Friends of Blackwater

BLACKWATER CANYON TRAIL HERITAGE MEMORIAL TO WEST VIRGINIA LABORERS MUST BE SAVED!

The timber company Allegheny Wood Products wants to turn the scenic Canyon Trail, on our public land, into a logging and condominium road. After months of public comment, the Forest Service is still ignoring the recommendations of the Wilderness Society, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the EPA, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).

The latest Service proposal for the Canyon Trail is – get this – to “evaluate” all the historic resources on the Trail, and then they can be destroyed!

Many historic railroad bridges, cut-stone archways, coke ovens, and retaining walls lie along this old West Virginia and Maryland Railroad grade (the steepest grade in the east, in the boom period of 1880 to 1920). The Blackwater Industrial Complex with the ribbon of railroad grade that ties it together has been declared eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The Forest Service still refuses to even consider barring Allegheny Wood Products from destroying this monument to workers from 14 countries who built the amazing coal, coke and railroad center, one

see Trail page 3

SOS CAMPAIGN

SAVE OUR SQUIRREL!

The endangered West Virginia northern flying squirrel, (Glacomyus sabrinus fuscus), under federal protection since 1985, is the exemplary mammal species of the boreal forests of the Allegheny Highlands and the Monongahela National Forest. Now this tiny, big-eyed mammal is under direct attack from the Bush Administration’s Fish and Wildlife Service.

The ancestors of the West Virginia Flying Squirrel moved to the high ridges of the Appalachians during the last Ice Age, and evolved into “high elevation specialists”, thriving in West Virginia’s cold, damp, fungus-laden forests. This signature species shares its ecological niche with the threatened Cheat Mountain salamander, the northern water shrew, dwarf cornel, blister pine, the snowshoe hare, the winter wren, and the black-throated blue warbler.

The squirrel’s habitat is threatened by logging, mining, road building, and other land-clearing activities. Global

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

M O V E S  F O R W A R D

The endagered West Virginia northern flying squirrel, (Glacomyus sabrinus fuscus), under federal protection since 1985, is the exemplar mammal species of the boreal forests of the Allegheny Highlands and the Monongahela National Forest. Now this tiny, big-eyed mammal is under direct attack from the Bush Administration’s Fish and Wildlife Service.

The ancestors of the West Virginia Flying Squirrel moved to the high ridges of the Appalachians during the last Ice Age, and evolved into “high elevation specialists”, thriving in West Virginia’s cold, damp, fungus-laden forests. This signature species shares its ecological niche with the threatened Cheat Mountain salamander, the northern water shrew, dwarf cornel, blister pine, the snowshoe hare, the winter wren, and the black-throated blue warbler.

The squirrel’s habitat is threatened by logging, mining, road building, and other land-clearing activities. Global

Inside this Edition

Director’s Letter - Page 2
Save Blackwater Canyon (cont’d) - Page 3
North Fork Watershed - Page 4
Save Cheat Canyon - Page 5
Keep Dolly Sods Wild - Page 5
The Blackwater Challenge - Page 6 & 7
Blackwater Heritage: The Railroad - Page 8
In Memory & Honor - Page 9
Blackwater Heritage: J.R. Clifford - Page 10
Recreation & Tourism: White Grass - Page 10
Nature Notes: Christmas Greenings - Page 11
Membership Form - Page 11
Blue Ridge Outdoors on National Park - Page 12
Holiday Gift Order Form - Page 12
Notes from the Director

Dear Friends,

As the holiday season approaches, we are reminded that for many of us, the Blackwater Canyon is a spiritual haven, an island of peace in a troubled world. Nature generously gives humanity these wonderful natural landscapes that can inspire and restore us. We must not allow her precious gifts to be destroyed!

I am glad to report that the Blackwater Canyon Trail is a vigorous new champion, the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Trust has strongly challenged the Forest Service’s Historic Review, and has pointed out the Service’s utter failure to follow the law. We are honored and encouraged that this venerable and highly respected national organization is bringing attention to the heritage resources of the Blackwater Canyon.

This is your campaign, and we are honored to help you make it a winning effort. The Blackwater Challenge Teams and the supportive team (Team Captain Sandy Fisher plus Jeannie, Regina, Sharon, and Bonnie) have raised $8,500 this to Carter Zerbe for the loan of his office and phones. This generous donation of $3,000 from the Kyle Family Foundation. We are a third of the way toward our goal!!

