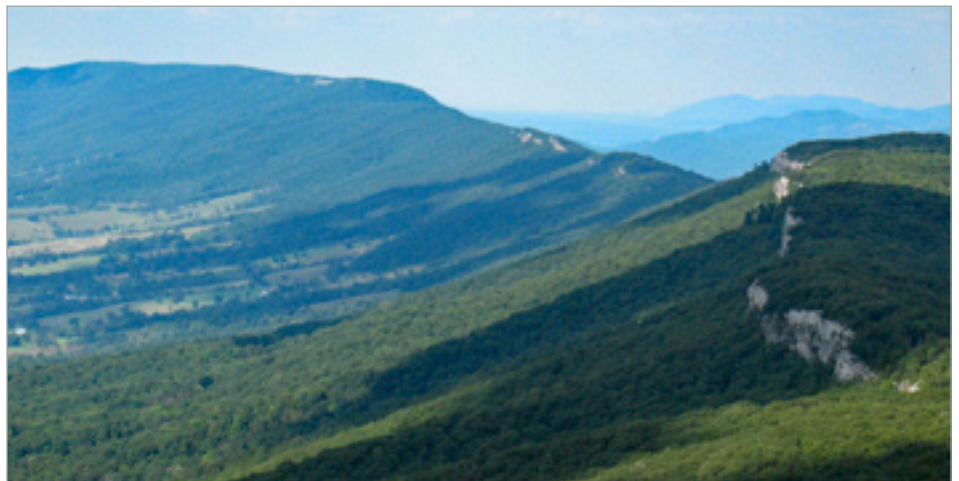


BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON

“We’re putting almost 11 billion tons of carbon into the atmosphere every year, but 6.3 billion tons are absorbed into plants on land and plants in the ocean. And the largest single place that’s removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere on an annual basis is forests. As trees get older, they absorb more carbon every year, and because they are bigger they store more carbon. Letting existing natural forests grow is essential to any climate goal we have.”

—WILLIAM MOOMAW, IPCC POLICY SCIENTIST
<https://e360.yale.edu/features/why-keeping-mature-forests-intact-is-key-to-the-climate-fight>

This statement makes clear that we cannot afford to lose any trees. It’s a problem, therefore, that our National Forests, unlike National Parks, are administered by the Department of Agriculture (USDA). The trees within these areas are regarded as a crop—not a natural resource to be protected, but one to be logged. In fact, National Forests



North Fork Mountain (within the Monongahela National Forest) looking north. PHOTO: BETSY JAEGER LAWSON.

are expected to generate their own income from timbering, which is why less than 25% of our 188 million acres of publicly owned trees are old growth.

On Earth Day 2022, the Biden Administration issued an executive order to identify, inventory, and protect old growth forests on federal lands. In response, last December the U.S.

Forest Service released a **Notice of Intent** for a nationwide forest plan amendment to conserve old-growth forests across the National Forest System. This was followed by a 45-day comment period from the public. More than half a million people submitted comments, with most advocating for stronger

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Building on our Past for an Effective Future



BY JIM KOTCON

As the Sierra Club WV Chapter approaches its 40th Anniversary celebration (SierraFest, October 4-6), it's important to reflect on why we are here and where we are going.

The WV Chapter was originally part of a Mid-Atlantic Chapter, but was established as an independent entity in 1984. We did a lot of outings and work projects in the Monongahela National Forest in those early years. Some of my favorite memories are the hikes and camping trips with new friends and like-minded members.

Our efforts later expanded to state and federal legislative initiatives, and our work with the West Virginia Environmental Council led to the passage of landmark recycling, solid waste, and groundwater protection bills.

By the early 2000s, climate change became the dominant issue for the Sierra Club nationally, and it has played a central role in our efforts here in West Virginia. With that concern, we've opposed efforts to

keep coal-fired power plants operating or build new fossil fuel facilities. We've challenged permits for mountaintop removal coal mining, all in an effort to make sure that the coal industry pays the true cost of its environmental and human health impacts. Our fight against climate change has also focused us on protecting mature forests.

Ultimately, the Chapter's strength depends on our volunteer members.

We've worked with local political

leaders to support renewable energy policies and facilities and adopt energy-efficiency projects.

In 2023 the Chapter hired a full-time Executive Director, Honey May, and she is tasked with taking our efforts to the next level. We want to expand outings, organize stronger campaigns, and build the Chapter to the level we will need for new initiatives and involvement.

Ultimately, the Chapter's strength depends on our volunteer members. While the challenges are huge, we have a very bright future as long as we work together and keep inspiring the next generation of environmentally active, concerned citizens. We invite you to be a part of these efforts!

West Virginia Sierra Club Chapter Directory

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

Term ends at first meeting of indicated year.

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jim Kotcon, Chair	('26)	304-594-3322
Kevin Campbell, CCL Delegate	('25)	304-613-4099
Davis Funk	('25)	
Dani Parent	('26)	606-371-9434
Bill Price	('26)	304-389-8822
Chrissy Sandy, Secretary	('25)	
David Sturm	('25)	304-612-0024

MONONGAHELA GROUP EXCOMM

Michael Attfield, Vice Chair, Chpt Delegate	('24)	
Jim Kotcon	('25)	304-594-3322
James Lamp	('25)	304-244-9257
Betsy Lawson, Secretary, Membership	('24)	304-983-2980
Sally Wilts, Treasurer		304-379-7567

EASTERN PANHANDLE GROUP EXCOMM

Currently Inactive.
For information, contact Chris Craig at ccraig@laurelodge.com.

OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS

Kathy Gregg, Archives/Chapter History	304-472-4055
Bill Price, Conservation	304-389-8822
Chris Craig, Newsletter & Outings	304-433-1260
David Sturm, Political	304-612-0024
Candice Elliott, Treasurer	304-319-2245
Davis Funk, Webmaster	
Baileigh Rhoads, WVU Sierra Student Coalition	937-360-4108

REGIONAL SIERRA CLUB ORGANIZING STAFF

Honey May, WV Chapter Director	304-356-8774
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Blackwater Canyon Trail Culvert at Big Run Tributary PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN.



Same Culvert After a Landslide PHOTO: STEPHEN STROTHERS.

Save the Blackwater Canyon Trail

One of the most popular hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing trails in West Virginia needs our help!

The Blackwater Canyon Trail in Tucker County is a ten-mile former railway that connects Hendricks, southeast of Parsons, to Thomas. It recently suffered a serious landslide that needs more repair than trail volunteers can provide.

