

FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER



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Working to protect West Virginia's High Alleghenies, Blackwater River, & Blackwater Canyon.

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Welcoming New Faces and Saying Goodbye to Others



Photo of Jocelyn.

A big sunny hello to all the Friends of Blackwater Canyon! My name is Jocelyn Phares, and I am a West Virginia native. I was born in Elkins and raised on the rivers of this beautiful place. Ensuring West Virginia's public lands, waters and all the creatures depending on them are protected is truly my calling. I am thrilled to be back in my beloved home state for the first time in several years. I love our Wild and Wonderful state, and I am eager to help preserve its beauty for generations to come!

In 2016, I graduated from West Virginia University with a BA in International Studies and a minor in Global Environmental Change. In January 2021, I completed my J.D. in Portland, Oregon at Lewis and Clark Law School with a certificate in Natural Resources Law. In 2018, I externed with the World Wildlife Fund in Wellington, New Zealand. I also clerked for Earthrise, a non-profit environmental law firm. In my final year of law school, I worked as a clerk and research assistant for the Global Law Alliance. The Global Law Alliance focuses on regulating the international trade of endangered species.

Between graduating WVU and beginning Law school, I traveled internationally for 8 months and worked as a ski instructor in Colorado. I recently became a certified open-water diver, and I am learning to surf. I adore sharing my passions for outdoor sports with others and I hope to inspire environmental stewardship in everyone I meet!



Photo of Josh

Hello! I first came to West Virginia as a delegate to the National Youth Science Camp in Pocahontas County in 1997. I then returned for many summers to work at the camp, where I led climbing, biking and backpacking trips, as well as music and science activities. I studied geology at Montana State University and cello at the University of Northern Colorado before teaching in public schools in Montana and Alaska. While out west, I was lucky enough to climb and hike some fantastic places, including Devil's Tower and Denali.

In 2009 I was able to move to West Virginia for a full-time position with the National Youth Science Foundation to develop new programs for WV middle and high school students. We worked with the WV Department of Education, the Green Bank Observatory (then still the NRAO), and NASA grants to pilot several successful science enrichment camps WV kids. After those projects, I spent a few years away working in Indiana and Montana as a bicycle mechanic and orchestra cellist, including realizing a decades-long dream of performing Beethoven's 9th Symphony. Though I'm grateful for that opportunity, I happily returned to Tucker County for good two years ago.

Earlier this spring, I accepted job at Stumptown Ales in Davis, finally putting to professional use my last 20 years of home beer and wine making, and one day Judy stopped by the brewery to ask if I might be interested in helping with water monitoring, and I was happy to get on board!



Hello FOB family! I'm sad to tell you that my West Virginia chapter has come to a close. Since leaving FOB at the end of March, I've moved to Franklin, NC to work with Mainspring Conservation Trust to conserve land in the southern Blue Ridge mountains. After two years in Tucker County, I know that nothing can replace the community and mountains that I called home, but I'm happy to be settled in NC closer to family. I'm already counting down the weeks until I come visit for a snowy winter weekend. I learned so much from working with Judy and the FOB team- some of my favorite memories are hosting the Backcountry Film Fest at White Grass, taking new volunteers out to water monitor, working with some incredible Americorps to improve our Forest Service trails, and spotting three huge beavers on Beaver Creek! The miles that I walked and ran in Canaan Valley, along the edges of the Blackwater Canyon, and in the Monongahela Forest are so special to me, and I'm so proud to have played a tiny role in protecting and restoring those public lands. Thank you all so much for playing a role in that as well. I'll be back soon!

Blackwater Watershed Project Updates



DNR Fisheries

Employees from the DNR Fisheries unit out of Elkins have begun a project to measure water temperature in the headwater streams of the North Fork. They placed devices in 4 locations in the upper North Fork of the Blackwater which will chronicle changes in temperature over a year. These readings will allow them to make scientific decisions about whether to invest in a trout fishery in the North Fork. With a new water treatment facility on the North Fork the whole length of the river may support a reproducing trout population.



Earth Day Clean-Up

Friends of Blackwater and Q&A Associates partnered with the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Blackwater Bikes Association, and the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources to hold a special clean-up on Camp-70 road for Earth Day. Camp-70 is a 5-mile long road behind Shop & Save, leading through the Little Canaan Wildlife Refuge. More than a dozen volunteers came to the Clean-up on Saturday! The hosting groups had tables and tailgates spread out every ten yards, making it easy for volunteers to follow along the designated clean-up area. Despite the rainy weather that afternoon, the event proved to be successful. Volunteers collected over six bags of trash and a cracked container of tractor fluid! The wastes were taken to Sunrise Sanitation. Following the clean-up, volunteers enjoyed several pizzas donated by Sirianni's Cafe!



