

Friends of Blackwater Canyon

Spring 2004

501 Elizabeth Street Room 3, Charleston, WV 25311 • 304-345-7663 • www.saveblackwater.org • info@saveblackwater.org



CANDIDATES OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT BLACKWATER PROTECTION!



The public's voice is being heard **loud and clear** by West Virginia's 2004 political candidates. It's only April of this election year, and already a large number of statewide West Virginia candidates have spoken out in favor of protecting the Blackwater Canyon.

We are determined to make Blackwater protection an important issue in this year's campaign – and your support is making that happen! So, if you haven't already signed the 2004 Election Year Save Blackwater Canyon Petition, please do so on-line at www.saveblackwater.org, or with the mail-in form in this newsletter.

Here is the current list of candidate statements, as of this newsletter's deadline. The statements are listed alphabetically by candidate name, and have been edited for space. For updates, check our website. And be sure to vote!

Secretary of State

D - Donna Acord: I am a member of Friends of Blackwater and believe the entire Blackwater Canyon should be put in public ownership and eventually be made into a national park.

D - Larrie Bailey: Protecting our special places is the key to West Virginia's future. I visit the area often. Blackwater Canyon must remain pristine.

D - George Daugherty: I support protecting Blackwater Canyon, because it is the right thing to do.

D - Ken Hechler: I support Blackwater Canyon protection.

R - Betty Ireland: Protection of our public lands is important to the preservation of a natural environment that is vital



Big Run in the Canyon

to West Virginia's tourism economy. My husband and I are avid outdoor enthusiasts and frequent visitors to the Blackwater area, as well as to other protected scenic and ecologic spots throughout our state. Count me as one of your supporters!

D - Roger Pritt: I believe that we must do everything we can to ensure the protection of not only Blackwater Canyon, but of all of our State's treasured landmarks. I support the preservation of Blackwater Canyon.

D - Mike Oliverio: The Blackwater Canyon area is one of the most beautiful places in West Virginia. I spent many excursions with my family there and treasure it deeply. Through the expansion of Blackwater Falls State Park and other treasured places around West Virginia, we can add to our economy through tourism while conserving our natural resources.

Governor

R - Rob Caphart: I support your efforts to protect the Blackwater Canyon. We need to preserve our recreational lands for the people of West Virginia.

D - Lloyd Jackson: The Canyon is a unique natural gift to West Virginia. The Jackson Administration will initiate serious negotiations with the private landowners for the acquisition of the Canyon and will use every power at its disposal to acquire the Canyon as an addition to Blackwater Falls State Park. The Blackwater Canyon should be preserved for the citizens of West Virginia and for future generations, and the protection of the Blackwater Canyon will be a priority for the Jackson Administration.

D - Jim Lees: I am opposed to the timbering of the Blackwater Canyon. As Governor I would fully support the efforts to incorporate the Canyon into either a Federal or State park system.

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WOODCOCKS..... AND GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS FOR ALL OF US.

As I write this, Emily Sarmago is finishing the layout for our Spring 2004 Friends of Blackwater Newsletter. It's a big job. Emily has come to Charleston for several days, leaving her normal work at the North Fork Watershed Project office in Thomas, at the head of the Blackwater Canyon Trail.

Meanwhile, in the woods outside Thomas, in the moist and warming soil along the Canyon rim, miracles are taking place. Earthworms, grubs, and beetles are moving and feeding. Tubers, bulbs, and rhizomes are stirring, sending their energy upward to court the buzzing pollinators with color and scent, lace and flourish.

Just in time to keep those grubs and worms in check, hundreds of woodcocks have flown into the Canyon from their winter feeding grounds further South. (The woodcock's narrow, three-inch bill is perfect for probing in the soil for tasty morsels.) One of Spring's more spectacular miracles in the Canyon is the dance of the male woodcock — which he performs, they say, to attract a mate. (Sort of like John Travolta in "Saturday Night Fever?")

The dance begins at dusk, when there is barely light enough to see. The male, a plump, dappled fellow with short legs, usually invisible in a brushy area, utters a series of loud, shrill, buzzing "peent, peent" cries. To me, they sound almost insect-like, like a cicada. Then the noise stops, and the bird begins to flap its wings rapidly, rising explosively into the darkening sky, the sound of its wings whistling loudly in the cool night air.

From the ground, the once-concealed bird is now quite visible, if you look carefully. He flies in tight, circling spirals, higher and higher, a fainter and fainter fluttering dark ball against the sky.

