

Friends of Blackwater

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Photo courtesy of Andy Altman

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

Notes from the Director

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Dear Friend,

Our campaign to protect the Blackwater Canyon is winning important battles! Now more than ever, we must keep the pressure on!

It's hard to believe that it has been FIVE YEARS since the U.S. Forest Service first agreed to review a bizarre proposal to turn the scenic and historic Blackwater Canyon Trail, on our public land, into a logging road for a timber company. Together, we have fought this crazy proposal at every turn, and we have gained strength and numbers in every battle.

If you sent in comments on the Trail-destruction proposal, then you may have recently received a notice from the Forest Service, saying that a "Final Environmental Impact Statement" ("FEIS") and a "Record of Decision" are being finalized. If you wish, you can request a copy of any final decision from the Forest Service. If you don't, we will let you know if and when a decision is issued.

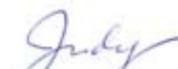
Meanwhile, our lawyers have proven, several times, how the proper legal basis for a decision has not been met. And we have seen these notices before, followed by more delay. MOST IMPORTANTLY, ANY FOREST SERVICE DECISION IS NOT -- AND WILL NOT BE -- THE LAST WORD.

We will appeal any Trail-destruction plan to the court system, and we are confident in the merits of our case.

We are even more confident that the strength and persistence that you and we have built together will prevail - and we will protect West Virginia's Scenic Crown Jewel for future generations!

Best wishes in the New Year, and thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Judy Rodd



Whole-Hearted Victory

by J. Lawrence Smith

Among the enemies of the natural beauty of the Blackwater Land, indeed all of the Allegheny Highlands, are persons afflicted by the malady of greed -- as they strip the land of resources for personal and short-sighted gain. Many look only to their bulging bank account and inflated ego -- today is the day for making money and merriment! Foresight, the future, and leaving something for posterity have no place in their plans.

The way we see something is also the way we will respond, nurture, or embrace it. An infant is for loving, and there is no question about a baby's need for affection and loving care. When we see the land, the lakes, and the forest as deserving of our affection, we will respond in seeking means of preservation. What will it profit us to gain a fortune in silver and gold, and sacrifice the places that offer us refreshment for our souls?

Persons with affection for the land will endure, for they have the heart for the struggle against greed. They must be dogged and unflagging -- and the greedy will give in, for they have not the heart for a sustained struggle. A few with their whole hearts in the fray will win the day long before a crowd of many who are only half-hearted!

Can You See a Squirrel from an Airplane?

As the nights grow cold in the deep woods of the Blackwater Canyon, one woodland creature is well-prepared for the chilly weather -- our dear friend "Ginny," the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel.

When the sun goes down and moonlight casts spooky shadows on the forest floor, Ginny climbs out of her leaf-lined nest in a tall tree. She leaps into the air, spreading her limbs to extend the flaps of skin that she needs for her long glide to the ground. Once safely landed, Ginny sniffs for the scent of her favorite food - underground fungi that live on tree roots. (She can smell them right through the snow!)

Sometimes several flying squirrels will gather in a woodland clearing, digging up a "bumper crop" of these nutritious "Highland truffles." Ginny's thick fur coat allows her to forage successfully for hours in the dark cold mountain nights, when predators have a harder time at their work.

Several years ago, Friends of Blackwater hired one of the nation's top mammal ecologists to study West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel populations on the rim of the Blackwater Canyon. It was a remarkable experience to trudge through the snowy woods with a field biologist, visiting the baited (peanut butter, truffles are too expensive) boxes that had attracted these tiny, furry creatures the night before. (We feature a cute photo on our web site of a squirrel in the gloved hand of one of the field workers.)

Based on these important field studies that followed scientific protocols first developed by the official Species Recovery Team for the squirrel, we were able to keep hundreds of acres free from habitat-destructive logging. But if the right-wing DC politicians who want to defeat the Endangered Species Act in the West Virginia Highlands have their way, these population studies, which are required even if Ginny were removed from the Endangered Species List (she won't be!), will come to an end.

Here's the DC bureaucrats' proposed alternative: airplanes will fly over the mountains and take pictures! No, the airplanes aren't looking for squirrels hiding in the trees. They will be "estimating" the number of red spruce trees -- and that will give them an estimate of the number of squirrels, they say.