Active Treatment Planning

The plan for an active water treatment plant on the North Fork is moving along. It will treat the three main sources of acid mine drainage. Tim Danehy of BioMost in Mars PA is in charge. He done an analysis of the flow and pollution measurements for Long Run, Mine Portal 29 along the rail trail and Burns Blow-Out across the North Fork in all seasons. These measurements are needed to calculate the size of the treatment tanks and the amount of the sludge removed to be disposed of. Siting of the plant is being discussed and addition funds sought to cover the very expensive project. Funding for the planning comes from Friends of Blackwater through a grant from the WV DEP 319 program. Engineers from BioMost and the state AML division met with Friends of Blackwater in May to discuss plans.



Rail Trail Banners

Last fall, in collaboration with historian David Vago, we created vinyl banners that are currently hanging along the Blackwater Rail Trail on the chain link fence downstream of Thomas. These banners focus on the history surrounding the city of Thomas, particularly about the railroads and the various industries that helped make the town boom in its heyday. The first one is about the coke ovens, followed by the various industries, and lastly, the two railroad companies that operated in Thomas. There are five banners created, each one being 6x8 feet tall. We placed them at the very top of the fencing and before fastening them securely with zip ties. Our walking tour brochure of all the historic signs along the 3.7 miles of the rail trail can be picked up in the box at the end of the vinyl sign display.

Give Turtles a Brake!

By Steven Kirchbaum

It's that time of year – many animal species are moving about their landscape, often trying to increase their chances of reproducing. And one species – we humans -- are often driving motor vehicles at high speeds, which can have tragic consequences for some of our fellow creatures.

One of the most vulnerable species on our highways are turtles. No matter how many times I see them crushed and lifeless on a road, it breaks my heart. It must happen hundreds or thousands of times a day in the USA.

What makes it even worse is that a disproportionate amount of the turtles being killed are adult females, who make long distance forays searching for nest sites. Some turtles are terrestrial, such as Box Turtles and tortoises, some are amphibious, such as Wood Turtles, but



most are aquatic. They all lay eggs and nest on land.

Aquatic species like Sliders and Cooters, and Map, Musk, Softshell, and Snapping Turtles, may nest 200-600 yards from the water. When they leave their wetlands in search of upland nest sites, they often have to cross at least one road. Breeding females are most important to sustaining turtle populations. Vehicular mortality of females during the nesting season can be the most significant threat to population persistence.

Turtles are especially vulnerable to human-caused loss and mortality, due to their slow growth, late maturity, long lives, low reproductive potential (small clutches), and high natural mortality of eggs and hatchlings (such as from predators). Some species, such as the northeast's Wood Turtle, can take 15-20 years to reach maturity. And then, after reaching maturity, turtles must survive and reproduce for decades more just to replace



themselves. Field studies and statistical analyses clearly show that even modest rates of death or removal (intentional or incidental) of adult or juvenile turtles can lead to strong declines in populations. The loss of a small number of turtles above natural attrition can be devastating.

Most areas of the Eastern United States, where most turtle species reside, are within ca. 400 yards of a road. This is not surprising, considering that in 400 years we've gone from ZERO to 5-6 MILLION miles of roads. A probability model estimated that the likelihood of a turtle successfully crossing U.S. Highway 27 in Florida decreased from 32% to 2% due to a 162% increase in traffic volume.

Retrofitting America's road system to make it more wildlife friendly -- such as installing wildlife crossings -- needs to be a priority. Identifying hotspots of mortality and installing passageways and fencing can make a huge improvement. Barrier or drift fences with under-highway culverts to provide passageways and prevent animals' use of roads during dispersal can dramatically reduce roadkill. Along a 0.7-km section of one north Florida highway near Lake Jackson, turtle mortality before installation of the fence was 11.9 turtles/km/day, while post-fence mortality was 0.09/ km/day, a reduction of more than 99%.

Stopping your vehicle and getting turtles off roads can make a big difference (I move snakes off the road as well). You can usually do this without compromising your safety. Be gentle and move the turtle in the same direction that it was headed, as far off the road as you can. It doesn't take much of your time – and the turtles need all the help they can get. Please give turtles a brake! -- and encourage your friends and neighbors to do likewise.

