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Working to protect West Virginia's Highlands, including the Blackwater River watershed, the Blackwater Canyon and the North Fork River.

GOVERNOR MANCHIN MEETS WITH FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER

3,000 PETITIONS DELIVERED

On June 16 representatives of Friends of Blackwater met with West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin to discuss the plight of the Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail. The public Trail is under threat from the Forest Service, which wants to turn it into a logging haul road for Allegheny Wood Products. The group delivered over 3,000 petition names to the Governor, asking him to intervene on behalf of the citizens of West Virginia and tell the Forest Service to stop the public land give-away.

The Governor was welcoming and listened to our group’s concerns. The petitions were turned over to Governor Manchin by four-year-old Tucker Welch of St Albans. The Governor said to Tucker, “You want to tell me that you want more public land for your children and grandchildren to be able to use, right?” To which we all vigorously nodded in agreement!

Blackwater Friends Director Judy Rodd reported, “We reminded the Governor that the state has a vested interest in keeping the Trail’s scenic and historic views and sites intact. The West Virginia Highway Division has committed to use Corridor H highway mitigation money to improve the Trail and to preserve the 100-year old coke ovens and historic stone archways along the old railroad grade. It would make no sense to squander this state investment by allowing the public Trail to be destroyed for a tiny amount of private logging.”

Agencies Support Friends of Blackwater’s Trail Position

Supporters of the protection of the Blackwater Canyon Rail-Trail have hit a “Trifecta”! Three separate government agencies have strongly criticized the U.S. Forest Service’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement (“DEIS”) on John Crites’ proposal to turn the historic Canyon Rail Trail into Crites’ personal logging haul road.

The second agency in the Rail-Trail “Trifecta” is the West Virginia Division of Culture and History. On February 10, 2006, the Division’s Historic Preservation Office advised the Forest Service that: “There is insufficient information in this current draft for the public to comment on the historic resources and their eligibility. The public should have the opportunity to comment on the historic resources.”

The most recent official body to speak out is the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the lead national historic preservation agency. In a May 22, 2006 letter to the Forest Service, the Council expressed concern about “substantial impacts on important historic properties”. The Council’s letter noted “procedural problems” and “concerns regarding the Forest’s consultation and compliance.”

Working to protect West Virginia’s Highlands, including the Blackwater River watershed, the Blackwater Canyon and the North Fork River.
By J. Lawrence Smith

A hawk circling effortlessly with its silhouette set against the blue of the sky often captures our attention, but few people may know that it is a Red-shoulder. The bird is identified, not only by rusty shoulders, but also by narrow bands on the tail and tricolor wings called “windows.”

Prefering wooded slopes where the forest cover is largely unbroken, is the Broad-winged Hawk. This hawk will often be seen circling the forest canopy voicing its whitish pink-note and plying the black and white tail bands.

The Red-tailed Hawk, rather fittingly named for its rusty tail feathers, seems to like habitat somewhere between the other two, but perhaps more in upland areas. Where the land is identified, not only by rusty shoulders, but also by narrow bands on the tail and tricolor wings called “windows.”

Field marks or characteristic patterns of feather colors and other traits can be easily learned to make color identification rather easy. While it is not always a hard and fast rule, identification may be based partly on the habitat that the hawk is observed especially during the nesting season. For example, the aptly-named Red-shouldered Hawk likes swampy woods and woodland near bogs.

Should the rather harsh voice of a Red-shoulder be heard in woods in Canaan Valley, it might well be a Red-shoulder. The bird is identified, not only by rusty shoulders, but also by narrow bands on the tail and tricolor wings called “windows.”

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Raptors from page 2

remained relatively unharmed for many years. In recent decades the Godwit hawk has made it appearance, or perhaps reappears in the Blackbird country. This fierce, largely gray hawk, may have been present, but disappeared after the clear-cutting of the forest and is returning after nearly a century of forest regeneration.