It's hard to know where to start in criticizing this goofy idea. Every single independent scientist who has studied the squirrel says it won't work. It is contrary to the Division of Natural Resource's recommendations. Squirrels are no fonder of red spruce than of any other high mountain forest species. Moreover, tree populations take decades to change noticeably, and squirrels are far more sensitive to micro-habitat changes. Threats to squirrel habitat like climate change are left out of the equation, as is road-building. The only scientific way to measure squirrel populations is to do field work on the ground.

It's obvious why the Beltway insider wise-use extremists really want to keep scientists out of the woods. They want to hide the truth until it's too late, and Ginny and her family lose their mountain home. But it ain't a-gonna happen!

The "SOS! -- Save Our Squirrel" Coalition now has more than 27 member groups from across the region working to defeat the "de-listing" proposal. Members of West Virginia's Congressional delegation like Nick Rahall are helping to expose the politicization of science at the Fish and Wildlife Service.

National groups, including the Center for Biological Diversity, have put "Ginny" up there with the Manatee and the Spotted Owl as "poster children" for the Endangered Species Act. We have assembled a crack legal and scientific team to fight in every legal and policy arena.

Perhaps most important of all, thousands of citizens have spoken out to help save Ginny and her mountain home. You can see just a few of those comments in the sidebar that accompanies this article.

"Ginny" the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel is a signature mammalian species for the incredible "little bit of Canada in Appalachia" island ecosystem of the high mountain ridges and valleys of West Virginia. To learn more about how you can help save Ginny and her mountain home, go to www.saveoursquirrel.org, or call 1-877-WVA-LAND.



IN YOUR WORDS.....

Abby Tennant of Knob Fork, West Virginia, wrote: "I live in a rural area of West Virginia and I grew up in the country. I watched my grandfather raise baby flying squirrels to adults and then we released them. Those babies were the only flying squirrels I have ever seen. I know these animals are nocturnal, but even as I watch the woods in the early hours of evening, they still seem to elude our forests. Please, do not take them off of the endangered species list."

Frances M. Cone of Pawleys Island, SC, wrote: "No species should be removed from the Endangered Species list until there is scientific proof that the species is well on the road to recovery. Even at that point, there must be a plan that will continue to allow the species to recover by protecting its habitat. Please protect the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel until you have done a new scientific study to determine its current population and please ensure that its habitat is protected. We did not inherit this Earth from our parents, we are borrowing it from our children!"

J. Lawrence Smith of Hurricane, West Virginia wrote: "Long ago poet John Donne wrote, 'No man is an island entire of itself. . . He spoke of the way humankind is one and we should grieve when a fellow dies. We think of the Northern Flying Squirrel largely in terms of expense or economics - the expense of continued protection - the economics of timbering its habitat. We fail to consider that here is a creature molded by the same Creator as us and deserving essentially the same respect as our fellow humans!"

Adam Webster of Montrose, West Virginia, wrote: "Unfortunately, I continually sense a knavish sense of pleasure from our federal government as they whittle away at environmental regulations that protect our heritage, ecosystems, economy, health, and more. Delisting the flying squirrel isn't just a case of protecting a small furry creature that people rarely see, it is a case of protecting an ecosystem that filters water, provides oxygen, biodiversity, and sustains local economies through recreation and tourism."

Randall Roorda of Lexington, Kentucky, wrote: "I'm one of the few who've been privileged to observe flying squirrels in their habitat and to learn something of their habits and plight directly from one who studies them (Dr. Jim Krupa, a biologist at the University of Kentucky), who's been researching them in UK's Robinson Forest for many years. Even in this near-pristine mixed mesophytic habitat, the animal's numbers appear to be declining. There are hard times pending for squirrels and associated life forms, clearly, even without the ill-considered measure here contemplated. There are no good reasons, aside from narrow, short-sighted, near-term economic ones, to revoke well-founded protections for this creature."



Blackwater Canyon Christmas Celebration



On December 7, 2007 Chuck Smith and Steve White hosted a party and auction to benefit Friends of Blackwater. With

all the efforts of our hosts and sponsors we were able to raise nearly \$30,000 to keep up the fight to protect the Canyon!

We wanted to use this space to share with everyone some pictures of the event and to thank our hosts and the host committee for all their outstanding efforts.