Steven Krichbaum, PhD, a herpetologist and conservation biologist who lives in Virginia, has worked with grassroots groups for over 30 years, seeking protection of wildlife and public lands. He's never met a turtle he didn't like.

The Forest Service Versus Nature



A Hiker in the Cranberry Wilderness

The Center for Biological Diversity and Friends of Blackwater have commissioned a preliminary legal and scientific review of the Monongahela National Forest's proposed "Cranberry Spring Creek" logging project, which covers a 69,448-acre area and includes the Cranberry River. This is the third time that the Forest Service has tried to get approval for this massive project.



We are very concerned about proposed thinning and clearcutting near endangered candy darter habitat, extensive logging of old growth trees, and cutting of hardwoods that provide valuable habitat for the "Ginny," the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel.

The Forest Service proposal says there will be 8,045 acres of total thinning treatments, 1,679 acres of total regeneration treatments, and 640 acres of miscellaneous vegetation treatments, and identifies 939 acres of commercial timber regeneration harvests (clear-cuts with reserves). These operations can have a wide range of impacts on upland and aquatic environments, from soil disturbance and compaction, to erosion, sedimentation, and stream acidification.

We are very concerned that the Forest Service may be including old growth and potential old growth stands in areas it intends to log. Late successional forests (>120 years) make up 5% of the project area and mid successional forests (40-79 years) make up 6% of

the project area. These areas must be excluded from logging as they not only provide numerous benefits for wildlife but they are also essential to combatting the effects of climate change as they pull carbon from the atmosphere and have significant carbon stores built up over decades and centuries.

Friends of Blackwater and Center for Biological Diversity remain concerned about the management of the West Virginia northern flying squirrel on the Monongahela National Forest. The proposed project will thin 2,233 acres of overstory hardwood trees to increase the spruce component in the overstory, midstory, and understory of several stands.

The Forest Service must recognize the importance of hardwood stands to the species and consider the loss of food sources resulting from the removal of hardwood tree species.

To date, the Forest Service has also not conducted the necessary studies in the Forest to determine what vegetation management activities are needed to maintain the persistence of the WVNFS. Therefore, we believe it is premature for the Forest Service to log within WVNFS suitable habitat in the name of "spruce restoration" without first knowing precisely what management activities are necessary to sustain the species.



A West Virginia Candy Darter

Friends of Blackwater Celebrates Endangered Species Day with Kids Art Contest !



Big Bat by Asa Gaujot *Threatened & Endangered Species, Second Place*



Cheat Salamander by Delany Stull *Threatened & Endangered Species, Winner*



Mountain Lion by Keira Kosut *Iconic Species, Winner*



Bobcat by Marley Miner *Common WV Species, Winner*

We're SO Excited to Share This Years Kids Art Contest Winners!

This year was our second art contest for kids to engage in their creativity and learn more about West Virginia wildlife. WV is home to roughly 600 incredible creatures that need our time and attention in order to thrive! In order to protect and love something, it's important to learn about it. We see this annual art contest as an opportunity to inspire upcoming generations to get involved in conserving our beautiful wild lands. Our participants this year were all roughly from the same age group, so we decided to organize winners in three categories of: Threatened and Endangered, Common WV Species, and Iconic. All winners received t-shirts. 1st place winners also received stickers and Ginny ornaments. Congratulations to the contestants! We are so thankful for their participation, and love seeing creative minds at work! A special thank you to Mountain Laurel Learning Cooperative for their engagement.



Coyote by Tessa Dubansky *Iconic Species, Second Place*



Black Bear by Raina Logar *Common WV Species, Second Place*



Rhododendron by Vivian Crossland *Iconic Species, Runner Up*

Restoring the Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail to its Natural Habitat

By Cheyenne Carter

Friends of Blackwater's 2021 "Botany Project" has begun!

Volunteers -- including students from Eastern Community and Garrett Community Colleges -- have removed the invasive species autumn olive, multiflora rose, and Tartarian honeysuckle from locations along the Blackwater River Trail, near the Town of Thomas. We have identified eight priority sites along 3.7 miles of the Trail, and begun planting with native perennials, trees, and shrubs. We have on hand approximately 1,000 native plants and 300 red spruce trees that we'll be planting, while continuing to remove invasives until October of this year. Thanks to a grant from the National Forest Foundation and a match from Dominion Energy Foundation, we have funds to support the project through next Spring -- but we need more, so keep those donations coming! We are especially grateful to the U.S. Forest Service for their help in healing this land especially Chad Landress. Thank you to all who have donated their time in removing invasive species and preparing for the plantings. Please come join us for a very rewarding experience. Our local flora and fauna need you!

