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Thank you for helping to get High Allegheny National Park and Preserve into the spotlight. Every day, people are calling and writing to tell us what a good idea this is for West Virginia -- and to ask how they can support the Park Campaign.

However a few Washington, DC lobbyists -- who are paid to stop new national parks -- are spreading false rumors about High Allegheny National Park and Preserve. They have targeted West Virginia Senator Manchin. These Capitol Hill spin-meisters claim that the new Park and Preserve will “seize private property,” “shut out hunters and fishermen,” and “block access” to Park and Preserve lands. These are all lies, but that's politics — and supporters of High Allegheny are not deterred one bit by lies. We can’t let lobbyists from inside the Beltway decide whether we can have a National Park here in West Virginia. We are going to do what's right for our state and we are going to persevere and succeed!

Our proposal for a National Park would only include current federal lands. It would allow hunting and other traditional uses. The unique historic sites in the High Alleghenies would get special attention and the stories of our ancestors and our unique mountain heritage would be told to visitors from around the world. High Allegheny National Park would preserve our beautiful forests and headwater streams while creating jobs and putting people to work. Special places like the Spruce Knob Seneca Rocks Recreation Area, Blackwater Canyon, Canaan Valley and Big Run Bog would get additional Protections. The state parks, wilderness areas and the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge would have a buffer of National Park and Preserve land around them. Small tourism railroads, arts and crafts stores, restaurants and country inns would flourish. The Nation would finally recognize the natural wonder that is West Virginia!

To meet these goals we are expanding our grassroots outreach. We are meeting with civic groups, Chambers of Commerce, and County Commissions to explain the benefits of a Park and Preserve. We are educating the public about how a Park and Preserve will bring new jobs to the Allegheny Highlands, and increase protection for our most special places. If you would like to help please join us as a volunteer by calling 304-345-7663, writing us at 501 Elizabeth St. Charleston, WV 25311 or go to our newly designed website and look for the form under Action at www.saveblackwater.org.

BLACKWATER CANYON UPDATE  by Judy Rodd

Tell Senator Manchin, It’s time to Save Blackwater Canyon.  We have been working to protect what Senator Robert C Byrd called West Virginia’s Scenic “Crown Jewel” for fifteen years. It is again time to make a strong push to move the remaining threatened 2,700 forest acres of the Canyon into protected public ownership. Senator Manchin needs to live up to his promise and make this happen!!

One hundred and sixty years ago, the Blackwater Canyon was made famous across the Nation by an intrepid band of explorers from the Eastern Panhandle - who hiked, camped, fished and got lost in this mighty Canyon and lived to tell the tale. Porte Crayon, a/k/a David Hunter Strother, published articles and drawings about the wild Blackwater River in Harpers Weekly, in a series called “Virginia Canaan.” This idyllic period was followed by the Civil War, and then heavy industry, beginning in the 1870’s. The railroad grade was carved out of the Canyon by Henry Gassaway Davis, who cut timber, dug coal and built 1,000 coke ovens to process the coal before it was sent by rail to Pittsburgh.(See page 6). Many remnants of this industry can be seen in the Canyon today.

The Blackwater Canyon has recovered from the industrial era and is now home to unique wildlife found only in the highest mountains of the state, including “Ginny” the West Virginia northern flying squirrel. This rare mountain fastness is covered by a thick northern hardwood forest, with babbling brooks and songbirds in the trees. It is also a place for wild outdoor adventure whether by kayak, by bike or on foot. (use the map on pages 4 & 5 to tour the Canyon) and Join Friends of Blackwater in challenging all our elected officials to work to Buy Blackwater Canyon Back for the citizens of West Virginia and visitors from around the world!!!!
**The Blackwater Canyon Circle Loop**

*Thanks to Dave Watson of www.wvbike.org!*

The Blackwater Canyon Circle Loop is a 34-mile bike loop that will take you in a complete circle around the beautiful, and endangered, Blackwater Canyon. There are numerous Canyon views, three different waterfalls and a height change of over 1600 feet. Most of the loop riding surface is rail-trail, forest road or paved road. The main uphill section of the trip is on the Blackwater Canyon Trail whose grade is no steeper than 3% (3 feet up for every 100 feet forward). We call it the “Blackwater Canyon Circle Loop”, since the name “Blackwater Canyon Loop” was already taken.