Co-Chairs:

Chuck Smith and Kim Covert
Steve and Katy White

Host Committee:

Brian Glasser and Lena Thoren Glasser
John Perdue
Marie Prezioso
Karen Coria
BJ and Jerry Nibert
Steve Haid and Jennifer Taylor
Priscilla Haden
Larry LaCorte
Marvin Masters
Barrie Kaufmann
Harriett and Paul Nusbaum
J.R. Carney
Darrell and Debbie Rolston
Pat and Anita Maroney
Tom and Paula Flaherty
John and Debbie Brown
Julian Serafin and Albert Liu
Cy Barton & Luisa Cucina DiTrapano
Wendel and Jane Turner
Senator Jon and Judy Hunter
Mark Carbone
Phil Reale
Fred and Tracy Herz
Tom and Stacey Halloran
Carrie Webster and Greg Skinner
Nikki Barone

Music by:

Lost Cause

Food by:

Ichiban
Luisa DiTrapano



Damon Frederick with the son and daughter of Tom Halloran



Kim Covert chats with other supporters.



Above and Right: Lost Cause with B.J. Nibert keeps the crowd excited.



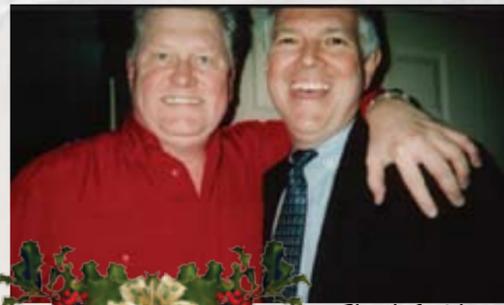
Patti Hamilton, David Higgins and Jennifer Taylor mingle with other guests and supporters.



Tom Halloran's children pose in the kayak sponsored by dad's company - AquaClear.



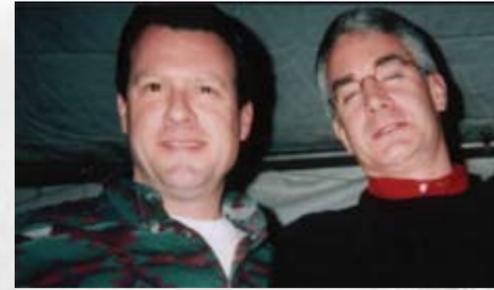
Host Steve White always had a smile on his face.



Chuck Smith and Nick Casey pose for the camera.



Gift Basket donated by AquaClear.



Tom Halloran proved to be an outstanding host.



Laura Lou Harbert was a lovely door attendant.



Patrick Smith enjoys a laugh with other guests



Host Cy Barton



Kim Covert bids on one of the numerous silent auction items.



This event definitely kept a smile on the faces of all the attendees.



Dr. Edward Howard of Charleston enjoys the company of other guests



Silent auction items included a signed photo of WV's own Randy Moss.



- Sponsors:**
- Adele Thornton Lewis
 - Allegheny Treenware
 - Appalachian Milk Soap
 - Aqua Clear
 - Barrie Kaufmann
 - Blackwater Outdoor Adventures
 - Bob Foster
 - Canaan Valley State Park
 - Canaan Valley Trading Post
 - Capitol City Roasters
 - Carolyn Cavendish
 - Charleston Bicycle Center
 - Charly Jupiter Hamilton
 - Cornucopia
 - Cy Barton
 - Damon Frederick
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 - Dr. Toni Frederick
 - South Mountain Title Group
 - Falcor Vineyard
 - Flying Pigs
 - Frog Creek Books
 - Hare Hill Candles
 - Hellbender's Burritos
 - High Mountain Outfitters
 - Highland Prospects
 - Jeff's Bike Center
 - JimiStyx
 - John Ferguson
 - Laura Moul
 - Mary Ann Honcharik
 - Mountain Made
 - Mountain State Brewing
 - Mutley's
 - Nina M. Brode Everson
 - Oval Construction
 - Patrick Smith & Guy Busey
 - Paul Brown
 - Perdue's Market
 - River Riders
 - Rivers Whitewater Center
 - Ron Hinkle
 - Sirianni's
 - Songer Whitewater
 - Steve Payne
 - Steve Shaluta
 - Steve White
 - Tamarack
 - Taylor Books
 - The Purple Fiddle
 - The Rainmaker Media Group
 - The Wine Shoppe
 - Tico Herrera
 - Timberline
 - Titi Ferguson
 - Pathfinder
 - WaterGap Retreat
 - Whitegrass Touring Center & Café

BLACKWATER THREATENED AS STREAM WAR RAGES

By Adam Webster, Interim Director, West Virginia Rivers Coalition

The Blackwater Canyon is often called the "Crown Jewel of West Virginia." For some, this epithet stirs a vision of an intrinsically noble and priceless wilderness, a steep rhododendron-choked Appalachian paradise cut by a wild, torrent river and deserving the highest level of protection.