Email cheyenne@saveblackwater.org for details on how you can participate.



Chad Landress from the Forest Service with an eel



Sarah prepping flowers to be planted



Team Rail Trail removing brush



Jocelyn Phares removing invasive species



Student Technician removing invasive species



Amazing Places to Work in Tucker County

Friends of Blackwater's AmeriCorps VISTA employee, Alicia Erjavec, has compiled a series of video interviews that promote job opportunities for young people in Tucker County. There are seven interviews in Alicia's presentation, each from a different business and representing several employment areas, including environmental protection and conservation, seasonal tourism, and restaurants/consumer goods.

We are proud of Alicia for assembling this cool video presentation that highlights how young adults can choose from a number of interesting and community-minded job opportunities; and showcasing different ways for them to get their foot in the workforce.

Highlights from the video include Blackwater Falls State Park Superintendent Matt Baker discussing job opportunities at the Park ranging from housekeeping, campground maintenance, working at the Nature Center, gift shop clerks, and running the snack bar. In another section, student workers discuss their summer trail improvement work on the Monongahela National Forest.

Also, Timberline Resort's Director of Operations Tom Price talks about jobs in food services, the rental shop, and maintaining the front offices; and Blackwater Outdoor Adventures explains their jobs that involve canoe shuttles, office help and working the rental shop, and being a white-water raft guide. Viewers also learn that getting a job at Sirianni's Cafe is fairly simple -- just walk in talk to the owners face-to-face, and training is a hands-on approach. Another section describes Wild Ginger & Spice, a boutique store in Davis that manufactures self-care products like bath salts, bath bombs, deodorants, and candles.



Patrick McCann, Blackwater Outdoor Adventures



Michael Goss, Sirianni's Cafe



Amo Oliverio, Eastern WV Community & Technical College Moorefield



Matt Baker, Blackwater Falls State Park



Annie Mac, Wild Ginger & Spice



Thomas Price, Timberline Mountain



Mackenzie, Appalachian Conservation Corps

If you wish to see this video, and/or share it with any young people looking for jobs in Tucker County, we will have it available on our YouTube channel. You can also call us at 304-345-7663 extension 103, or email Alicia at alicia@saveblackwater.org

Protecting Squirrels, Fish, Salamanders – and Much More! Positive News from the New Administration

The rare and vulnerable wildlife of the Allegheny Highlands include many distinctive and diverse creatures, living their complex and beautiful lives among these ancient mountains.

"Ginny" the West Virginia Flying Squirrel is feeding on truffles in the moonlight in a protected old-growth forest. Meanwhile, the tiny, colorful "Candy Darter" fish, shimmers in a pristine mountain stream. And don't forget "Sally," the elusive, glistening Cheat Mountain salamander, scurrying under a deep leaf carpet!



Sally, a Cheat Mountain Salamander



Ginny, a West Virginia Flying Squirrel

Today, Friends of Blackwater supporters and our allies across America can celebrate the news that these magnificent creatures (and many more) have just had their chances of survival (and thriving) increased. Why celebrate? Because the new Administration in Washington has just announced a bold plan to strengthen implementation of the Endangered Species Act. The plan will rescind Trump-era regulations that allow exclusions from critical habitat designations. And the new plan will automatically extend protections provided to endangered species to those listed as threatened.

Friends of Blackwater makes a priority of enforcing the Endangered Species Act in the Highlands. Our supporters count on us to alert them to threats, and their comments and letters keep government agencies aware that the public is watching. Our donors know that we will use their funds assertively --, when necessary filing lawsuits.

Ginny, Candy Darter, and Sally – and all of the miraculous creatures who live in our mountains -- deserve the best protection we can give them. Thankfully that protection has just increased.

West Virginia Gets New National Trail

The Greenbrier River Trail is a 78-mile former railroad now used for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. It is the longest trail of its kind in West Virginia. The trail provides many breathtaking views as it passes through several small towns, crosses 35 bridges, goes through two tunnels, and cuts through some of West Virginia's most remote areas.