A threat to raptors well bring hunting during the Godalming Front during fall migration. Developing time to studying raptors through binoculars with a knowledge of their field marks can add an added sense of discovery to observing in the outdoors. Our world of raptors may become acquainted with creatures with whom we share the earth.

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Creating Blackwater Canyon National Park - combining landscape wide preservation with sustainable economic development in the Blackwater Canyon area

Blackwater Canyon National Park

A Tourism Magnet for the High Allegheny!

The Blackwater Canyon, West Virginia's scenic Crown Jewel, should be protected as a National Park.

This unique, unspoiled wilderness is threatened by reckless developers in search of a quick profit. Their short-sighted views ignore the long-term sustainable value of the Blackwater Canyon.

Preserving the Blackwater Canyon as a National Park makes good economic sense. The Canyon's pristine habitat enhances property values in the area and attracts dollars from across the region.

Many people do not realize that protected public land like national parks pays up to six times more money to local government than private timberland taxes. We must preserve the integrity of the Blackwater Canyon for sound economic reasons, and to preserve West Virginia's natural heritage for future generations.

Economic Impact of Selected National Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Visitor Spending (millions)</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shenandoah</td>
<td>1,163,950</td>
<td>$42.7</td>
<td>1,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Smoky</td>
<td>9,366,845</td>
<td>$598.4</td>
<td>15,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acadia</td>
<td>2,431,062</td>
<td>$133.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yosemite</td>
<td>3,378,064</td>
<td>$529.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grand Canyon</td>
<td>4,124,900</td>
<td>$538.1</td>
<td>7,812</td>
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</table>

West Virginia's Scenic "Crown Jewel"

The 10,000-acre, tremulous Blackwater Canyon, in the heart of the Monongahela National Forest, is West Virginia's signature scenic landscape. Its sweeping vistas and wild river Canyon grace the covers of West Virginia tourism brochures. At the head of the Canyon, Blackwater Falls State Park is a beloved recreational destination for West Virginians and outdoor lovers from the mid-Atlantic Region. The Canyon is a regional mecca for hikers, skiers, kayakers, birders, climbers, hunters, and fishermen. The Blackwater Rail Trail is beautiful and well used, with historic sites and a diverse population of plants and animals including endangered flying squirrels, bats and salamanders. The adventure, artist, and writer Porte Prince in 1962: "Never in all this far land of ours has a scene more beautifully grand broken on the eye of painter or poet." West Virginia Senator Robert C. Byrd calls the Blackwater Canyon "one of West Virginia's most cherished natural treasures."

Serious threats to the Canyon's scenery, recreational use, and ecological integrity began in 1997, when 3,000 acres of pristine Blackwater River corridor in the heart of the Canyon – the only land in the Canyon not in protective public ownership – was sold by a public utility company to timber operator John Crites, of Allegany Wood Products, for five million dollars. Crites soon began logging in the Canyon and planning condominium developments in its pristine forests. Governor Bob Wise offered to purchase the land for public ownership at fair market value, but Crites has so far been unwilling to sell. Crites is pressuring the state park and the Monongahela National Forest to allow a logging road on the scenic hiking trails and through public land in the Canyon.

Since 1997 the Friends of Blackwater (FOB) has advocated for protection for Blackwater Canyon and the Wild and Scenic Blackwater River as a National Park. We have helped to move 675 acres of the Canyon into public ownership under the Underwood and Wise Administrations. We have protected the endangered species of the Canyon through research, public education and advocacy by sponsoring tours and educating decision makers about the value of the Blackwater Rail Trail. In May of 2005, under pressure from FOB, the Forest Service began a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Study on Allegany Wood Products' proposal to turn the public Blackwater Canyon Trail into a logging haul road that would lead directly to proposed housing development along the Wild and Scenic Blackwater River.

In the Forest Service's Draft EIS, issued in February, the Service favored turning control of our Trail over to the timber company. Our campaign caused over 5,000 people to tell the Forest Service to redo the plan. As we wait for the final EIS, we are challenging this "public land grab" by asking West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin to speak out against the Forest Service plan. Please join us in this effort through our petition campaign. (See page 3).