Until 1888, the canyon was wild and covered with immense spruce and hardwood stands. Then coal and timber tycoon Henry Gassaway Davis laid tracks through the canyon. Along the then-West Virginia Central and Pittsburgh Railroad line, three impressive cut-stone culverts were constructed, built with stone quarried from the "road cuts" made during construction. Most of the canyon was eventually clearcut, and by 1910 fires swept over the wasteland. Flooding and soil erosion left the area uninhabitable.

The Monongahela National **BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON** Forest was established in 1920,

bringing anti-erosion and reforestation projects to the area. Slowly, the canyon began to recover, and trees returned. The railroad became inactive in 1983 and was designated a hiking trail in 1989. The Blackwater River was recommended for "Wild and Scenic River" status in 1995. But then-owner Allegheny Power Systems refused to sell adjacent land to the Conservation Fund. Eventually, Allegheny Wood Products (AWP) became the owner of 3,000 acres of the canyon.

Today the trail is the property boundary between Monongahela National Forest on the uphill side and land owned by Scenic Vistas, LLC on the downhill side. The landslide is at the stone culvert at Big Run Tributary, at Mile 4 on the downhill side. While Scenic Vistas, created by AWP, is the landowner, they are not obligated to maintain the trail. The historic and protected Blackwater Industrial Complex area, including the trail, is the responsibility of Monongahela National Forest. Unfortunately, they have failed to maintain it, leading to significant erosion from severe weather.

Coal and timber removal destroyed the canyon once. Now a highway, Corridor H, will intrude itself on the quiet and natural beauty of the canyon. The trail is essential to the local economy today, providing recreational opportunities for thousands of people each year. It is up to the Forest Service to repair this landslide and maintain the trail for the many people who use it.

TAKE ACTION!

Tell the Forest Service to repair the trail! Send your comments by scanning this code:



JOIN US FOR
SIERRAFEST 2024!

Celebrate 40 years of the
West Virginia Chapter

Friday, October 4 through
Sunday, October 6

CEDAR LAKES CONFERENCE CENTER, RIPLEY, WV

Look for full details on page 14



PHOTO BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON.

One First Hand Account: Cleaning up Coal

BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON

The scars of abandoned strip mines are readily visible in West Virginia, though many are obscured by scrub vegetation. But the orange acid mine drainage (AMD) that flows from them exposes their presence. This was especially true this past May 13 when, during a long dry spell, water was seen gushing from below the pit of a permit-revoked strip mine adjacent to our property.

Back in 2012, despite our attempts to stop it, the WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issued a permit to surface mine ninety acres of woods and pasture directly in front of us. (We were invited to have our land stripped too but ignored it.) Soon logging, then blasting and bulldozing exposed part of the Waynesburg seam. I counted 56 blasts that shook our house. One blast in particular was badly done and shattered a mine wall. The other side of the wall contained several old punch mines above a ravine. (I have been photographing acid mine drainage there for the past ten years.) The company was poorly run, and eventually big debts forced them to declare bankruptcy in 2014, leaving yet another bond forfeiture mine. The quiet was a welcome relief after two years of nonstop noise and dust. But we were left with a large hole in the ground, mountains of overburden, and nonstop AMD flowing into Dents Run. The DEP Office of Special Reclamation didn't consider this mine a priority, so it sat until recently when one of the two landowners prevailed upon the DEP to hire a company from Flatwoods, Collins Reclamation, to do the work. They had submitted the lowest bid.

But Collins Reclamation had financial problems and was purchased by Range Environmental from Cleveland, Ohio. An entirely new crew and foreman started two weeks before the gush of mine water appeared. The foreman had no knowledge of the shattered wall or the punch mines and evidently saw no reason not to just start filling the pit—a violation of the reclamation permit.

The landowner asked neighbors to witness the gushing acidic water. Three of his cows died after drinking downstream from the AMD drainage, but no autopsy was done to prove the cause. Despite his MAGA shirt, he wanted to see the EPA and the DEP do their job and protect our environment—and his property.

So I wrote a letter to the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE) in Charleston and the state DEP Office of Special Reclamation in Philippi detailing the reclamation problems. The shattered mine wall from the bad blast was never dealt with, so as the pit was being filled back in, standing water was forced through the shattered wall. It ran through the old punch mines and gushed into the ravine on the other side, headed for Dents Run.

Two inspectors, one from OSMRE and the other from DEP, visited the site on May 29, taking us, the two landowners, and other neighbors on a four-hour inspection of the mine. A ten-day-notice was issued with three violations: failure to pass water runoff from the disturbed area through a control system (settling pond), failure to initiate reclamation in a timely manner after notification of forfeiture, and failure to properly distribute topsoil.

The latter would have been difficult to do, because the original mining company didn't separate topsoil from rocks, clay, and organic debris. They didn't construct settling ponds that worked properly, and they backfilled the pit to above the coal seam without ever dealing with the shattered wall.

Now under the eye of a federal inspector, Range was forced to treat the water in the pit, taking a big chunk out of their profit margin. I asked the state inspector if dumping dozens of truckloads of limestone into the pit would be a permanent solution for the AMD. He responded no, that it would need treatment in perpetuity.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

"Dry" Statistics Raise Drought Concerns



BY AILEEN CURFMAN

Who doesn't love falling asleep to the steady drumming of falling rain? During the summer of 2024, this sound was rarely heard in West Virginia. By late July the absence of rain had led Governor Justice to declare a statewide emergency.

How dry was it? A map released on August 1 showed the entire state suffering from some stage of drought, with abnormally dry conditions in the southwestern counties along the Ohio River, and extreme drought in the easternmost counties. Though floods in the state brought headlines in recent years, drought has become the big story in 2024.