Can the female woodcocks on the ground see him? I like to think so. "Peent, peent" probably translates as "Hey you all, watch me!"

Just as our hero seems to be too high to pick out against the sky, he stops his spiral upward and begins to hurtle downward in a zig-zag series of pitches, twittering loudly. (I would

say that this exultation can be translated as: "Ladies! – check this out!"). The dance often ends with a bang – or at least a loud "thud" — when the exhausted bird finally returns to earth, often quite near where he started.

At this point, we must close the veil of modesty, but suffice it to say that a gnarly display of well-fed stamina has hopefully attracted both the attention and the favorable assessment of a female woodcock – and the great cycle begins again! What a miraculous way to take care of a few earthworms!

* * *

Each time I visit a local, state, or national park – or any of our public recreational lands — I see mothers, fathers, children, babies, and grandparents, enjoying the outdoors. I see folks in wheelchairs, and folks with canes, and folks driving beat-up cars, and folks in fancy SUVs. I see Birkenstocks on feet and granola in high-tech aluminum food boxes on the picnic table -- and I see high-heeled sandals and white-bread baloney sandwiches. I see costly carbon-fiber hiking poles, and picked-up sticks from the woods – in the eager hands of brown and white and yellow children. I see a real, everyday, working diversity that I find inspiring.

Well-off people have their private resorts, but for the great majority of ordinary Americans, and especially for those at the lower end of the economic spectrum, governmentally-protected and cared-for public lands are the key to a decent, affordable vacation – or even more importantly, a Sunday afternoon in the woods or at the lake, enjoying the natural world.

Creating and protecting public lands for public use and enjoyment is about creating a decent and liveable, spiritually rich society for all of us — social justice in the deepest sense. When we fight to save and protect our special places like the Blackwater Canyon, we insist that government not only has the power but the duty to take action – to enhance the lives of all of our citizens. We build the positive and life-affirming role of government of, for, and by all of the people.

Our public lands, our parks, our greenspaces, are our collective commons and birthright in the natural world. They are worth fighting for!



John Travolta?!



Don't Forget about the Blackwater Photo Contest!

Capture the magic of Blackwater Canyon on film, Send us your entries, Win Cash Prizes!!

Visit: www.saveblackwater.org for details

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Watch for the
*Special Blackwater
Wildlife Issue* of
our newsletter this
summer!

Loving These Trees and Hills An Interview With Long Time Blackwater Supporter Nathan Anderson

Nathan Anderson did not just learn about the value of our natural resources, he was raised living it. Both of Nathan's grandfathers were founding members of the Todd County Soil and Water Conservation District, and many of his relatives served as board members. Nathan and his brother were conservation district managers.

Nathan is a research scientist with Bayer Polymers, and he uses his company's payroll deduction program to make sure that Friends of Blackwater gets a donation from him every time he gets paid. Nathan became one of Friends of Blackwater's first members in June 2001. When Nathan isn't making foam at Bayer, he can be found hiking, canoeing, or making his own beer. He also enjoys contra dancing and giving live performances to nursing home residents, singing and playing with friends in a band. Nathan's favorite place to hike is in the Otter Creek Wilderness near Blackwater Canyon.

Growing up in the flatlands of South Dakota, he and his brothers hoed and watered forty acres of trees that their parents planted. The trees kept the sandy soil from blowing away and held snow on the fields to provide extra moisture in the dry, western South Dakota climate. They also protected the livestock from the harsh winter winds.

"When I first came to West Virginia, I was appalled at how West Virginia took care



Nathan and canoe at Blackwater Lodge

of her natural beauty. I since learned that many West Virginians care deeply about their state's resources, but their elected officials seem to have much more interest in fattening the wallets of corporations than in serving the state's population," Nathan said. "I love these hills, and I am impressed with the dedication of people like Linda Cooper and Judy Rodd who save treasures from profiteers. They set a fine example for the rest of us."

Student Intern, Chris Tolley



Man in Black
Protecting Blackwater

Chris Tolley has been an intern with Friends of Blackwater since January. Chris is our master of the database and a video wizard, helping us revamp our Blackwater film collection. Here is Chris — in his own (slightly edited) words:

"I'm 22 years old and have lived in Charleston, West Virginia for my whole life. I'll be graduating from West Virginia State College (or, I should now say, West Virginia State *University*) in May 2004 with a bachelor's degree in communications. I'm looking forward to moving after college and seeing more of the world.