We are also advocating for a National Park in the Canyon and supported a National Park study bill in the 2006 West Virginia legislature, sponsored by Delegate Sharon Spencer and Senator Randy White. We will continue this work in 2007.

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Under pressure from Friends of Blackwater and the Fish and Wildlife Service and Allegany Wood Products began research for a Habitat Conservation Plan on Allegheny Wood Products Land.

Endangered species protection in the Canyon. We are monitoring this process to make sure that the law is followed.

GOALS FOR 2006:

- Work to keep the trail public.
- Review the Habitat Conservation Plan on Allegheny Wood Products Land.
- Participate and Comment on the Monongahela National Forest Management plan.
- Work towards the creation of a National Park.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Sign the petition calling on Gov. Manchin to protect the Trail. Sign on-line at www.saveblackwater.org
- Download petitions and help get more West Virginians to sign. Take them to club meetings, outings, and local outdoor businesses.
- Send a donation for our scientific research on wildlife, historic sites and water impacts of proposed logging haul road on our public trail for
GOALS FOR 2006:
- Set up monitoring program.
- Create a map of the Watershed.
- Write report on the health of the North Branch of the Potomac.
- Educate the public about water quality issues.

HOW YOU CAN HELP
- Volunteer to be a water monitor. Call the North Fork office at 304-463-4008 or email info@northforkwatershed.org, and ask about the next training session.
- Donate items and/or attend a fund raising auction on July 22, 2007 at 6:00pm at the Purple Fiddle in Thomas. Items up for bidding include hiking gear, outings, weekend in cabins, and crafts.

PARTNERS:
US Office of Surface Mining
WV Division of Environmental Protection
Generations United  -   Nisource
The Thomas Education Center
The Norcross Foundation - Town Creek
W.Va., is a gateway for hikers coming into the Blackwater Canyon. It’s a walk into history, past overgrown stone coke ovens where 10,000 immigrants from 15 different countries toiled in the early 1900s. The industrial history has left its mark on the river including acid mine drainage (AMD) and metal deposits from abandoned deep mines and strip mines. There are safety problems: a wall of coal separating the Cokeron and Kempton mine pools (two sets of flooded mine tunnels under the Maryland-West Virginia border on the eastern continental divide) could break and cause major flooding and pollution. Previous reclamation projects helped stabilize disturbed land, but surface subsidence, water pollution and some safety problems remain. The North Fork underground mine pool of polluted water also impacts the beautiful headwaters of the North Branch of the Potomac. Liz Salsbury joined the staff as an OSM intern. In April of 2006 the Project added a new staff member when Liz Salsbury joined the team as an OSM intern. In July she will become part of the full time staff taking the position of the project leader. Liz graduated from Davis and Elkins College in May of 2006 with a Bachelor of Science in Recreation Education. She also has been working to improve water quality, educate the public on the negative impact of acid mine drainage and combine water remediation with historic preservation.

The North Fork Watershed Project
In April of 2006 the North Fork Watershed Project added a new staff member when Liz Salsbury joined the team as an OSM intern. In July she will become part of the full time staff taking the position of the project leader. Liz graduated from Davis and Elkins College in May of 2006 with a Bachelor of Science in Recreation Education. She also has

RESTORE THE NORTHFORK - GATEWAY TO THE CANYON
The trail along the North Fork, a key tributary of the Blackwater River in Tucker County W.Va., is a gateway for hikers coming into the Blackwater Canyon. It’s a walk into history, past overgrown stone coke ovens where 10,000 immigrants from 15 different countries toiled in the early 1900s. The industrial history has left its mark on the river including acid mine drainage (AMD) and metal deposits from abandoned deep mines and strip mines. There are safety problems: a wall of coal separating the Cokeron and Kempton mine pools (two sets of flooded mine tunnels under the Maryland-West Virginia border on the eastern continental divide) could break and cause major flooding and pollution. Previous reclamation projects helped stabilize disturbed land, but surface subsidence, water pollution and some safety problems remain. The North Fork underground mine pool of polluted water also impacts the beautiful headwaters of the North Branch of the Potomac.