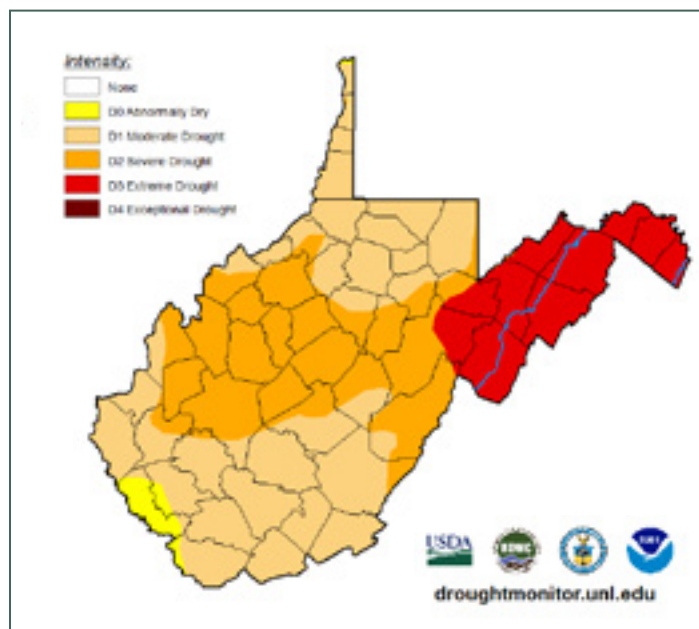
Droughts are most common in the "rain shadow" just east of the mountains. That's because clouds produce rain as they travel west to east across the highlands, and little rain is left for the eastern counties. But the entire state is subject to drought. In October 2007, during an extreme drought, the Daily Mail WV reported that farmers were selling cattle because they had not produced enough hay to feed them. The same month then-Governor Joe Manchin placed a ban on all outdoor burning in the state. Officials requested aid for West Virginia counties in 2010 because of another extreme drought. A severe drought occurred in several locations in 2019 and in Jefferson County in 2023.

As climate change brings rising average temperatures, West Virginia is likely to see more drought years. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, "Regional climate modeling suggests that seasonal droughts may increase in severity, as rising temperatures will likely increase

evapotranspiration and aridity. Public water systems in smaller, rural communities located in the headwaters of unregulated watersheds are at the greatest risk for drought-related impacts. In 2019, half of West Virginia experienced moderate to severe drought, while the remainder of the state experienced abnormally dry conditions."

The West Virginia Emergency Operations Plan provides a bureaucratic structure for mitigation efforts to be implemented, but few specific strategies are suggested. The plan assumes that localities will adopt water conservation measures and will encourage the public to do the same. It also mentions providing livestock feed to farmers and identifying sources of water hauling and pumping capabilities. To aid in assessment, the plan describes stages of drought as meteorological, agricultural, hydrological, and socioeconomic. These correspond roughly to the classifications from Do to D4 used by the U. S. Drought Monitor.

West Virginia has been fortunate to have wet years alternating with dry years. However, water is a finite resource, and now is the time to fill in the blanks in the state's Emergency Operation's Plan. Since average temperatures are still increasing, it's unlikely that the short-term outlook will improve. Unless we are prepared, humans and wildlife alike are at risk. 🌿



FOR MORE READING:

- **US Drought Monitor:** tinyurl.com/wv-drought-map
- **State Impacts:** tinyurl.com/wv-drought-impacts
- **Drought.gov:** tinyurl.com/wv-drought
- **Indiana University/Adaptation Strategies:** tinyurl.com/wv-drought-strategies
- **WV Extension/Drought Management** tinyurl.com/wv-drought-ag-management



U.S. Drought Monitor for West Virginia on July 30, 2024. The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>. AUTHOR: LINDSAY JOHNSON AND NATIONAL DROUGHT MITIGATION CENTER. COURTESY USDA.

Fern and corn plants show stress from lack of rain. PHOTOS BY AILEEN CURFMAN.

U.S. Department of Energy Must Demand Actual Demonstration of Industry Claims on ARCH2



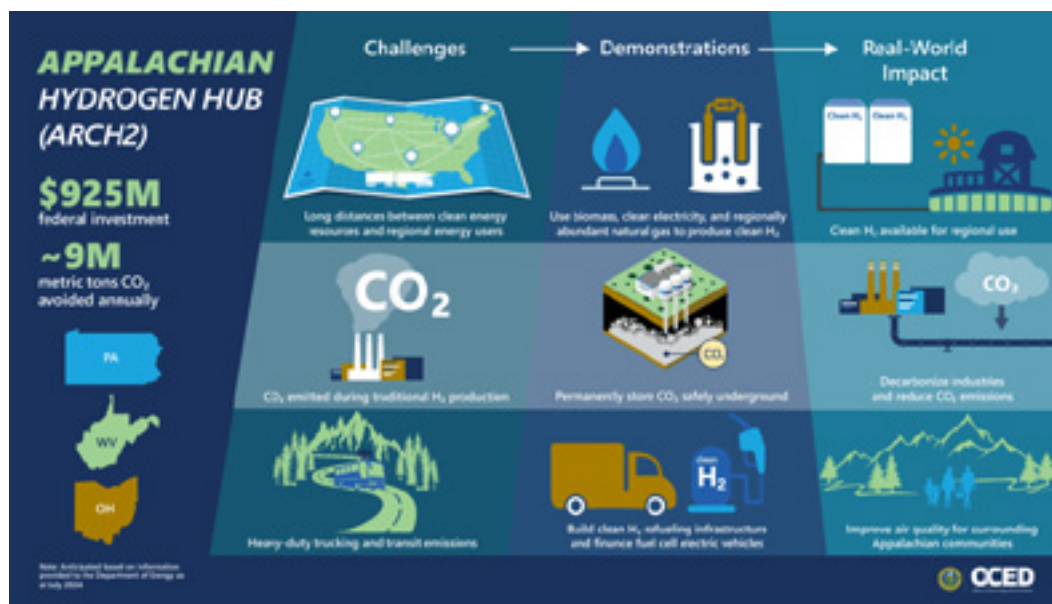
BY ERIC ENGLE

Along with announcing the funding, the DOE Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) released a project Phase-One fact sheet and community benefits commitments summary on their website at <https://www.energy.gov/oced/appalachian-hydrogen-hub-arch2>. According to the fact sheet, “The Hub intends to produce more than 1,500 metric tons of clean hydrogen per day and reduce CO₂ emissions by 9 million metric tons per year—equivalent to the annual

Despite massive levels of investment and decades of research and development, carbon capture and sequestration or storage (CCS) has not been proven viable in capturing and safely, permanently storing or sequestering even a fraction of what is needed to make these proposed operations successful. Even if CSS somehow were to become viable during the course of the phases of this

project at anywhere near the scales necessary, it would substantially add to the costs of producing “blue” hydrogen—hydrogen derived from fracked methane gas to be used in ARCH2—making it an even more expensive prospect. Bloomberg New Energy Finance (BNEF) predicts “green” hydrogen production—hydrogen produced by using an electrolysis process to split water molecules powered by renewable energy—will be cheaper than blue hydrogen production by 2030, years before ARCH2 could reach fruition.