For others, the vision is quite different. The hillsides of Blackwater are rich with century-old timber ripe for cutting. The vistas are better suited for high-price houses than hiking trails and laws intended to protect water quality and endangered animals are mere obstacles to profit.

And so the battle continues.

Weakened water rules headed to Legislature

A half decade battle to protect West Virginia's most pristine headwaters is approaching a decisive showdown this winter. In January, West Virginia's legislature will decide with a pen stroke how many of the state's healthiest headwater streams—including hundreds of trout fisheries—will receive special protections under state laws.

The streams considered for these protections are included on lists known as the Tier 2.5 list and Category B2 "Trout waters" list.

Tier 2.5

The Clean Water Act requires states to keep clean streams clean and prevent already polluted streams from becoming more polluted. Under this requirement, known as antidegradation, federal guidelines call for three increasing levels of protection, Tier 1, 2, and 3.

In 2001, industry and development groups quickly became concerned by federal antidegradation requirements because a large number of West Virginia's streams qualified for

the highest level of protection, Tier 3. In response, these groups lobbied fervently to change the law to include a fourth, less protective category, known as Tier 2.5.

After modifying the law to serve private interests, the State Legislature directed the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, DEP, to create a list of high quality streams supporting wild trout populations, flowing through state parks and national forests, or having other unique scenic, recreational, or ecological values.

The original list—known as the Tier 2.5 list— included 444 streams. Listed streams included the Blackwater River in Tucker County; Cranberry, Williams, and Elk rivers in Webster and Pocahontas counties; Seneca Creek in Pendleton County; Loop Creek in Fayette County; and Elkhorn Creek in McDowell County.

In 2006, the same groups that originally lobbied for the Tier 2.5 system retreated from previous position and began campaigning to eliminate stream protections altogether.

The West Virginia Farm Bureau, Forestry Association, Chamber of Commerce, Hospitality and Tourism Association, and other private interests led the charge, eventually pressuring DEP to reduce the Tier 2.5 list to 309 streams.

This year, the DEP cut the Tier 2.5 list to only 156 streams, unjustly striking the Blackwater River and other eligible streams from the list of protected streams.

B2 Trout Waters

Another list that includes the Blackwater River, the B2 "Trout Waters" list, is located within the West Virginia Water Quality Standards and also offers added protections. The list sets higher water quality standards in order to protect trout populations in more than 450 streams statewide.

Both stream lists threatened

Start contacting Governor Manchin and your local representatives today to let them know the importance of protecting our state's streams. Tell them you support a Tier 2.5 list that contains at least 309 streams and the full list of Category B2 "Trout waters"

that includes more than 450 streams.

Visit <http://www.wvrivers.org/news2007/tier2.5campaign.html> to learn more about this specific issue.

The Wild and Scenic Waiting List

Amidst West Virginia's stream wars, the Blackwater River awaits yet another protection for which it is eligible, yet lawmakers have not moved to implement.

After recognizing that many of our rivers were imperiled, in 1968 Congress created the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The purpose of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is to preserve America's finest rivers in their free-flowing condition, simultaneously protecting their outstanding values—including scenery, recreation and fisheries.

A U.S. Forest Service investigation determined that segments from 12 different Monongahela National Forest streams are eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, including 8.7 miles of the Blackwater River. However, only one river in West Virginia—the Bluestone— has been officially designated.

The report deeming the Blackwater River eligible for the Wild and Scenic River System has yet to be forwarded to Congress for further action. In the meantime, however, the legislation states that protective management of federal lands within a river study area begins at the time the river has been found eligible for addition to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

To some degree the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides a sense of security for the Blackwater and its immediate environment; however, without final designation as a Wild and Scenic River, the river remains threatened by development.

Much like the stream protection rules getting tossed around the legislature, the Blackwater River can't depend on rules that could or should be in place to protect them into the future. Rather, we can only feel confident once our representatives pass them into law.