LIZ SALSBURY JOINS NORTHFORK WATERSHED TEAM
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TUCKER COUNTY: Forty years-100% owned by Florida Light & Power & Mountainaire project on Backbone Mountain form the largest industrial wind project in the East. An estimated 5,000 birds and bats die a year. Local tax benefits haven’t materialized; the county has only received $92,000 in three years the project has existed.

GRANT COUNTY: Two hundred turbines on the Allegheny Front have been certified by the West Virginia Public Service Commission. A nuisance suit by five landowners against Ned Power contends that the project will reduce property values and cause noise pollution here. The suit has been appealed to the WV Supreme Court.

The state legislature reduced property taxes on wind turbines to 5% of assessed value. The tax revenues will decline every year with depreciation.

PENDLETON COUNTRY: US wind project of 125 turbines north of Canaan Valley, certified by PSC but not built. Citizens for Responsible Wind Power asked for and got the PSC to create a certification acceptance review before building can begin.

GRANT COUNTY: US wind project approved for a certificate for 24 turbines at Liberty Gap, Jack Mountain. Learn more at www.protectpendleton.com

GREENBRIER COUNTY: Invention applied for over 124 wind turbines at Beech Ridge. At weeklong PSC hearings in May, citizens pointed out impacts to the Cranberry Wilderness and Highlands Scenic Highway.

OTHERS: Pre-applications processes are underway for projects on Rich Mountain, Randolph; Laurel Mountain, Barbour County; Brier Ridge, Preston County; Mineral County; Garrett and Allegheny Counties in Maryland; Highland County near Monterey, Virginia. These projects will impact scenic views and the Cranberry Wilderness and Highlands Scenic Highway.

GOALS FOR 2006:
- Slow down the building of wind turbines until federal siting regulations are in place to protect ecologically sensitive areas.
- Inform the public and government officials about the true costs of these projects, and about the value of the Allegheny Highlands, its heritage, scenic views and special habitats.

PARTNERS:
The coalition of groups under Citizens for Responsible Wind Power (CRWP) which includes Friends of the Allegheny Front, Stewards of the Potomac Highlands, Friends of Beautiful Pendleton, Friends of Backbone Mountain, Friends of Blackwater Canyon, and Mountain Communities for Responsible Wind (Greenbriar).
You are cordially invited to attend a Cheat Canyon Fundraiser.

Proceeds will be used to fund the campaign to protect endangered species in the Cheat Canyon.

GOAL FOR 2006:

- Continue to distribute information to all age groups about nature and history of the area.
- Publish children’s books about the ecology of the Blackwater Canyon watershed.
- Plan the 2007 Blackwater BioBlitz.

For more information, contact Friends of Blackwater at (304) 345-7663 or send an e-mail to outreach@saveblackwater.org.

For more information, contact the Blackwater Challenge at (304) 345-7663.
Promoting recreational opportunities in the Blackwater area

GOALS FOR 2006:
- Hold Blackwater Challenge Event
- Lead hikes through Blackwater Canyon
- Assist with trail maintenance and bridge construction to complete the new trail along the Blackwater from Blackwater Falls State Park to the town of Davis.
- Protect the Rail-Trail.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:
- Be a tour leader.
- Share your stories of trip to Blackwater on our website.
- Join the Blackwater Challenge Fund Raising Team.
- Volunteer for Trail maintenance.
- Donate time, dollars, deck lumber or concrete for the bridge in the Park.

OUR PARTNERS:
Blackwater Falls State Park
Conservation Fund - NiSource
WV Trails Coalition - Tucker Co. Trails

STATE REPORTS ECONOMIC INCREASE DUE TO TOURISM

According to the WV Division of Tourism, in a press release for release in August 2006, travelers to the Blackwater Falls area spent more than $3.8 million in 2005, a year with no increase in prices or generating a $336 million in state tax revenue each year and accounting for 4,100 jobs. Without those travel-generated tax revenues, each household in West Virginia would have to pay an additional $730 in state and local taxes. Of that number, 53 percent of their current service level.