"As for my goals in life, I want to have the normal "American dream" — work in an office wearing the three-piece suit, do the 9 to 5 shift, live in a suburb about a half hour away from a big city, and have a nice average family with two and a half kids. If I can find a good way to use that degree of mine, I'll have it made!

"It has been a pleasure interning at Friends of Blackwater, and fighting for the protection of Mother Earth."

Conservation Alliance Supports Blackwater

Friends of Blackwater was recently awarded a major grant from the **Conservation Alliance**. The Conservation Alliance is a non-profit organization of outdoor businesses who support grassroots citizen-action

groups and their efforts to protect wild and natural areas. We are honored to receive this highly competitive award, and it is a tribute to our dedicated membership!

Blackwater Case Featured In Tribute to African-American Lawyer J. R. Clifford

J.R. Clifford (1848-1933) was West Virginia's first African-American lawyer. Clifford's most famous case, Williams v. Board of Education (1898), came from the Town of Coketon — at the head of the Blackwater Canyon! In the Williams case, Clifford represented black schoolteacher Carrie Williams, and established equal school terms for blacks and whites in West Virginia.

Clifford's achievements were recently celebrated at a March 9 program at the West Virginia University College of Law. Nineteen presenters — historians, environmentalists, legal scholars, educators, actors, judges, park managers, and relatives — spoke on such topics as: "The Town of Coketon;" "Tucker County in the 1890's



Karen Rolls, Freda Rolls, Rev. Coleman, and Judy Rodd at the J.R. Clifford Seminar at the West Virginia University Law School.

and Now;" "The Black Educator and the Colored School;" "J.R. Clifford and the African-American Struggle;" "Understanding Clifford and his Times Today;" and "J.R. Clifford and the African-American Bar." Members of Clifford's family who attended the program included Freda Rolls, her daughters Karen and Kimberly, and the Reverend Harry Coleman and Reverend David Coleman. A

play about the Williams case will be presented at the Berkeley County Courthouse in Martinsburg, on April 12 at 7: 30 p.m.. The event is free and open to the public. For more info. visit:www.state.wv.us/wvsca/BlackHistory/Clifford2.htm.

...continued from page 1

D - Joe Manchin: As Senator Robert C. Byrd has remarked, the Blackwater Canyon is West Virginia's "Crown Jewel." As Governor, I would work with federal, private and non-profit sources to come to a fair and equitable agreement with the landowner, to preserve this region for future generations. This unique viewshed is a vital piece of our history, heritage, and environment.

R - Doug McKinney: I have visited the Canyon a number of times. It should be maintained in as nearly pristine condition as is possible.

R - Richie Robb: Blackwater Canyon is truly a unique area of natural beauty that must be preserved. I agree with all efforts to preserve this property for future public use. If the state is making the purchase, I am not adverse as to the use of eminent domain, particularly where, as I understand it, there may have been a recent effort to have the property's value artificially enhanced.

D - Lacey Wright: The Blackwater Canyon is very important to me, as I have visited the area on a regular basis since I was in high school. I support moving all the private land in the Canyon into public ownership and protecting the welfare of West Virginia. Some places should just remain pristine.

Please fill out the following card and mail it to Friends of Blackwater.

2004 Blackwater Protection Petition

Dear West Virginia Candidates in the 2004 Elections:

Protecting West Virginia's signature landscape — the magnificent Blackwater Canyon — is very important to me. I support moving all of the private land in the Canyon into public ownership. I urge you to make protecting the entire Canyon a prominent campaign issue in 2004, for the welfare of West Virginia, today and in the future.

Yours truly,

(Name)
 (Address)
 (City, State, Zip)
 (Phone)
 (E-mail)

Your address will be kept confidential by Friends of Blackwater. An e-mail address will allow us to send you updates at a low cost to us and the environment.