In addition to these questionable claims of decarbonization, nothing presented to the public thus far in this project’s Phase One has



COURTESY OF OCED.

emissions of more than 2 million gasoline-powered cars.” OCED states in the fact sheet that “OCED will provide project management oversight of the Appalachian Hydrogen Hub by evaluating the status and quality of implementation at each phase of the project. Through its phased approach to project management, OCED will review and evaluate the Hub’s progress, including community benefits, which impact OCED’s decision to continue to provide federal funding and allow a project to progress to the following phase.”

indicated what industry participants intend to do about the methane itself that will inevitably escape during these operations. Over a 20-year period, methane is 86 times more powerful as a heat-trapping greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Nor has any information been released about the inevitable expansion of fracking for the gas, with its numerous and sundry public health, safety, and climate and environmental harms (see: <https://concernedhealthny.org/compendium/>).

The most important aspect of the OCED’s project management oversight is and will be the oversight of the “fossil resources with safe and responsible carbon capture” that will allegedly be used to produce clean hydrogen. Industry participants must be forced to demonstrate that they can, in fact, capture carbon dioxide emissions from their operations and safely transport (i.e., via pipeline) those emissions and store or sequester them. I have seen no reason whatsoever to believe that industry partners to the ARCH2 project can or will successfully do this.

It is my considered opinion that the ARCH2 project is nothing more than a waste of taxpayer dollars in pursuit of an admittedly admirable goal of using hydrogen as a means of decarbonizing challenging sectors of our economy like steel and cement production, and aviation and international shipping, along with other things like finding more efficient energy storage options. I support green hydrogen production and possibly even use of hydrogen recovered directly from natural deposits (“white” hydrogen)—if it can be managed safely. But in my opinion ARCH2, as devised to date, is not the right path forward.👉



In July, WV River's first Design Committee meeting for its PFAS Community Engagement action brought together representatives of state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations. Legos teambuilding activities added some fun to the work. PHOTO BY AUTUMN CROWE, COURTESY OF WV RIVERS.

EPA Grant Empowers Communities Facing PFAS Issues

BY MARIA RUSSO, WV RIVERS COALITION

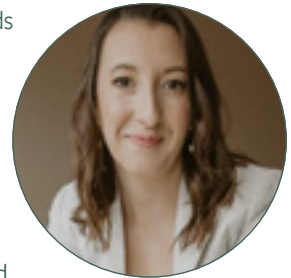
PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are a category of over 9,000 synthetic substances found in many industrial and consumer products, ranging from firefighting foam to food packaging. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), PFAS contamination in water, soil, sediment, and air have been linked to many harmful health conditions, including liver damage, thyroid disease, decreased fertility, and various types of cancer.

In 2023 the West Virginia legislature passed the PFAS Protection Act, which aims to identify and address PFAS contamination at the source and avoid undue financial burden on water utilities or ratepayers. As the state prepares to draft PFAS Action Plans as required by the act, West Virginia Rivers Coalition and the Sierra Club recognize the importance of bringing community voices, particularly those of impacted residents, to the forefront.

Last year, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) in partnership with WV Rivers was awarded an Environmental Justice Government to Government grant (EJG2G) by the EPA to provide education and initiate action in eleven WV communities. The U.S. Geological Survey had found PFAS contamination at levels

exceeding then-current EPA health standards in the water system sources of all these communities.

On July 30, 2024 at Shepherd University (Shepherdstown), WV Rivers held its first in-person meeting of the Design Committee for that grant. In partnership with WVDEP and community-based organizations from these communities, the committee is building a groundbreaking engagement model that centers community voices as it identifies local PFAS contamination and prioritizes action for remediation.



At the heart of each community's engagement is an ambassador, who will lead the way in identifying the needs of their neighbors and defining how the state can help address PFAS contamination at the source. The EJG2G program provides funding to support these activities over a three-year period. The goal is to lead to tangible environmental or public health improvements in the communities and to develop models for other communities that are faced with PFAS contamination. 🍃

GET INVOLVED

By working together, we can protect our water, improve public health, and ensure a cleaner, safer environment for future generations. If you are passionate about environmental justice and finding solutions to PFAS contamination in our waters and want to get involved, we would love to hear from you. Please reach out to Maria Russo at mrusso@wvrivers.org.

WVEC to Set Goals and Plan Action in September — and You're Invited

The West Virginia Environmental Council (WVEC) is a coalition of people and organizations — including the Sierra Club — that works for the environment in the state legislature and elsewhere around the state. WVEC's 2024 Annual Meeting registration is now open. Whether you're new to this or a long-time advocate, everyone is welcome.

The meeting runs September 13-15 at the beautiful Tygart Lake State Park in Grafton, WV. Arrive Friday, enjoy a full day of activities on Saturday, a bonfire that evening, and a farewell brunch on Sunday.

Your voice and ideas matter — every participant is crucial! Take advantage of this opportunity to learn about and vote on legislative priorities and become familiar with the organizations behind these efforts. You'll connect with environmental leaders, share your ideas, and help steer WV's future. Let's come together, enjoy nature, and work towards a better West Virginia in 2025!

WHAT'S ON THE AGENDA

- Citizen Air Monitoring
- Environmental Justice and the Law
- Climate Change: What Young WV Voters' Polling Reveals
- Protecting Our Public Lands
- Dispelling Anti-Solar Myths
- Community Solar
- Special Session for New and Young Activists



TO REGISTER, reserve lodging, or get more information, please visit their event page:
wvecouncil.org/annual-meeting



CLEANING UP COAL | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4



The federal inspector said that because the mine was so badly constructed in the first place, it would cost \$9 million to reclaim the mine properly. A bond amount of \$91,000 was collected, and \$1,559,000 is what was

allocated for the project. In other words, the mine will not be properly reclaimed. I asked the inspector if the coal removed from the mine was worth more than the endless amount of diesel consumed by bulldozers and trucks to both expose and cover up the coal seam. He shook his head and said that some people just have a bug in them to get that coal out of the ground. I guess when you know you can shift the costs to someone else, that coal seam looks really attractive. Maybe if the coal companies had to post the true cost of reclamation up front, strip mining would look a lot less attractive.

WHAT WE ARE DOING AND HOW YOU CAN HELP!

The WV Chapter has been working with the WV Environmental Council to pass stronger

mineland bonding requirements. House Bill 3057 would require bonds adequate to assure proper reclamation as well as maintain the financial solvency of the WV Special Reclamation Fund. It addresses many of the issues recommended by a Legislative Auditor's analysis of bonding requirements. We are also pushing for House Bill 5416 to expand use of degraded properties such as mine sites for solar farms.