WE WERE ABLE TO PUBLISH A COMPLETE REPORT ON THE BLACKWATER area website with a list of places to stay and things to do in Tucker County. Our on-line newsletter for Blackwater Falls State Park in the Open Trail system with Tucker County Trails has.

how fob is promoting tourism & recreation in the blackwater canyon

We were able to promote several grants for the construction of a bridge in the Blackwater area. Tucker County is a wonderful partner with Tucker County Trails. We had a preliminary report on the value of public land to the Tucker County economy and how a national park would add to that value. E-mail outreach@saveblackwater.org for more information.

new in memory of...
Choose a membership level and send your name, address, and e-mail to Friends of Blackwater, 501 Elizabeth Street, Charleston WV 25311
www.saveblackwater.org outreach@saveblackwater.org

- Porte Crayon Society $1000
- Crown Jewel Club $500
- Sustaining Steward $250
- Patron $100
- Family $50
- Individual $35
- Senior $20
- Student $10

YES! I WANT TO JOIN FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER

Name
Address
Phone
E-mail

YES! I WANT TO MAKE A DONATION!

Send me ____ Friends of Blackwater Canvas Tote Bag(s) @ $15.00 each Total = $________

Support FOB & Save a Tree...

Buy our Blackwater Tote bag and help protect the environment. You won't need to pick plastic or paper when you use our canvas bag, with charming wood thrush artwork by Julie Zickafoose.

Ginny, the West Virginia Flying Squirrel, Blackwater Canyon’s mascot and her friends and relations -- could face extinction. The US Fish and Wildlife Service plans to remove the squirrel from the legal protection of the Endangered Species list, even as the squirrel's habitat becomes more threatened by increased human activity in remote, high elevation old growth forests.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has been crippled in its ability to fulfill its conservation mission under the Bush administration, due to funding cuts and delisting directives from DC. On June 2, 2006, the Service announced its intention to delist the flying squirrel, plus review for possible delisting two West Virginia river mussels and the Cheat Snail. The Fish and Wildlife Service claims to have located 1,100 West Virginia Northern flying squirrels over the past 20 years. Is 50 squirrels a year, over one million acres, “a lot”? We don’t think so!

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulates disturbance of the habitat of scientifically selected plants and animals, on private and public land. The ESA has been a “thorn in the side” of some developers, timber operators, road builders, and coal companies, who have lobbied to get rid of the law, despite the extinction of multiple species worldwide each year. Popular support has kept the Endangered Species Act in place. Outdoor lovers have joined with Evangelical Christians, who recall the Biblical story of how Noah and his family saved the animals in the Ark.

Timber operators like John Crites of Allegheny Wood Products, the leading opponent of putting the entire Blackwater Canyon into public ownership, have contributed thousands of dollars to George W. Bush and West Virginia’s Republican Congresswoman, Shelley Moore Capito. Now it looks like payback time!

The Fish and Wildlife Service concedes that logging is the single biggest threat to the flying squirrel, and logging will continue to grow under the new Forest Service plan for the Mon Forest. “What the Fish and Wildlife Service fails to say is that older forests are essential to the squirrel, and that older growth habitat is constantly under threat,” said Judy Rodd. “West Virginia Northern flying squirrels’ main food source is underground mushrooms that thrive under old trees. The spores from the mushrooms are spread in squirrel manure. Ginny the flying squirrel glides through the forest, sowing her own future garden and enriching the forest floor. That’s how this ecosystem works,” Rodd explained.

The ESA works because it protects habitat, not just individual plants and animals. We don’t believe that the Service has done enough research on the squirrel and its needs, or put the right measures in place to keep it from going extinct and disappearing forever.” Fans of Ginny should stay tuned to the “SOS” campaign. The flying squirrel may have to go to court, to stop the delisting.