As I looked out over the Canyon last month from Blackwater Falls State Park Lodge, the red, orange, and yellow leaves, fringed by green conifers, seemed more beautiful than ever before. I thought of the words of the songwriter Woody Guthrie: “This land is your land, this land is my land.”

The Blackwater Canyon belongs to all of us - and that is why we work to keep West Virginia’s scenic “Crown Jewel” protected and unspoiled for future generations!

Best wishes for the holidays, and thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Judy Rodd
It is the dragonfly.

The dragonfly is the most common and widespread insect on earth. It is the only insect that can fly in all four directions. It beats its wings at 60 times per second. It can fly faster than 45 mph. The dragonfly’s wings are so thin that you can see through them.

Our “spotlight species” is not your average charismatic mega-fauna one might expect. It has been around before the first two-legged mammals, amphibians, or even birds. The oldest fossils of a dragonfly are 450 million years old! The dragonfly is one of the most ancient life forms known to us.

The difference between the two is that while resting, dragonflies hold their four wings out flat to its sides and the front pair is smaller than the back. A damselfly folds all four of its wings together vertically over its body, and all 4 pairs are generally the same size. Damselflies spend the majority of their life (one to three years) underwater in their nymph stage. Here, they feed on larval insects, devouring anything in sight, including fish, salamanders, and even their own siblings.

Between birth and its adult stage the dragonfly can molt up to 15 times, developing and each time preparing itself for its 3 weeks of adulthood. Eventually, the excessively molled larva climbs out of the water, clings on to anything in sight, sheds its exoskeleton, and emerges as a beautifully equipped adult dragonfly. Here it will fly around for the next 2 to 3 weeks in search of food and a mate. After it has successfully accomplished both, it ends its journey, but leaves its offspring to continue its circle of life.

In the United States, there are around 450 species of dragonflies and damselflies. The threat to Dolly Sods and the Allegheny Front continues with the clearing of land for eighty-two, 388-foot-tall industrial wind projects from Spruce Knob and North Fork Mountain. The Greenbrier project was certified by the PSC in August but is being appealed. There will be a hearing on the Peniel Project in December. Other projects are proposed for Preston, Barbour, Grant, Randolph and Mineral Counties.

The threat to Dolly Sods and the Allegheny Front continues with the clearing of land for eighty-two, 388-foot-tall industrial wind projects from Spruce Knob and North Fork Mountain. The Greenbrier project was certified by the PSC in August but is being appealed. There will be a hearing on the Peniel Project in December. Other projects are proposed for Preston, Barbour, Grant, Randolph, and Mineral Counties.

The campaign to protect the sensitive ecology of Cheat Canyon from destructive logging continues. The Sierra Club, Cheat LakeCommitment and Recreation Association, and Friends of Blackwater may go to court in Wheeling in November, bringing the case for protection of the threatened Cheat land snail in the wild and scenic Cheat Gorge in front of Judge Stump. It is thanks to all of you who sent money for the campaign and attended the fundraiser at Cheat Lake that we were able to hire a wonderful small expert from Tennessee, Dr. Ron Caldwell. Caldwell has done field research and raised additional concerns that snail habitat is being damaged on Allegheny Wood Products property along the Cheat River. This area between Albright and Cheat Lake is famous for its dangerous rapids, wild rafting rides, and steep and unpaved roads (until now) forested slopes. The West Virginia Supreme Court has agreed to hear the lawsuit from local citizens, “Burch vs Nedpower Mount Storm LLC”, asserting that they will be damaged by the industrial wind project and have a right to have their case heard by a circuit judge. A decision is not expected until next spring.

Other scenic areas around the Monongahela National Forest threatened by poorly sited industrial wind projects are in Greenbrier County near the Cranberry Wilderness. In Pendleton County, the Jack Mountain Project threatens views from Spruce Knob and North Fork Mountain. The Greenbrier project was certified by the PSC in August but is being appealed. There will be a hearing on the Peniel Project in December. Other projects are proposed for Preston, Barbour, Grant, Randolph, and Mineral Counties.
Wow!! What a great experience this was for everyone. Okay so I confess the weather on Saturday left a little to be desired but we can’t have it all. All in all it was a good turnout and everyone was wonderful. We had bird banders (and let me tell you these guys are serious). Linda Cooper led Team Kingfisher, which included Joyce Cooper and Don Gasper, and they identified over 60 individual birds. Team Hoyt was led by John Hoyt with team members Donna Hoyt and Pat Findikoglu. They were up bright eyed and bushy tailed very early in the morning. Way to go Team Kingfisher and Team Hoyt!!