The ride begins at Hendricks, WV. Park at the trailhead for the Allegheny Highlands Trail on State Route 72. Bike up the Blackwater Canyon Trail to where it intersects with Douglas Road. Take Douglas Road to Route 32 and turn right. Stay on 32 until you see the sign for Davis. Turn right onto the gravel road in front of the sign. This is private land but it is not posted. The gravel road will lead you to the old Davis Branch rail bed. Follow the rail bed to Pendleton Lake. There you leave the old branch line and enter Blackwater Falls State Park. The park road will take you to the Pendleton Point Overlook and then to the Blackwater Falls Trading Post where you can walk down to see the falls up close. Continue on the park road across the Blackwater River to Forest Road 13 (Canaan Loop Road) which runs along the eastern edge of the canyon. Stay on FR 13 until it meets Forest Road 244. Continue downhill on FR 244 until it ends at State Route 72. Turn right onto SR 72. It will take you back to the beginning of the loop in Hendricks.

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**BLM Draft Regs to Reduce Risks to Ground Water from Fracking**

Press Release from National Resources Defense Council (NRDC)

WASHINGTON (May 4, 2012) — The Bureau of Land Management today issued draft safeguards to reduce the risks to groundwater from hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") of oil and gas wells. These new safeguards, once finalized, will apply to leasing of federal oil and gas reserves beneath BLM land, “national forests”, national wildlife refuges, and other property.

The proposal would require operators to better manage fracking waste, disclose the chemicals used during fracking, and strengthen the actual wells put into the ground.

The following is a statement from Amy Mall, senior policy analyst at the Natural Resources Defense Council:

“We need BLM to be a leader when it comes protecting our lands, water and ultimately our health from fracking pollution, yet several states already have stronger protections in place than what the agency proposed today. This is a critical first step, but so much more needs to be done.

“Oil and gas operations are expanding rapidly with new technologies and into new areas, including closer and closer to where families live and children go to school, but federal safeguards have not caught up. And industry does not inspire confidence when it balks at the notion of sharing chemical ingredients upfront. Communities shouldn’t have to wait for that information until after the deed is done.”

“We hope the agency will strengthen this proposal before it becomes final.”

Today’s action marks the second step from the Obama administration to help manage the dangers associated with fracking. Last month, the Environmental Protection Agency finalized the first-ever limits on dangerous air pollutants produced during the fracking process on federal and private lands. Similar to today’s draft proposal, the EPA addressed some major concerns but fell short of what’s necessary to address critical environmental and health problems such as limiting emissions of methane, a potent climate change pollutant and other dangerous air pollutants.

Comments supporting increased protections must be in by July 10, 2012. Please check our website for a sample letter.

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**MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST WITHDRAWS UPPER GREENBRIER DECISION**

WE WON!!

After an appeal by Friends of Blackwater the Monongahela National Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson withdrew the large scale Upper Greenbrier North timber sale which included logging and herbicide spraying in “Ginny” the West Virginia Northern Flying Squirrel’s habitat. The Forest is now considering smaller projects that would restore streams and decommission roads. We will keep you posted!
BLACKWATER CANYON RAIL TRAIL - TRAVEL DEEP INTO THE CANYON & BEYOND

Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail - 10.2 miles - hike or bike. Parking at four points along the way can reduce the length. Scenic and historic. Some rough spots, gentle incline drops 1,200 ft. over its length.

Trailhead: Kiosk at Thomas. Park on Front (Main) Street. Trail below road. Follow to intersection with Douglas Road at Mountain Made, downhill to trail entrance (left after North Fork Bridge).

Alternative: Drive out of Thomas on 32 turn right at Mountain Made sign onto Douglas Rd. Park downhill from store as above. You are now at:

★ Mile 1.1 – from Coketon Proceed along gravel road.
★ Mile 1.6 – Coke Ovens, on left and right of trail, These “beehive” ovens were used to purify coal, from the 1880s to the 1920s for steel production. The ovens are among the best preserved in WV.
★ Mile 2.2 – Douglas Falls (sheer drop of 35 feet) and Forest Service gate. (No motorized vehicles) Parking before Falls (on left after crossing old RR bridge).
★ Mile 3 – Canyon Point Bridge.
★ Mile 5.6 Big Run Bridge Arch: View Cut Stone Bridge and Arch built by Italian Stonemasons in 1880’s off Trail and down to right. Good picnic spot
★ Mile 8.1 – FS Gate, Limerock Trail enters from the right. Parking on road.