Adam Webster was born and raised in West Virginia and has family ties to every corner of the state. He has been with for WVRC for two years, first as Conservation Director and now as Interim Executive Director.

WVRC's mission is to conserve and restore West Virginia's exceptional rivers and streams. Their office is located in Elkins and they work with watershed groups, policy makers, and others to ensure the protection of West Virginia's rivers.

MAX BLAIR HARBERT

Max Harbert has been honored by his mother, Laura Lou Harbert of Charleston. Here is what Laura had to say about Max:

The son I call Blair is Max to his friends. Now that we have the same reference point, I will tell you how much he enjoys the unspoiled Backwater Canyon.

Because of his love of an extreme sport, I have learned a new vocabulary or new use of words including creeking, playing, rolling, eddy, run, and off the river. You guessed it, kayaking.

Probably his love of adventure started Max kayaking. It certainly was not his mother, who is afraid of the water. In 1998, he began his kayaking journey at the "Y" in Parkersburg. After overcoming the hurdle of rolling his kayak in the pool, he has not looked back.

Max has several rituals which include Gauley Season (his friend who lives in Colorado joins him), the Cheat Festival, and watching Bridge Day from the water in his kayak. He had to miss it one year, as (horror of horrors!) his sister had the nerve to get married on Bridge Day.

In addition to West Virginia, Max has kayaked in Colorado, Idaho, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Costa Rica. After cutting his teeth on the Lower Backwater, he ran the Upper Blackwater in 2006, for the first time. He can also be seen in a two person kayak with Hester.

Needless to say, I do not run the Blackwater with Max, but we do enjoy hiking the Canyon and Otter Creek, as well as partaking of the land pursuits at the Purple Fiddle and the art galleries.

Note the pictures of Max in action. In 2006, he took the picture of the rapid kayakers call Phil's 100 yard dash. It is located about 100 yards downstream from Blackwater Falls. The pictures say it all. Naturally Max Blair Harbert is a member of Friends of Backwater.



Left and Below: Max Harbert on the water.



Left: Fly Fishing along the Blackwater.



Above: Joe Gatski as painted by Morgantown, WV artist Helen Panzironi

JOE GATSKI

The Friends of Blackwater would like to memorialize Joe Gatski, an outdoorsman, artist, and craftsman from Grafton, West Virginia, who passed away November 27, 2007. Joe's love of the wilderness and the high Allegheny country touched many and is beautifully expressed in his poetry. The poems Anthem and High Country Morning have been included here in celebration of Joe's life.

Anthem

by Joe Gatski

*Say goodbye to the good earth
from Virginia to Alaska
the country is dying.
Say goodbye to fresh clean
streams
the trout therein
the raptor on the wing.
Say hello
to the holy human right
there's a stranger
in the forest
a face I've never seen.*

High Country Morning

by Joe Gatski

*High country morning
in fall
you can tell where the
rivers are by the fog
The thickest bands
are as snakes
winding through valleys
out of these mists
we must return
to threads of darkness
as each sun sinks
to be received unto
another
ever and ever
over and over
the cyclic void
from which we sprang
play your heart strings
for all your worth
give freely
with all your soul*

HOLLY SYMBOLISM ANCIENT

by J. Lawrence Smith

“Deck the halls with boughs of holly” are words to a favorite Christmas carol. Even though the symbolism of holly is associated with Christmas, its use for decorations originated in ancient times.

Trees and shrubs that remained green throughout the year, such as spruce, pines and holly, were regarded by people of long ago as having qualities lacking in other plants. Holly kept its leaves in winter and seemed to possess a spark of eternity.

The Romans decorated their houses and temples with holly during the winter feast of Saturnalia. The Druids held the shrub as sacred and used it in religious rites with the belief it warded off evil spirits.