The fall foliage was great and the Fall Foliage Driving tour participants got some great pictures of the canyon some of which have been included on this page.

In the afternoon, we had three teams of hikers: Team Educate, Team Mother Wit and Team Flying Squirrel. These folks take the cake and I mean they really take the cake. Due to road conditions, what was supposed to be an eight mile hike ended up being a 9.6 mile hike. These guys deserve a big round of applause (and maybe some Ben Gay)!!

And what about the mountain bikers you say? Well, Team Justice biked the canyon for five-plus hours and they were still smiling when they were done. Congratulations, Team Justice!!! (Though secretly some of us wonder if you guys needed a massage at the end of that trip.)

And remember that history tour? Well we are happy to report that Team History Mystery not only took the tour on their own but using some historical maps and their noggins believe they may have found the location of the Coketon Colored School and Coketon Colored Church. As you may know the site of the school is significant because it was where Carrie Williams taught. (For more information about who Carrie Williams was please visit www.jrclifford.org and see page 10). The paperwork is underway to have a marker placed at the site. We will keep you updated on this story as it unfolds. Congratulations to Brandae and Maria (or perhaps we should call them Velma and Daphne) for adding to the Blackwater Canyon’s fabulous historical value.

The Blackwater Challenge

Team Mother Wit: Colleen Anderson, Michael Davis, Amanda Cox and Bill DePaulo

Team Hoyt: Donna Hoyt and Pat Findikoglu (not pictured here John Hoyt)

Team Educate: Lowell Markey, Michael Preston, Billie Smith and Bill Smith

Team Mother Wit: Colleen Anderson, Michael Davis, Amanda Cox and Bill DePaulo

John Hoyt at Dolly Sods

Linda Cooper, Donna & Carroll Cook at the Awards Dinner

Team Justice: Dale Murphy and Scott Coater

Judy Rodd, Bill Coulter and Joyce Cooper at the Awards Dinner

Team Fling Squirrel: Judy Rodd and Bill Cautious

Tom Rodd relaxes after biking and hiking

Don Gasper and Maria Armada between events

Deb McHenry biking

Team Wind: Carol and Donna Cook

Team Hill Hopper: Jeannie, Paul and Nancy Hill

Team History Mystery: Maria Armada and Brandae Mullins

View of Blackwater Canyon from Lindy Point

Team Justice: Dale Murphy and Scott Coater

Judy Rodd, Bill Coulter and Joyce Cooper at the Awards Dinner

Team Hoyt and Team Educate hiking on Saturday morning

John Hoyt at Dolly Sods

Team Fling Squirrel: Judy Rodd and Bill Cautious

Team Wind: Carol and Donna Cook

Team Hill Hopper: Jeannie, Paul and Nancy Hill

Team History Mystery: Maria Armada and Brandae Mullins

To:

JOHN BRIGHT and his staff at the PURPLE FIDDLE - SAM and DIANE of HIGHLAND SCENE TOURS

ALICE at EAST WEST PRINTING - THE NELSONS - THE ART COMPANY of DAVIS

WALT and the STAFF of SIRIANNI’S PIZZA - WILLIE and BRYAN over at MT. STATE BREWINING CO.

MATT MARCUS of BLACKWATER BIKES - MATT QUATTRO - LISA PORTER

ALL the MERCHANTS and RESIDENTS of THOMAS and DAVIS

Thank you for all of your warmth, generous help, and hospitality.

November 2006

November 2006

Page 6 - Projects

Projects - Page 7
In Memory and Honor...

JOSEPH C. COMETTI

Joe Cometti was a great friend of Blackwater and worked with us to Keep Dolly Sods Wild. Joe was memorialized recently by his sisters Cathy Samargo and Lisa McIver. They described Joe in the following way:

“Our precious brother was an avid cyclist and environmentalist. Joe’s life’s work took him to many wild and out of the way places in West Virginia. His utopian nature led to the creation of Bergonia, a nation with a rich history and a progressive social conscience. Bergonia, his life’s work and legacy, is preserved for all to explore and enjoy at his website - www.bergonia.org.”