**Remember to
Vote on
May 11!**

Welcome! New "Friends of Blackwater" Members

Lifetime

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Ralph & Molly Anderegg

Calvert & Ted Armbrecht

Robert Arnold &

Glenn Harma

Edward L. Ash

Dave Bassage

Henry Battle

Mary Boyd & John Henning

Jo. Baily Brown

Ann Burns-Slusher

Howard Bussard

Jane T Christenson

Rachelle Davis

Douglas Denton

Alan Dolan

David A. Eckhardt

Carl Wertz &

Donna Ford-Wertz

Alvan Gale

Carolyn Del Grande

Dorothy M. Guy

Bill & Jean Hartgrove

Shannon Holliday

Janis Hurst & David Elkinton

Jerry Jenkins

Claire A. Johnson

Elin Jones

Sandra Knowles

Linda Kolb

Rene Laventure

Lenna Leeson

John R Magan

Alta I. Mainer

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Martha Douglas Milam

Larry E. Morse

George & Ginny Mozal

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Thorn Roberts

Sharon Roon

Lois J. Schiffer

Judy Seaman

David Shribman &

Cynthia Skrzycki

Joan Sims

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Mary E. Vogel

Barbara Wolfert

Ed Zahniser

Senior

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Joanne Amberson

Hazeline Anderson

Terry Anderson

Thomas Angotti

Mary Ashcraft

Mary Beard

James & Helen Butterworth

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Del and Linda Yoder

Student

Florence Adams

Eula L. Elliott

Doug and Janet Gebler

Mary Kyle

Sandra Lindberg

Sharon Pauley

Clarke Ritchie

Spring & Summer Calendar:

April 12: J.R. Clifford Play, Courthouse, Martinsburg, WV, 7:30 pm

May 1: Family Trail Days, Blackwater Falls State Park. This event features the eight-mile walk between Blackwater Falls and Canaan Valley State Parks.

May 6-9: Wildflower Pilgrimage, Blackwater Falls State Park. The famous activity-packed weekend includes bird walks, wildflower tours, nature programs, beginner wildflower and bird identification workshops, and craft exhibits.

June 4-6: 21st Annual Non-game Wildlife Weekend, Blackwater Falls State Park. Workshops, field trips and evening programs on the rich non-game wildlife species of West Virginia.

July 3-4: Independence Day Activities in Tucker County. With Blackwater Falls in the center of July 4th festivities, you can't miss all the activity. Mountaineer Days in Thomas features crafts, fireworks, gift & novelty shops, parades and more. Activities in Parsons, Davis, & Canaan Valley too!

In Memory and Honor

We celebrate the lives of those listed below who were honored by friends and family through a donation to Friends of Blackwater.

In a very real way, the only hope for tomorrow is for those of the older generation who are concerned about the future of the land to seek to instill within the younger generation a sense of the value of things of the earth. . . Perhaps among future generations there will be an attitude toward the land that goes beyond legislation and law — a love that springs from the heart.

-J. Lawrence Smith from The High Alleghenies

In honor of my West Virginia heritage, by Martha Newman Westgate: “I was born in Lavalette, Wayne County, West Virginia and currently live in Portland, Oregon. I am one of those people who left West Virginia after college due to limited opportunities, but I could never leave behind my feelings for the beauty of the mountains. As an adult, I have visited the beautiful Blackwater Canyon three times, and I am deeply concerned with the short-sightedness that threatens its preservation.”

In honor of Homer Masters, by Joanne Masters: “I celebrate the life of my husband while he struggles at Pinecrest Hospital in Beckley for his recovery from a stroke. All of his life, he has been a hard worker who stuck to what he liked. He was a railroader, a truck driver, a fisherman, and a hunter. He loves the mountains, the rivers and the streams, and he raised our children loving them, too. He was teaching them how to fish for trout while they were still in preschool. All of us are looking forward to his recovery and trip back home.”

a mark of our having been there. His own protection of the flora and fauna of Blackwater Canyon modeled a rich heritage to protect.”



In memory of Leonard Chase Ricketson, by Stephanie Mendelson: “My father was born a Quaker. He knew the woods well and could spend all day in them. He was one of the first recyclers before the term was popularized. He invented uses for many different products. He secretly planted bulbs in friends’ yards, so they would be surprised in the spring when they bloomed.”



In memory of Richard S. Jones, by Kathryn Makela: “My father and I are originally from South Charleston. He loved to travel, and we visited many wonderful spots in West Virginia. Blackwater was one of those stops. We both loved the Blackwater area, and now I go every fall with my husband. It’s one of our favorite destinations, because it is so peaceful and beautiful there.”



In memory of Mary Clark, by Phyllis Harman: “My mother was a lifelong hiker and grew up in Grant County. She was a strong believer in protecting the environment. Blackwater Falls was a family favorite. That’s where we always took Grandmother for Sunday picnic dinners. We were overwhelmed with the beauty then, and we grew up learning to appreciate the beauty of our home. She married in 1944 after meeting on a blind date. At the time, my father, Lloyd Clark, was stationed at Seneca Rocks, where the Army’s mountain climbing units trained.”