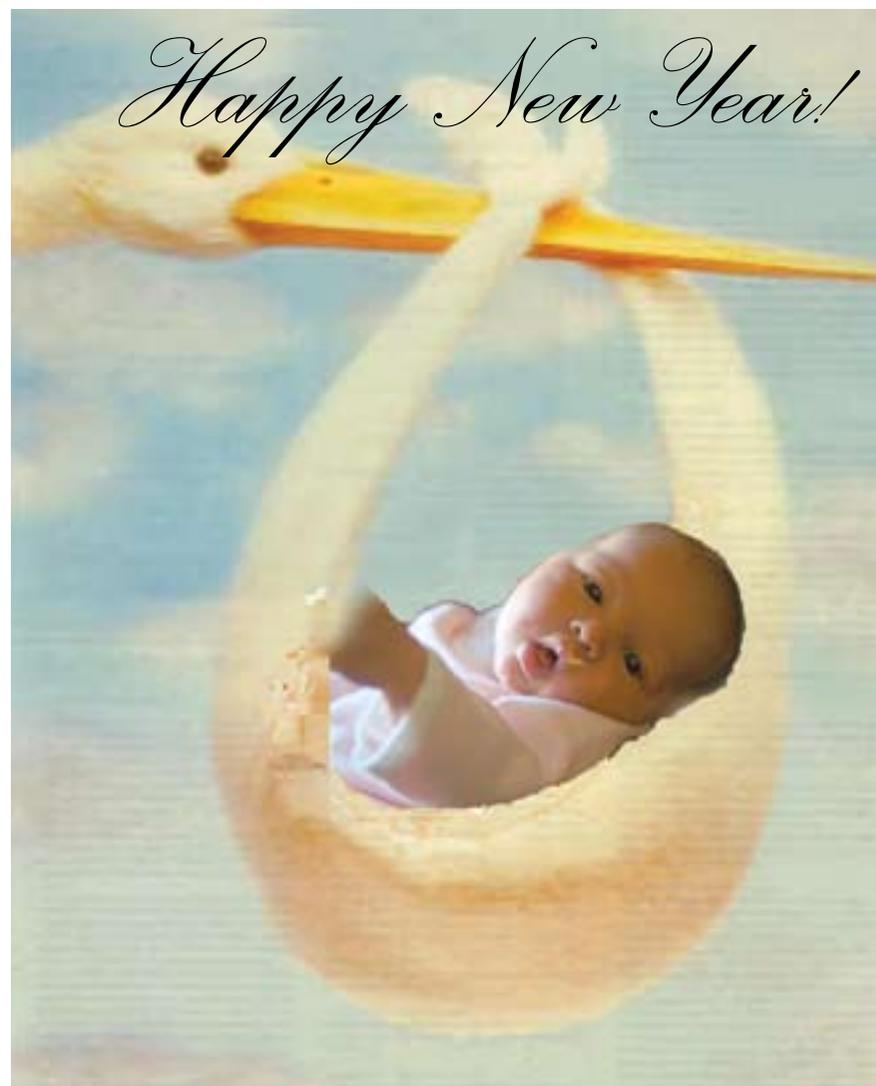
The Pilgrim settlers of Massachusetts found the American variety in the woods of New England that was much like English holly in appearance. Holly soon became a part of Christmas celebrations among all colonists of English background.

A superstitious belief associated with holly was that it played a part in romance. A young woman who slept with a leaf under her pillow was believed to have a dream about her future husband.

Holly is found growing in West Virginia in a swath of counties down through the central part of the state. Numerous places are named for it, such as Holly River in Webster County and Holly Meadows on Cheat River in Tucker County.

The berries are a favorite food of many wildlife species such as the Cedar Waxwing. They are most palatable after being softened by freezing and thawing.

When you find holly with its red berries among the green of hemlock or spruce, just remember here is a shrub rooted deep in ancient belief.



Congratulations to Judy and Tom Rodd on the birth of their granddaughter Aurora!

Aurora was born on December 6, 2007 to mom Priscilla and dad Deane. She joins older brothers Loki and Zion. Best wishes to the entire family and enjoy your very own “Happy New Year!”

YES! I WANT TO JOIN FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER

Choose a membership level and send your name, address, and e-mail to

Friends of Blackwater, 501 Elizabeth Street, Charleston WV 25311

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------------------------------------|-------|----|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Porte Crayon Society | \$1000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | _____ | \$ | 35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crown Jewel Club | \$ 500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior | _____ | \$ | 20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Steward | \$ 250 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student | _____ | \$ | 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$ 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | _____ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | _____ | | | \$ | 50 |

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

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My donation is in memory/honor of: _____

Please send card to: _____

I want to add my name to the Petition to Protect the Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail.

Add me to your volunteer database.

Please send future newsletters only via e-mail.

Please update my personal information.

Please remove me from your mailing list.

___ Ginny Stuffed Toys Lg Sm

___ Ginny Magnets

My check/money order for _____ is enclosed.