Left: Joseph Cometti
Below: A map of the utopian Bergonia.

TIM GAVIN

Once again Tim Gavin has been honored by multiple persons, including those responsible for the Harper’s Ferry Outdoor Festival.

Tim Gavin was an avid kayaker who died in a kayaking accident on the Upper Blackwa
ter River in 1998. Each year the Tim Gavin Downriver race is held in his honor as part of the annual Harper’s Ferry Outdoor Festival.

This year’s festival was held on Saturday June 17. It drew 31 races in 2 categories and 53 sponsors, including Wavesport, BackCountry.com, Immersion Research, Lotus, NRS and Stohlquist.

Additionally, each May rafters compete in a race geared to accommodate newbies to the river and to the summer season. This year, River Riders beat out six other teams for the glory of the coveted Shenandoah Cup.

Proceeds from the festival are divided among Friends of Blackwater, Friends of the Shenandoah River, and Friends of the Potomac.

This year’s donation put HFOF into the Porte Crayon Society.

Tim’s love of the Blackwater River and Blackwater Canyon, continues to reach out and inspire others.

BLACKWATER HERITAGE

Honor those that went before us and preserving what they left behind in this magnificent mountain landscape.

THE RAILROAD: CARVING OUT HISTORY

One year and ten miles later, the Black Fork grade, as it was named, was completed. This was an astonishing feat considering that along the way occasional hundreds of feet high were made into Blackout Mountain in order to facilitate railroad construction. Other obstacles encountered were deep ravines and several rushing tributary streams. Along the way trestles were often built to keep construction moving, with workers returning later to place fill material on the trestles and remove trestles and build gigantic stone archways to accommodate both the railroad and bridge the mountain streams. Additional work was done by hand. It was considered at the time to be a nearly impossible task.

Of the stone culverts constructed, the most impressive is located at Big Run. The culvert at Big Run is estimated to be 60 feet long, with a width of 20-25 feet and height of 30 feet. The culvert at Big Run was named as the site of several wrecks and derailments, mainly because of the severity of the curve which the railroad took at this point.

The Black Fork grade was also known for its steep gradient. The railroad grade climbs 325 feet over its ten-mile course, giving it an average grade of 2.34 percent. Modern surveys and field tests show that in some locations the grade is slightly more than 3 percent, making this an incredibly steep railroad when compared to current standards.

With the railroad came industry and expansion. Along the way towns popped up, as the influx of workers to the coal mines, coke ovens, and timber industry began.


during creator gives some of himself into his creation, incontrovertibly, and the creation becomes a bit of a mirror, something of a child...

--- Joe Cometti from “Why Bergonia?” at www.bergonia.org

LUCILLE WRATCHFORD

Paula Poole and Ron Eckard have made donations to Friends of Blackwater in memory of the late Lucille Lenora Wratchford. Lucille, who was born in Thomas, WV, in 1912, spent many happy childhood days at the home of her grandparents. Benjamin and Elizabeth Eckard Wratchford, in the community of Limerock...and actually lived there for a while after the untimely death of her mother, Clara Pennington Wratchford. Lucille passed away October 24, 2005, just four days shy of her 93rd birthday. However, in May of 2004, Lucille was provided an opportunity to return to her grandparents’ home site in the Blackwater Canyon. During that visit she spoke fondly of her grandparents and her Uncle Martin Eckard who lived on the other side of the river. She pointed out the location of her grandparents’ home and spoke of other families that lived nearby. The old house was still on the Wratchford property. Lucille looked at the picture of it even weeks after her trip, and recalled many little walks she had taken to her grandmother’s “refrigerator”. Lucille was possibly the last living person who could pass on some of the secrets of the Limerock era. We are so pleased that she got to visit there one more time. Now, almost a year after her passing, we all still miss her wonderful smile and special love for the West Virginia mountains she called home.


When the spruce and balsam fir of the Blackwater Canyon region, their branches laden with the sun's final boughs, are cut down for Christmas, families across the nation bring home a fresh tree that will brighten their homes with a pleasing fragrance. For centuries, the Blackwater Canons has been the source for some of these trees. The tradition of the Christmas tree spread after the Revolution and the settlers brought it to Pennsylvania where it was popular by 1840. Missionaries and preachers from such denominations as Episcopal and Presbyterian introduced the custom to many areas of the United States, especially the Appalachian region, in the late 19th Century.