You can help by contacting legislators and insist that they do something about West Virginia's woefully inadequate mine reclamation programs. The companies that profit from coal must pay the true cost of reclamation and should not dump those costs onto taxpayers. 🍀

Sierra Club Council of Club Leaders Meets with National Board



BY CHRISSEY SANDY

The Sierra Club’s Council of Club Leaders held its annual meeting with the National Board via Zoom on August 1-3. While normally this meeting is a three-day, in-person event, budget challenges changed that this year.

After brief introductions, the Council and Board heard from Sierra Club President Allison Chin and Executive Director Ben Jealous. Twelve resolutions were considered this year. Breakout sessions were held to discuss and edit each one before the Council voted on them. Six positions on the Council’s executive committee were filled, and a forum enabled the Council to hear from all the candidates.

A state show-and-tell featured the **Florida** Chapter’s Inspiring Connections Outdoors program (outings for children), the **Wisconsin** Chapter’s “Stop Line 5” campaign to halt progress on an oil pipeline, and a **Maine** Chapter podcast launched last fall that explores the intersection of climate justice and conservation.

Discussions later in the meeting centered on budgeting and fundraising as well as chapter development. The executive committee election resulted in two new officers and four incumbents re-elected. No award ceremony was held this year.

FLORIDA Inspiring Connections Outdoors



LEARN MORE: sierraclub.org/ico

WISCONSIN Shut Down Line 5



LEARN MORE: tinyurl.com/stop-line-5

MAINE Redefining Conservation Podcast



LEARN MORE: sierraclub.org/maine/podcast

PRE-ORDER BY SEPTEMBER 30 2025 Calendars

The WV Chapter offers a 20% discount on Sierra Club calendars to anyone who places their pre-order directly with us. Please mail the order form or email your request to candice.k.elliott@gmail.com no later than September 30. You won’t be billed until late October or early November, when orders are ready for delivery.



Our price for the monthly Wilderness wall calendar is \$15.00 (retail: \$18.95) and for the weekly Engagement desk calendar, \$16.00 (retail: \$19.95). 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 questions, feel free to contact Candice.

ORDER FORM

CALENDAR	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
<input type="checkbox"/> 2025 Wilderness	\$15.00	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> 2025 Engagement	\$16.00	_____	_____

Please make checks payable to
“Sierra Club West Virginia Chapter”
and mail to: PO BOX 4142,
Morgantown WV 26504-4142.

For additional ordering or payment
options, contact:
candice.k.elliott@gmail.com

Subtotal: _____

Shipping: **\$ 9.00**

GRAND TOTAL: _____

SHIP TO:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____

Email _____

2024 GENERAL ELECTION SIERRA CLUB POLITICAL ENDORSEMENTS

The Chapter Political Committee has surveyed candidates, reviewed voting records, and consulted with local members, and has identified an exciting roster of candidates worthy of the Club's endorsement. More importantly, these are candidates who will make a difference if elected. **Please support them.**

FOR PRESIDENT

Kamala Harris (D)

WV HOUSE OF DELEGATES

27TH (WAYNE) Gina Milum (D)	79TH (MONONGALIA) Evan Hansen (D)
40TH (MONROE) Jim McNeeley (D)	81ST (MONONGALIA) Anitra Hamilton (D)
46TH (GREENBRIER) Paul Detch (D)	82ND (MONONGALIA) Bill Reger Nash (D)
49TH (NICHOLAS) Jean Nutter (D)	91ST (BERKELEY) Joseph DeSoto (R)
54TH (KANAWHA) Mike Pushkin (D)	97TH (BERKELEY) Lucia Valentine (D)
78TH (MONONGALIA) Diane Market Gaston (D)	100TH (JEFFERSON) Maria Russo (D)

STATE SENATE

16TH (BERKELEY & JEFFERSON)
John Doyle (D)

Of course, we want you to **VOTE** for these candidates when you go to the polls. **But you can do more!**

- Talk to your neighbors.
- Write a letter to the editor.
- Contribute to the candidates' campaign funds.
- Volunteer to make phone calls, write post cards, or go door to door.

Your efforts can magnify your vote a hundredfold and can mean the difference in achieving victory.

STATE AND MON GROUP EXCOM ELECTIONS

Nominations Sought

If you think you or someone you know may have some ideas to offer to the Sierra Club West Virginia Chapter, now is the time to come forward.

Two-year terms for several Chapter and Mon Group leaders will expire at the end of this year. The Executive Committee (ExCom) members listed in the Chapter Directory on page 2 of this newsletter with a (25) after their names are up for re-election or replacement this December. Some will run again, but others have opted not to or are restricted from running due to term limits in the Chapter's bylaws.

To ensure that our members can select the best candidates to help shape West Virginia's environmental policies, we need willing and qualified candidates to add their names to the ballots. Any member of the WV Chapter may have their name placed on the ballot along with a short statement (100-120 words) expressing their interests, experience, and qualifications.

The Monongahela Group is also looking for eligible candidates for their ExCom, which addresses environmental issues specific to its local area. Members residing in Monongalia, Marion, Harrison, Preston, or Taylor counties are encouraged to consider putting their names in the hat for the Group ExCom election. This is a great, low-stress way for beginners to get more involved, while serving with more experienced peers.

If you know of any likely people or are yourself interested in serving, please contact the Nominating Committee: bill.price2011@gmail.com or mdattfieldo@gmail.com.

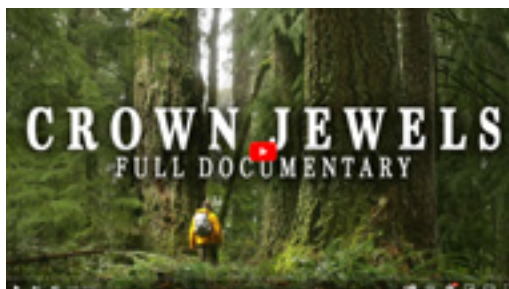
SAVE EASTERN TREES | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

protections for old growth. On June 20, USDA released a **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)** for the National Old Growth Amendment (NOGA). The 90-day comment period ends September 20. How will this amendment affect West Virginia?

NOGA focuses on threats to Western forests, such as wildfires, drought, insects, and disease, while ignoring the likelihood of flood risk and the benefits that Eastern old-growth forests can provide in terms of reducing runoff. Furthermore, it advocates continued logging for forest maintenance, disregarding the executive order to encourage mature and old-growth ecosystems. Most importantly, since the majority of carbon stored in forests is in the form of soil organic matter, logging actually accelerates the loss of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, contrary to the whole intent of the President's executive order. Nine regional field meetings were scheduled this summer to discuss the amendment with the public. Only one, in Illinois, was held east of the Mississippi River.