In memory of Eleanor Rogers Debolt, by Bruce R. Debolt: “On the other side of Canaan Route 72, over by Laurel Fork and Dry Creek, there is an old house in what used to be Jenningson. It was our family’s fishing camp and is still there. Although we live in Oregon, we still come back, as do other family members. Growing up, my mother spent her summers there.”



In memory of Arnold F. Schulz, by Barbara Schulz: “My husband worked as one of the leaders of the first wildflower pilgrimages [at Blackwater Falls State Park] more than 40 years ago, and he absolutely loved it. He was a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service, based in Elkins. He was also a botanist. He graduated from WVU’s forestry school in 1950, before earning his masters’ degree from Colorado State University at Fort Collins. During his days at CSU, he worked as ranger-naturalist in Rocky Mountain National Park. When he was not working, we went camping for many years at parks across the United States.”



In memory of Brad Short, by Rachelle Davis: “Brad Short was an outdoor enthusiast and long-time ski patroller at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. He was assistant director of the ski patrol at the time of his unfortunate death in a motorcycle accident.”



In memory of Harold B. Miles (1907-1960), by Carol Sue Miles: “My father was a wildlife advocate who taught his young family the importance of advocating or the maintenance of the natural environment. As children, we learned how to cross a terrain without a sound or



In memory of Richard A. Johnson, by Barbara Johnson: “Richard became interested in nature at seven years old, when teachers from Alleghany County started a bird camp. It was a passion that traveled with him through

adulthood. Richard was an orthopedic surgeon in Cumberland. As an avid naturalist and a good birder, he hiked a lot. One of his favorite pastimes was backpacking in Dolly Sods. After Richard passed away at the very young age of 53, the University of Maryland Appalachian Lab honored his memory by establishing an annual endowment in his name. The Richard Johnson Environmental Education Award is presented to somebody in the Western Maryland area who does outstanding work in environmental education."



In memory of Torrence Miller Hunt Sr., by Mrs. Edward Schoyer: "Torrence was a Pittsburgh philanthropist and a top official with the Alcoa Corporation, the company his grandfather founded. He was the senior trustee of the Roy A. Hunt Foundation, which is named after Torrence's father. Torrence was an avid sportsman, and he was active in many civic, educational, wildlife and conservation groups. He was especially committed to helping the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation."



In memory of Tom Kelly, by Stan Klem: "Tom and I became best friends in 1983, after our wives introduced us. Tom and his wife Lynn grew up in Illinois, and came to the Washington, DC area when Tom was offered a position as a research physiologist with the USDA. Each of us had two sons. They were the same ages, went to the same school for a few years, and became best friends. Tom loved sports—hiking, biking, basketball, racquetball, and tennis. As a father, Tom shared his love of sports with his sons, who in time became quite competitive, just like their dad. Over the next dozen years, our families spent lots of quality time together. When I discovered the West Virginia Highlands with my camera club in 1984, I became enthralled with the mountains; and I wanted to share it

with both our families. And so in the summer of 1985 we rented a cabin together in Canaan Valley. Although our first trip lasted only 3 days, we were hooked by the rugged beauty of the mountains, streams, and wildlife. That first afternoon Tom and I and our four boys hiked through Muddy Creek and Swallow Falls at Deep Creek, before joining our wives in Canaan. For the next ten years, we vacationed together almost every summer in Canaan Valley. We usually stayed on Cabin Mountain in Timberline, and always made Blackwater and Elakala Falls a special part of every trip. Up on Cabin Mountain in Canaan there is a large rock ledge overlooking the entire Valley -- a place where we would always stop to rest and enjoy the wonderful view below. In the summer of 1996, Tom, at age 49, was stricken with spinal cancer, that all too quickly took his life. The following summer, in honor of his wishes, we all came back to the Valley to spread his ashes—on that beautiful overlook we now call Tom's Rock."



In memory of Don Good, by Jerome Burch: "Don was my friend, who fought for what he believed in. He was an honest man. I got to know him when we were involved with the Isaac Walton League. I led the Blackwater Chapter and he led the Tucker County Chapter before going on to become state president. He was quite a conservationist. He died from a rare neurological disease in his early fifties."