There is an evergreen that meet about every taste and belief and was used at Christmas for decoration in many ways for centuries. Other plants that can be used at Christmas for decoration are mountain laurel and dogwood. Use your imagination to create new expressions, symbol of the season, and the meaning to appeal to all our beliefs associated with evergreens.

Whitegrass Cross Country Ski Resort is participating in Winter Trail Day White Grass Cross Country Resort on January 6, 2007. National Winter Trail Day is an event that is sponsored by the American Hiking Association. As their participation, Whitegrass will offer the following:

Free lessons/classes and half priced rentals to all first time interested skiers or snowshoers.

XC lessons every hour and a half hour and a 10 am and 2 pm clinic on types of snowshoes, clothing, basic techniques, and outdoor winter snow travel.

Free lessons/clinics and half priced rentals to all first time interested skiers or snowshoers.

The custom of the Christmas tree spread after the Revolution and the settlers brought it to Pennsylvania where it was popular by 1840. Missionaries and preachers from such denominations as Episcopal and Presbyterian introduced the custom to many areas of the United States, especially the Appalachian region, in the late 19th Century.

There is an evergreen that meet about every taste and belief and was used at Christmas for decoration in many ways for centuries. Other plants that can be used at Christmas for decoration are mountain laurel and dogwood. Use your imagination to create new expressions, symbol of the season, and the meaning to appeal to all our beliefs associated with evergreens.
You are cordially invited to attend Friends of Blackwater’s Annual Reception and Charity Auction on Thursday December 7, 2006 from 5-8 p.m in the Adams Morgan section of Washington, D.C.

If you would like to attend or would just like more information about the event, please contact Friends of Blackwater at 877-WVA-LAND or by e-mail at outreach@saveblackwater.org

Great Gift Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QTY</th>
<th>GIFT ITEM</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Tucker County Memoir Fat With Words - Speak to the Past by Davis Native Margaret Calwell</td>
<td>@ $18.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Tucker County History with Illustrations by Porte Crayon</td>
<td>@ $18.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Blackwater Chronicle by Philip Pendleton Kennedy (paperback)</td>
<td>@ $27.50</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country Cookbook - Bootstraps and Biscuits (paperback)</td>
<td>@ $12.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blackwater Falls State Park Adventure Guide by Emily Grafton (paperback)</td>
<td>@ $10.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flying Squirrel T-Shirt - Circle Size(s) Child: L, Adult: S, M, L, XL, XXL</td>
<td>@ $15.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kayaking Squirrel T-Shirt - Circle Size(s) Child: L, Adult: S, M, L, XL, XXL</td>
<td>@ $15.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clifford-Niagara T-shirt- Circle Size(s) Child: L, Adult: S, M, L, XXL</td>
<td>@ $15.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends of Blackwater Canvas Tote Bag</td>
<td>@ $15.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Christmas Gift Memberships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QTY</th>
<th>GIFT ITEM</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-year family membership (reg. $50.00) includes 4 newsletters</td>
<td>@ $35.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes 4 newsletters, personalized gift card and Blackwater Canyon refrigerator magnet.</td>
<td>@ $25.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchase 2 or more gift memberships for only $25.00 each!!!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUBTOTAL</td>
<td>@ $25.00</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SHIPPING LOCATIONS (Be sure to include shipping information with your order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QTY</th>
<th>GIFT ITEM</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@ 2.50</td>
<td>$______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL ORDER

Order online or send order with payment and shipping info to:
Friends of Blackwater,  501 Elizabeth Street, Charleston, WV 25311

Please include $2.50 shipping and handling fee for each location your gifts need to be shipped.

All holiday orders include gift card, bumper sticker and refrigerator magnet.

Checks should be made payable to:
Friends of Blackwater

www.saveblackwater.org

National Park Plan Highlighted

Friends of Blackwater’s plan to create a National Park in the Blackwater Canyon was highlighted in the September 2006 issue of Blue Ridge Outdoors with a great cover shot of Lindy Point. This thoughtful and in-depth article poses questions on hunting, mountain biking, access, and development. Many of these questions are answered in the National Park Quiz section of the Friends of Blackwater website, www.saveblackwater.org.

For a copy of the article, contact Friends of Blackwater at 877-WVA-LAND or by email at outreach@saveblackwater.org.

For those of you interested in exploring Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine further, please visit their website at www.blueridgeoutdoors.com.