With this in mind, a letter was sent to Randy Moore, Chief of the USDA Forest Service, stating that the new proposal for old-growth management **"maintains the status quo**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



"This is our last, best chance to save our trees..."

Volunteers Wanted!

The Sierra Club West Virginia Chapter has been a volunteer-led organization for the past 40 years. Our Chapter has thrived through the work of dedicated members who gave of their time, talent, and energy to keep us relevant. Most of those volunteers have worn several hats over many years to carry out the tasks needed most by the Club at any one time. However, as with many other organizations, our membership is aging. While older, retired members often have the experience and time to help, we hope to engage some younger members, too, who have a few extra hours to spare each month and want to do something meaningful to help the environment.



BY CANDICE ELLIOTT

Here are some needs our Chapter has. If any of these tasks strike your fancy or you want more details about what is involved, please contact our Chapter Chair, Jim Kotcon, jkotcon@gmail.com; or Chapter Treasurer, Candice Elliott, candice.k.elliott@gmail.com.

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR/ COMMITTEE

The membership committee consists of 3-5 members who enjoy meeting and talking with other people. Committee members welcome about 10-30 new members each month with a letter & survey or a phone call; direct interested members to key Chapter leaders who can offer opportunities for more involvement; and keep a list of members to call for various Chapter needs throughout the year, based on their expressed interests.

FUNDRAISING CHAIR/ COMMITTEE

The fundraising committee consists of 3-5 members who enjoy meeting and talking with other people. Committee members should be organized, able to recruit others and delegate tasks, which could include: thanking donors, recording data, managing direct mail campaigns, exploring grants, and planning events. The National Sierra Club has many resources and staff to help with all these tasks. A successful team might be able to acquire funding to hire staff to support our Chapter into the future.

SECRETARY

The secretary position is ideal for a detail-oriented member who prefers working behind the scenes. The secretary attends and prepares minutes for 4-6 Executive Committee (ExCom) meetings each year (about half of the meetings are in person around the state and half are virtual). Meetings are typically scheduled on a Saturday and last from 4-6 hours. Some ad hoc phone meetings also occur occasionally. This is a good opportunity for a newer member to get to know Chapter leaders and learn about the work our Chapter does. It is essential that we have a reliable record of ExCom decisions and tasks agreed to by attendees. If you are a good listener and can

summarize discussions concisely, you are just the person we are looking for.

PUBLIC LANDS

We're looking for someone to keep the ExCom informed of various issues occurring on state and federal public lands and to represent the Club at hearings/meetings involving those issues.

POLITICAL COMPLIANCE OFFICER

The WV Chapter needs someone to review our political endorsements, actions, and activities to be sure we are following proper protocols to stay compliant with state and federal election law. The position would be ideal for someone with a law degree or knowledge of election law.

TREES | [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10](#)

and fails to recognize the differences and needs of eastern forests.” It was signed by 34 organizations from the Eastern regions, including the Sierra Club West Virginia Chapter.

The letter points out that Eastern forests currently contain more than half of the above ground biomass in the U.S. and that national forests in the East, on average, store more carbon per hectare than do Western forests. The letter goes on to say that NOGA:

- Ignores the unique carbon-sequestration and storage capabilities of Eastern U.S. forests;
- Overemphasizes the threat of fire in Eastern forests, as recognized by the Forest Service's own data;

- Uses outdated definitions of old growth, such as trees not logged since European settlement, thus limiting what areas will be identified as old growth; and
- Fails to provide clear guidance on recruitment of mature forest into old-growth conditions. This is particularly concerning for the East with its shortage of existing old growth.

This is our last, best chance to save our trees, especially if there is a change of administration after the next election. The Sierra Club urges that “the Administration and the USFS **hear overwhelming public support** for conserving our mature and old-growth forests across the country. We must stop old-growth trees from going to the mill. There is broad agreement that what we have left is too precious to cut.

We must lay the groundwork for durable protections for mature forests, to ensure that they are able to develop into our next generation of old-growth forests.”

If you are able to see a related 58-minute documentary called “Crown Jewels,” please do so.

TAKE ACTION!

It is essential that as many people as possible speak out. The NOGA comment period ends September 20. Submit your comments here: <https://www.climate-forests.org/take-action>.



Outings

This season's outings list includes a bicycle ride, a conservation-based outing that involves a drive in old-growth forests, and offerings in parts of the state we have not covered in the recent past. Please look over to see if something matches your abilities and interests.

FOR MORE DETAILS on each outing, and to register online, visit: sierraclub.org/west-virginia/events



Saturday, September 14, 2024

DAY HIKE: Rolling Ridge Retreat Center, Shannondale, WV

Tucked away in West Virginia's little pocket of land east of the Shenandoah River, Rolling Ridge Foundation is a retreat center that maintains an extensive system of trails, including links to the Appalachian Trail. We will make a circuit around the center on rolling trails and possibly a few back roads. Expect some good views and a good workout. Trails are smooth, with no steep climbs, but some small stream crossings could mean damp feet, so hiking poles or staffs could be helpful. The hike is open to any adult or child (accompanied by an adult) capable of a moderate hike. There is no charge for this hike, though Rolling Ridge welcomes contributions to help maintain their trails and grounds.

Distance/ 5 miles
Difficulty: MODERATE
Duration: 3 hours

Friday, October 4, 2024

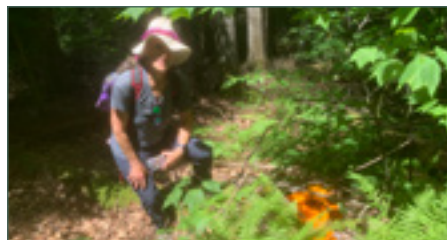
EVENING HIKE: Covered Bridge Walking Trail, Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley, WV

This easy stroll is an optional activity during SierraFest, the WV Chapter's gathering and celebration at Cedar Lakes. (See details, p.14)

Distance/ 1.0 mile
Difficulty: EASY
Duration: 45 minutes



Sierrans explored rock formations, caves, and woodland forest along the Alum Cave Trail of Audra State Park in late June.
PHOTO BY ED WHEELLESS.



ELIZABETH TAYLOR (aka ET) became the West Virginia Chapter's newest certified outings leader after organizing a hike in Audra State Park in late June. Here, she pointed out some especially colorful fungi along the trail.

PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.