In memory of the Burgers of Davis, by William Burger: My contribution is on behalf of the Nina Burger family of Davis West Virginia, to try and protect and preserve a Beautiful Crown Jewel that gave so much to our life. Being raised in Davis and the Blackwater area of West Virginia is an extra special blessing of God, beauty, and nature. We need it to be there forever.

When one experiences wind, water and woodlands - the things of the wilderness - he touches the outward signs of something of importance that is inner, unseen and that goes on forever.

-J. Lawrence Smith from The High Alleghenies

Valentine's Day Sweepstakes Winners

Bill and Jean Hartgroves, who live in Charles Town along the Shenandoah River, are the "Blackwater Getaway" winners in our 2004 "Valentine's Day Curl Up in Style Sweepstakes." Diane Hert, from Canton, Ohio, won our "Blackwater at Home" Prize Package.



Bill and Jean Hartgroves of Charles Town

Although the Hartgroves are former Washington, DC suburbanites, they head for the woods "every chance we get." They have always owned a canoe, and continue to look for new spots to get their boat in the water.

For 35 years, Bill led outings for Audubon and the Sierra Club. His favorite project was organizing outings for inner-city youth -- often taking them to Dolly Sods in support of protecting that landscape and getting its land into refuge. Together, Bill and his wife have seven children and ten grandchildren, and Bill has made sure that all of them own a butterfly net.

Even in his retirement, Bill is big on environmental educa-

tion. He is meeting with garden clubs to share ways to create natural areas.

The Hartgroves are looking forward to the premium-quality Blackwater Canyon lodging, meals, music, massages, and more that they won in our Sweepstakes. Enjoy, Bill and Jean!

Diane Hert, our other Sweepstakes winner, loves to garden and go birding. She is an avid believer in protecting pristine areas -- instead of having landscapes torn apart for vehicle use and coal. Diane's greatest enjoyment (with her husband Tom) is visiting their grandchild, who lives in

Texas. Diane won a prize package of West Virginia smoked trout, Holl's Chocolates, and other goodies!

Special thanks to all the companies who contributed to our Valentine's Day Sweepstakes: Blackwater Falls State Park, Holl's Chocolates in Vienna, West Virginia, the Purple Fiddle, Siriani's Café, and the Highland Inn and Spa.

Friends of Blackwater

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Dan Sullivan's Blackwater Kayaking Adventure

When Dan Sullivan was an 11-year-old Boy Scout, he first tried whitewater kayaking – and he was hooked. Today, Dan is one of an elite group of whitewater boaters from across the country who paddle the world-class rapids of the Blackwater Canyon. “If you think the view down into the Canyon from Lindy Point is great,” Sullivan says, “wait until you see it from the River!”

Dan lives in a cabin he built in Red Creek, West Virginia -- and he enjoys all of the outdoor activities the Canaan Valley area has to offer. “I can paddle the Blackwater in the morning and ski in the afternoon. And I have bears roaming in my backyard.”

At age 15, Dan started guiding whitewater boat trips on the Lehigh River in the Poconos. While Dan studied Wildlife Biology at West Virginia University, he led trips on the Cheat, Gauley, New and Upper Youghiogheny Rivers. He's even a boating jet-setter – guiding paddle trips on rivers in Chile, Quebec, Colorado, and Alaska.

Dan says that many boaters from around the country are coming to Tucker County to try their skills in the churning whitewater of the Blackwater Canyon. “With the change in boat designs and the growth of the sport, people are doing a

harder runs. News of the Blackwater River has spread, and now people come from all over to paddle there.”

Kayakers separate the main branch of the Blackwater River into the Upper and Lower Blackwater “runs.” The Upper Blackwater, says Dan, is “super-continuous. There's one technical move after another, the pools are short, and the rapids are really long. The Upper also has a much higher gradient [is steeper] than the Lower. The Lower Blackwater is a really good class 4 or 5, too, especially when the water is high.”



Dan Sullivan on the Blackwater, 2003

Dan says that kayaking through the Canyon gives a feeling of total solitude. “It makes you feel small being down there. Even when people are looking at you from the deck [at Lindy Point], you feel like you are all alone. The only other people you run into are trout fisherman.”

Sullivan says, “I have friends from Colorado who scoffed at the idea of paddling in the East, but they were blown away by boating in the Canyon. It's awe-inspiring. The Blackwater is a challenge even for Olympic level paddlers – it's a must-stop for all the pro kayakers when they come through this area.”