To Return: Hike or Bike back or set up a shuttle. For a shuttle take 219 south from Thomas towards Parsons. Take a left onto route 72 to Hendricks and leave a car at the Allegheny Highlands Trailhead.
VIEW THE CANYON FROM ABOVE

Blackwater Falls State Park Trails - Davis, WV

1. River Trail (1.56 miles) Park on Main Street near National Bank of Davis. Constructed of stone native to the area in 1892 it is the oldest bank in Tucker County. Follow Route 32 and cross the bridge then turn right onto the

2. River Trail (1.56 miles).

3. Cross Tank Run and continue until you get to the paved road.

4. Cross the paved road to the Gentle Trail (.25 miles) for viewing of Blackwater Falls from the Canyon Rim. From here continue 2 miles on the paved roadway to the

5. Blackwater Falls State Park Lodge, with more beautiful views of the Blackwater Canyon. Continue along the paved roadway for 3 miles to

6. Lindy Point Trail (.37 miles), where one will find a most spectacular view of Blackwater Canyon from atop a rock outcrop at trail’s end.

7. Pase Point (1.45 miles) - from the first stop sign in the park, proceed to the right toward Pendleton Lake. Take a left at the dam and cross Pendleton Run, then follow the yellow then red blazes to access this viewpoint on the opposite side of the Blackwater Canyon.

Canaan Loop Back to Davis (16.2 miles)
From Lindy Point Trailhead you can continue along the gravelled road known as Canaan Loop Road which gradually moves away from the Canyon Rim and loops back to Route 32 at Canaan Heights, then back 2.2 miles along Route 32 to to Davis.

Visit the new Forest Service kiosk at Thomas for info on the early Coal & Coke Industry.
VISIT HISTORIC COKETON
by Lori Halderman

The area just south of Thomas, enroute to Douglas, called Coketon, once had a thriving population of 2500 within one square mile centered around the Davis Coal and Coke Company.

Coketon was an industrial town created by Henry Gassaway Davis in the late 1800's. Tucker County had been a vast wilderness before Davis, with the help of his brother and son-in-law, Stephen B. Elkins pursued the rich coal reserves on the banks of the North Fork of the Blackwater River. With the completion of the West Virginia Central and Pittsburg railroad by Davis, in 1884 coal was loaded from the first mine. Then several years later

With the discovery that coal from the area mines was excellent for making coke the industrialization of the area was begun. In 1887 two experimental coke ovens were built. Within the two years called a trunnel which could be covered with a metal lid. Coal was emptied into these openings from the top, where there were tracks with “lorry” cars (also called “larry” cars) pulled by work animals and later motorized. Coal was deposited into the open hole at the top of each oven. Next the coal was leveled out to an even depth using a 12-foot long hoe-like tool. The oven was then sealed with firebricks to prevent exposure to air. The coal was ignited by heat from previous charging which started the coking process. The coke ovens were fired day and night, with the night sky glowing as if it were daylight.

After the coke was cooked, the front of the oven was opened and the coke was removed, put onto a rail car and shipped out.

By 1901 coke production had increased and ranked third in the state. Additional miners were needed and the population grew from the immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe. These consisted of Russia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Italy. The miners rented their houses from the Davis Coal and Coke Company in Coketon. The company also provided social, religious, educational and shopping needs. There were African American families living in Coketon and Thomas and working in the mines as well as working as live-in servants. According to the 1910 census there were 20 African American families living in Coketon and from other sources there was a count of 264 African American people. There were definitely enough for a school, with 26 students between 6 and 16 years of age who attended the school in Coketon which was referred to as the Colored School.

In 1892 the landmark court case, involving the colored school teacher, Carrie Williams, and her attorney J. R. Clifford vs. the Fairfax District Board of Education had a significant impact on West Virginia laws. It was one of the first civil rights cases in the country as well as West Virginia. Carrie Williams was asked by the Board of Education to sign a contract to teach 5 months which she refused to do as the white school was open for 8 months. She taught the full 8 months and sued the Board of Education of Fairfax District for her full school term pay. The case was won for Carrie, and then appealed by the Board of Education to the WV State Supreme Court which upheld the lower court ruling. The case established the right of the children of African American workers to school terms of equal length as the white children and equal pay for African American school teachers for all of West Virginia. The Williams case was a first in American jurisprudence, and played an important role in establishing West Virginia as a State where African Americans could exercise rights and opportunities.