Saturday, October 5, 2024

DAY HIKE: Bear Claw Trail, Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley, WV

This hike is an optional activity during SierraFest, the WV Chapter's gathering and celebration at Cedar Lakes. (See details, p. 14) The trail is considered easy, with firm and stable tread, but it does have some steep grades and can be slick and muddy after rains. Most of our walk will be in the woodland of Kanawha State Forest, but we'll have a bit of lakeside walking as well.

Distance/ 3.0 mile
Difficulty: MODERATELY EASY
Duration: 2 hours

Saturday, October 12, 2024

BIKE RIDE: Western Maryland Rail Trail, Big Pool, MD

This bike ride on the Western Maryland Rail Trail (WMRT) will be at a leisurely pace and is open to all. We will try to maintain a group pace, as this is our first bicycle event. We will start at the beginning of the WMRT in Big Pool, MD and bike to the town of Hancock, MD. The trail is flat and paved. Once in Hancock we will take time for lunch and exploring the town before our return. You must bring your own bicycle, and please also have a spare inner tube and/or tube patch kit.

Distance/ 20 miles
Difficulty: EASY (but with moderate distance)
Duration: 4 hours

Saturday, October 26, 2024

DAY HIKE: Poor House Farm Park, Berkeley County, WV

We will hike on trails used for hiking, biking, and disc golf at Poor House Farm County Park. We will see orchards, forests, and farms. While hiking, we will learn some of the history and ghostly lore of the farm, ending in fall fashion with apple cider and pumpkin treats. This hike is open to anyone who can handle hiking/walking on some uneven ground and some inclines on a steep grassy hillside. There is no charge, but donations are welcome. We will carry on in light rain but cancel in a downpour.

Distance/ 4 miles
Difficulty: EASY
Duration: 2 hours



Sierra hikers on Northern Virginia's Appalachian Trail found the waterfall on Hollow Brook reduced but still flowing on this hike during a late-June heat wave. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.

Saturday, November 9, 2024

DAY HIKE: C&O Canal Towpath, Hancock, MD

This hike is on the flat and level surface of the C&O Canal towpath. We will have views of the Potomac River and will see the rock formation known as the Devil's Eyebrow and the ruins of the Round Hill Cement Plant at our turnaround point. It is a relatively easy hike on level ground suitable for all capable of completing a 6-mile hike.

Distance/ 6 miles
Difficulty: EASY
Duration: 3.5 hours



Sierrans explored rock formations, caves, and woodland forest along the Alum Cave Trail of Audra State Park in late June. PHOTO BY ED WHEELLESS.



Tammy Vincent (L), Mark and Hera Karge at historic Bears Den on the Appalachian Trail near Bluemont, VA. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.

Saturday, November 16, 2024

DAY HIKE: Tuscarora Trail — High Rock and Sleepy Creek Mountain Loop, Berkeley County, WV

On this continuation of our Tuscarora Trail adventures, we will explore the trail and a stream valley between Hampshire Grade Road and High Rock. We will walk through a forest of oak, hickory, and maple, with some good views of the surrounding valleys. There will be considerable elevation changes, though gradual. It is appropriate for individuals who are moderately fit and comfortable on rugged trails. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome. There is no charge for this hike, though contributions are welcome.

Distance/ 6 miles
Difficulty: MODERATE
Duration: 3.5 hours

Saturday, November 23, 2024

DAY HIKE: Sweet Run State Park, Neersville, VA

We will hike in Virginia's newest State Park. Its 884 acres offer views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, mature forests, meadows, mountainside terrain, and the Sweet Run and Piney Run streams. There are ruins of a 19th-century farming community along with a restored farmhouse built in the 1840s. There is a \$10/vehicle entry fee; carpools may be arranged online. There is no charge for the hike, but donations are welcome.

Distance/ 5 miles
Difficulty: MODERATE
Duration: 2.5 hours

Saturday, December 7, 2024

DAY HIKE: Yankauer Nature Preserve, Martinsburg, WV

This hike is open to all. It is an easy 2-mile hike on gently rolling hills. We will have some good views of the Potomac River.

Distance/ 2 miles
Difficulty: EASY
Duration: 1.5 hours



TAMMY VINCENT (second from left) is one of two new West Virginia certified outings leaders after leading her inaugural hike up Buzzard Hill on the Appalachian Trail in Northern Virginia. In spite of the early-summer heat wave, nine Sierrans completed the hike after Tammy arranged at the last minute an earlier-than-advertised start time. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.

Saturday, December 15, 2024

DAY HIKE: Harpers Ferry Loop Through Park and Town

We will explore some of the busiest, most popular areas of Harpers Ferry as well as woodland areas few people know about. Some new trails have recently been developed by area volunteers. Winter will allow beautiful views of the Potomac River and the surrounding hills. Our route will take us on pavement, steep rock staircases, and earthen forest trails. It is appropriate for adults and children (accompanied by adults) capable of the distance and a couple of steep hills on uneven terrain. There is no charge for the hike, but donations are welcome.

Distance/ 6 miles
Difficulty: MODERATELY EASY
Duration: 3.5 hours

Saturday, December 21, 2024

DAY HIKE: Murphy/Chambers Farm and Virginius Island, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

We will hike through fields, wooded ravines, and a riparian forest. We will enjoy views of the Shenandoah River, Civil War cannons, earthworks, and numerous historic sites. This will be a terrific opportunity to see Harpers Ferry decorated for the Christmas season. Harpers Ferry NHP's entry fees are \$20/vehicle or a park pass. Carpooling may be arranged online. There is no charge for the hike, but donations are welcome.

Distance/ 6.0 miles
Difficulty: MODERATE (with options for a 1.5 mile EASY alternative)
Duration: 3.5 hours (shorter for easy option)



Turtles hanging out along the C&O Canal NHP showed no camera shyness during a Sierra Club hike in May. PHOTO BY TRACY HUDGINS.

JOIN US OCTOBER 4-6, 2024

Sierra Fest 2024: Celebrate 40 Years of the WV Chapter!

This October 4-6, the WV Chapter is hosting SierraFest 2024 at Cedar Lakes Conference Center, near Ripley. We are planning several activities to appeal to a wide range of ages and interests—plus Sierra Club’s Executive Director, Ben Jealous, is scheduled to provide an overview of recent changes in the Club on Sunday.



Check out the agenda highlights for an idea of what to expect. Make plans to stay for the whole weekend or come just on Saturday. Either way, we’d love to see you there!



Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley, West Virginia. PHOTO: MARY ALMOND.