In celebration of National Trails Day on June 5, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland today announced 10 new national recreation trails in eight states, adding more than 160 miles to the National Trails System. And yes, the Greenbrier River Trail is on the list!

Friends of Blackwater is working on several trail projects in the Tucker County region, including the Blackwater Canyon Loop Trail. Trails build community well-being. Our ace crews of volunteers are removing invasive species, to make them more attractive. Thanks to everyone who has supported this effort!



West Virginia Mountain Railroad National Historic Trail Support Needed



Proposed path of the WV Mountain Railroad National Historic Trail

The West Virginia Mountain Railroad National Historic Trail, a new proposal from friends of Blackwater, would follow the North Branch of the Potomac and the Blackwater Rivers. These beautiful waterways parallel Henry Gassaway Davis's West Virginia Central and Pittsburgh Railroad, built from 1880 to 1889, from Cumberland, Maryland to Elkins, West Virginia.

The Mountain Railroad Trail would be a long-distance hiking and biking trail, linked at Cumberland to the C&O Canal and Great American Passage Trails. It would preserve West Virginia's unique history, increase economic development, and honor the immigrant and black families who worked in the mines and mills of Mineral, Grant, and Tucker Counties.



Henry Gassaway Davis

The Trail is supported by tourism authorities in these counties, and by the Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area and the Western Potomac Heritage Area in Alleghany and Garrett Counties in Maryland. This historic route opened up West Virginia's highest mountains to development of their rich reserves of coal and timber. Twenty towns were created along the way, all named by Davis for family members or Senators who invested in the railroad. The railroad led to the creation of sawmills, coke oven complexes, pulp mills, and leather-making tanneries.



Company stores, headquarters and company houses were built along the way, as well as railroad bridges, tunnels, train depots, railroad repair shops, power plants and banks. Thousands of people were

employed along this railroad. Many recent immigrants came by rail, with 14 languages being spoken at in the town of Thomas in its heyday. Many of the historic buildings from the 1880 to 1890 era remain today.

Today, recreation has become an important industry along the Mountain Railroad route. Fishing, hunting, boating, hiking, biking, birding, rock climbing, and nature viewing will be accessible along the Trail. Two thirds of the proposed route could be on public land, with one third already developed as the Allegheny Highlands Trail, which is mostly on the Monongahela National Forest.



Other public land that could support the Mountain Railroad route are Maryland's Potomac State Forest and Wolf Den State Park; Jennings Randolph Lake, with campgrounds and boating access in West Virginia; and West Virginia's Barnum Campground and Allegheny Wildlife Management Area in Mineral County.

This historic route for sustainable tourism into West Virginia's highest mountains will increase the region's visibility as a recreation destination. Friends of Blackwater is looking forward to promoting and creating the West Virginia Mountain Railroad National Historic Trail!



Photo taken by Rob Stull



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DAVIS TOWN HALL

A MULTI-USE BUILDING SERVING A COMMUNITY

As is often the case in smaller communities, Davis' main civic building has often housed multiple uses, sometimes at once. Some of these uses were reflective of the kind of town Davis was during the timber boom, when lumber was king. From the charcoal mill that was on the site in 1884, and burned early on as the "Black House" through a fire storm. Eventually, the name "Friend's Hill" was adopted instead. Since the building contained only 11,000 sq. ft., Davis Town Hall and a rooming house and laundry were added in 1916. For most recently, this became its main use for civic purposes, where the town has had its town meetings, as well as many such civic buildings. The Davis Hill has housed a variety of organizations and events, including meetings of the town council and U.S. Army, Army, Navy, and other local groups.



As with many other civic buildings, the Davis Town Hall was built on a site that was once the site of a charcoal mill. The building was built in 1884, and burned early on as the "Black House" through a fire storm. Eventually, the name "Friend's Hill" was adopted instead. Since the building contained only 11,000 sq. ft., Davis Town Hall and a rooming house and laundry were added in 1916. For most recently, this became its main use for civic purposes, where the town has had its town meetings, as well as many such civic buildings. The Davis Hill has housed a variety of organizations and events, including meetings of the town council and U.S. Army, Army, Navy, and other local groups.



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Historic Signs for William Ave. in Davis

Friends of Blackwater has received additional funding from the West Virginia Humanities Council to create signs for downtown commercial buildings that illustrate the businesses of Davis in its timber industry heyday. There is also funding for State Park signs. Here is an example of the type of historic marker that will go on the Davis Town Hall and other local businesses.