TOUR - You can visit the coke ovens along the Blackwater Canyon Rail Trail, and the company store and engineering building. Turn right after the Thomas Post Office and you will pass the red brick Engineering Building and the restored yellow brick company store (Buxton & Landstreet Building). Continue downhill, crossing the North Fork of the Blackwater River, and turn left onto the trail. Go about a half mile to see the coke ovens.

Coke Ovens, Coketon, WV

following the first experiments, over 500 coke ovens had been built; there were nine mines and a group of company-owned workers houses all within one square mile south of Thomas. By 1910 the Davis Coal and Coke Company had reached its peak production employing approximately 2500 men of 16 nationalities, operated two power plants and worked 1000 coke ovens.

The bee-hive coke ovens are arched roof circular brick rooms constructed of masonry firebrick and tile with an opening at the top. At the top of each oven was a twelve-inch circular opening
The North Fork Watershed Project is proud to welcome Andy Herrmann to the staff as a Summer Intern. A resident of Paw Paw, West Virginia, Andy currently attends West Virginia University, majoring in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Resource Management. He enjoys hiking, biking, snowboarding, and swimming, pretty much anything that involves being out in the sun. When not participating in his favorite extracurricular activities, working to make West Virginia an improved state is one of his top priorities.

Previously, Andy worked for YCC (Youth Conservation Corps) as a general maintenance man in Nags Head, NC. He has also been employed as a videographer, salesman of extreme sports equipment, and a security guard for CSC (Contemporary Service Corporation). Additionally he holds certification for CPR and as a Wilderness First Responder (WFR).

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Andy Herrmann, right, shows off his humorous nature as he strikes a pose playing mini-golf.
WIN FABULOUS PRIZES
WHEN YOU VISIT OUR NEW FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER WEBSITE.
www.saveblackwater.org

“Race Law and Democracy the West Virginia Experience”
Sponsored by FOB’s JR Clifford Project June 2 in Martinsburg

This exciting community forum was attended by 91 people. Fifty five lawyers got continuing legal education credits for attending lectures by WVU Law Professor Atiba Ellis, Senior WV Supreme Court Justice Larry Starcher, Thomas Rodd, Esq, Paul Sheridan, Esq, Kitty Dooley, Esq., Dr. John Stealey, History Professor Emeritus at Shepherd University, and Dr. Connie Rice, WVU History Professor. Dynamic speaker Hari Jones discussed the freeing of slaves during the Civil War using the laws of war and the concept of “Contraband”. Great snacks were provided by Destiny Baptist Church and Charlotte Norris as well as by Chic-Fil-A. We could feel the presence of J.R. Clifford, who taught and ran the former Sumner School … in the very building where we held the program!!

Shepherdstown Garden Party

Seventy five people and four chickens attended the June 3rd, Friends of Blackwater/J.R. Clifford Project Garden Party/Benefit at the home of Hosts Dave Hammer and Effie Kallas. The beautiful backyard setting and wonderful music by the Critton Hollow String Band brought together folks from Charles Town, Harpers Ferry, Martinsburg, Berkeley Springs and more. Dave Hammer’s chickens clucked for the company and Tom Rodd sang “Get Off the Track” an 1850’s emancipation song. The living history drama “New Home for Liberty,” will have its Eastern Panhandle premiere at Shepherd University on Oct 20th. Thanks so much to hosts, Leonard and Helen Harris, James Tolbert, Clare and Jim Eros, Butch and Sherri, Pennington and Mike Moore for supporting the event! Thanks also to our guests of Honor, Honorable Larry v Starcher, Senior WV Supreme Court Justice and Hari Jones, Curator of the African American Civil War Museum.

“A New Home for Liberty”
Human Rights, Slavery & the Creation of West Virginia
Save the Date for this Living History Drama!!
October 20–21, 2012 at Shepherd University’s Frank Theater

Above: Hari Jones, John Stealey and John Maxey enjoy the patio at the home of hosts Dave Hammer & Effie Kallas.
Below: Priscilla Rodd and Aurora assist with the fundraiser, as Loki and Zion look handsome.