Reserve your spot no later than **September 27** by filling out and returning your registration form, with payment, using one of these methods (a **10% discount** may be applied if returned by **September 20**):

BY POSTAL MAIL

Sierra Club West Virginia
SierraFest 2024
Registration
PO Box 4142
Morgantown WV
26504-4142

BY EMAIL

candice.k.elliott@
gmail.com

DIGITALLY

[https://bit.ly/
SierraFest2024-
Registration](https://bit.ly/SierraFest2024-Registration)



Agenda

(subject to change)

FRIDAY, OCT 4

- 4pm Check-in begins
- 6pm Pizza, snacks, soft drinks
- 7pm Family-friendly ice-breaker games
- 8pm Mingle and network with others in attendance

SATURDAY, OCT 5

- 7:30am Breakfast buffet
- 8:30am Check-in continues
- 9am-12pm Programming (see highlights)
- 12pm-1pm Picnic/cookout & Chapter awards
- 1:30pm-5pm Programming (see highlights)
- 5pm-6pm Free time
- 6pm-7:30pm Dinner banquet
- 8pm-10pm Campfire & mingling

SUNDAY, OCT 6

- 7:30am Breakfast buffet
- 9am Keynote:
Ben Jealous,
Sierra Club
Executive Director
- 10am Round-robin sharing session, short nature hike, other programming (see highlights)
- 11am Clean up, pack, check out

WEST VIRGINIA SIERRAFEST 2024 Registration Form

NAME OF PERSON FILLING OUT THIS FORM:

BEST CONTACT EMAIL: _____

CONTACT PHONE (OPTIONAL) _____

HOW MANY OTHER ADULTS WILL ATTEND WITH YOU? _____
PLEASE INCLUDE NAMES:

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (check all that interest you or your group)

- Emerging Energy Issues: Adam's Fork, ARCH2, renewables
- Exploring the Roots of the WV Chapter:
Where do we go from here?
- Why We Organize and How to Win
- Wildlife & Public Lands track
- Hands-on workshop: How to do your own
water and air monitoring
- Forest bathing / Eco-therapy
- Fall wildflower walk
- Hikes: Covered bridge (~1 hour, easy), Woodland hike (~2
hours, moderate). See outings listings, p. 12
- Electric cars: Many Pros, Few Cons
(Drive one yourself - demonstration)
- Scavenger Hunt (for all ages, prizes for those
who complete the challenge)

FOOD

WEEKEND MEAL TICKET

Includes Friday night pizza, Breakfast Buffets
on Sat & Sun, Picnic/Cookout Lunch on
Saturday, Dinner Banquet on Saturday

SATURDAY ONLY MEAL TICKET

Includes Picnic/Cookout Lunch and
Dinner Banquet

Please indicate how many MEAL TICKETS you wish to reserve:

_____ WEEKEND ADULT X \$50 = _____

_____ WEEKEND CHILD X \$30 = _____

_____ SATURDAY ONLY ADULT X \$25 = _____

_____ SATURDAY ONLY CHILD X \$15 = _____

TOTAL FOOD COST: _____

DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

- None
- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Kosher
- Gluten-free
- Other:

Financial Aid: Please contact candice.k.elliott@gmail.com to request assistance with the cost of attending SierraFest 2024. We want to be sure everyone who wants to can attend.

WHAT DAYS WILL YOU ATTEND?

- Friday, Oct 4, evening
- Saturday, Oct 5
- Sunday, Oct 6, morning

WILL YOU BE BRINGING ANY CHILDREN?

- Yes No Maybe

Do you want to sign them up for supervised child-friendly activities on Saturday?

Yes - Morning Session (9am-noon) \$10/child

Yes - Afternoon Session (1:30-5pm) \$12/child

Maybe No

If Yes (or maybe), what are their ages? _____

LODGING

WHICH NIGHT(S) WILL YOU BE STAYING?

- FRIDAY SATURDAY

CHOOSE YOUR ACCOMMODATIONS:

BUNK IN A 10-BED DORMITORY (\$15/BUNK FOR FRI & SAT NIGHTS)
Shared bathroom; provide own linens/sleeping bag

PRIVATE ROOM WITH 2 DOUBLE BEDS (\$85/NIGHT)
Private bathroom; sleeps 2-4, WiFi

I will share my room with other participant(s).

Name(s): _____

I am willing to share my room. Please match me with a roommate. (You will be contacted for preferences.)

I WILL MAKE MY OWN LODGING ARRANGEMENTS

Please indicate which LODGING you wish to reserve:

_____ DORMITORY BUNK(S) X \$15 = _____

_____ PRIVATE ROOM(S) FOR FRIDAY X \$85 = _____

_____ PRIVATE ROOM(S) FOR SATURDAY X \$85 = _____

TOTAL LODGING COST: _____

TOTAL DUE (FOOD + LODGING): _____

If returned by Sept 20, subtract 10%.

DISCOUNTED TOTAL: _____

PAYMENT:

- My check made out to Sierra Club West Virginia is enclosed.
- I will pay online. Please send the secure link to my email address.



Sierra Club

West Virginia Chapter

PO Box 4142

Morgantown, WV 26504

sierraclub.org/west-virginia

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

FALL 2024



This newsletter is printed by HBP Marketing, LLC in Hagerstown, MD on 30% post-consumer, FSC-certified recycled stock, using 0% VOC inks.

Chapter ExComm Meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Committee of the Sierra Club West Virginia Chapter will be **10 am – 3 pm, Saturday, November 9, 2024**, and will be held remotely via ZOOM. E-mail jkotcon@gmail.com for a ZOOM link or to offer input.

MEMBERSHIP COUPON

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

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

Mastercard Visa American Express

CARDHOLDER NAME _____

CARD NUMBER _____

EXP. DATE _____ SIGNATURE _____

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

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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



F94Q **W 5700** -1

EXPLORE, ENJOY, AND PROTECT THE PLANET

Public Officials

U.S. SENATE

Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Joe Manchin (D)

(202) 224-3954
manchin.senate.gov

The Hon. Shelley Moore Capito (R)

(202) 224-6472
capito.senate.gov

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Carol Miller (R, 1st)

(202) 225-3452
miller.house.gov

The Hon. Alex Mooney (R, 2nd)

(202) 225-2711
mooney.house.gov

WHITE HOUSE

Washington, DC 20515

Comments Line

(202) 456-1111

Fax

(202) 456-2461

Capitol Switchboard

(202) 224-3121

WV STATE LEGISLATORS

Member, WV Senate or House of Delegates
Bldg 1, State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

WVlegislature.gov has contact information for all state legislators.

(877) 565-3447 or (304) 347-4836

GOVERNOR JIM JUSTICE

State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305
(888) 438-2731 • governor.wv.gov