

# Friends of Blackwater



*photo by: Steve Shaluta*

*Working to protect West Virginia's High Alleghenies, Blackwater River & Blackwater Canyon.*

PO Box 247 - Thomas, WV 26292 - phone: 304-345-7663 - <https://saveblackwater.org> - [info@saveblackwater.org](mailto:info@saveblackwater.org)

## Welcome Colin Matteson to Friends of Blackwater



Photo by: Shannon Gray

Hello Friends of Blackwater community! My name is Colin Matteson, and I have joined the Friends of Blackwater staff as their new Executive Assistant. I've been living in Thomas for almost two years now, after moving over 2,500 miles from Washington State (where I grew up, and the only other place I've lived).

I graduated from The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA in 2010 with a bachelor's degree in music theory, performance, and technology. From there I came to the realization that a degree in performing arts doesn't necessarily offer a clear path to a job in the performing arts (or really any job, for that matter). Nevertheless I've been tirelessly working

to build a career for myself ever since.

I've always had a deep-seated love for nature and wildlife, and the respect and reverence I have for the environment continues to grow each and every day. Ever since I moved to West Virginia, it has reminded me of Washington State in so many ways. Honestly, even though I've only lived here for a relatively short time, it feels like home.

All in all, joining an amazing organization like Friends of Blackwater was just too perfect of a fit for me to pass up. I can't think of a better way to use my time, energy, and skills than protecting the wild and wonderful nature of West Virginia and engaging with this incredible community.

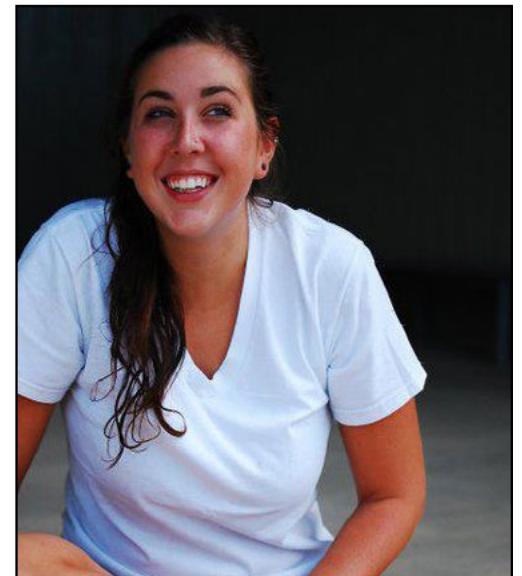
## Sarah Cartron Joins Friends of Blackwater

Hi all! I am Sarah Carton and am super excited to be a new addition to Friends of Blackwater and Tucker County. I recently moved to Aurora this past fall, after spending the last decade in historic Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. I studied Contemporary Photography as an undergrad at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, WV and then found myself in Washington D.C. as a graduate student at the Corcoran College of Art + Design studying photojournalism.

After graduate school, I moved back to the Eastern Panhandle for good and became the Outdoor Adventure Camp Director at River Riders Family Adventure Resort. During my tenure with River Riders, I enjoyed spending my time and energy on teaching the next generation on the importance of nature and their impact on it. I also enjoyed working on marketing strategies to draw in tourists and show them how wild and wonderful West

Virginia can be.

In my free time, I am an avid whitewater rafter, rock climber, and love to go hiking with my husband and our dog, Pepper. I have my own small business, Soap · A · Saurus, producing eco-friendly and plastic free soap and other skin care products. I am very excited to work with Friends of Blackwater and get to know the land and water that has created my new home!



## FOB Volunteer of the Year: Joe Dumire

Friends of Blackwater has presented an outstanding volunteer with a Volunteer of the Year award at the Holiday Open House in the Buxton and Landstreet Gallery in December. Our first recipient was Joe Dumire, a Thomas native and avid local historian. Joe has helped FOB tremendously this year with our new Rail Trail signs installed in October and with preparation required to begin restoration work in the Engineering Building.

Joe also led the push for the nomination of the Davis Bank Building to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. Friends of Blackwater and other community members met on January 13th to support this nomination. This would be a fantastic title to add to

this historic building and would open up new opportunities to fund restoration work on the bank. The nomination approval is expected by the end of May. Joe certainly knows this county's history and we are so thankful for his help on projects that highlight local heritage.



Sean, Joe, and Emmie at FOB 2019 Holiday Open House

# In Memory of Dr. Emory Leland Kemp

Emory Leland Kemp passed away on Monday, Jan. 20, 2020, at Ruby Memorial Hospital, from heart failure. He was born on Oct. 1, 1931, in Chicago.



Emory came to West Virginia University as an associate professor of civil engineering, specializing in structures and concrete. He then served as chair of the Department of Civil Engineering. In 1989 he started the Institute for the History of Technology and Industrial Archaeology at WVU. He served as president

of the Vandalia Heritage Foundation, Public Works Historical Society and Society for Industrial Archeology; he was a member of the board of directors of the West Virginia Independence Hall Foundation and West Virginia

Humanities Council; and a founder of the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia.

It was Dr. Kemp's work on the Opera House and at the Davis Coal and Coke Engineering Building that brought him to Thomas WV. He analyzed the Opera House structure and suggested immediate repairs. He also organized the removal of important documents from the Engineering Building which are now at the West Virginia University Regional History Center. As a pioneer in the fields of industrial archaeology and the history of technology, he also supervised, documented or consulted on many other projects, including the preservation of the Philippi Covered Bridge, Wheeling Suspension Bridge, and the Wheeling Custom House (West Virginia Independence Hall). Emory donated his papers to the WVU West Virginia and Regional History Center so that others may continue his work studying historic engineering structures. Friends of Blackwater is thankful for his work preserving West Virginia history.

## Big Rock

We are pleased to announce that in December 2019, the US Forest Service said that it will withdraw the **Big Rock Project**, a 2,400-acre logging project in the Monongahela National Forest, following objections raised by Friends of Blackwater, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the WV Highlands Conservancy. This timbering project would threaten the endangered candy darter, listed in November 2018, by adding dangerous amounts of sediment into the small streams where candy darters are found. Hopefully this is a step toward fully protecting the candy darter, a tiny jewel of a fish found in the timbering proposal area, near the world-famous Cranberry Glades.

The candy darter has been extirpated from at least half of its original range and less than a third of the original populations are healthy. Their biggest threats are hybridization



*the endangered Candy Darter*

with the variegated darter, warming waters, and sedimentation within their streams. Protecting their current habitats is the best way to give these beautiful little fish, or any endangered/threatened species, a chance to come back and repopulate their original range.

## Grassy Ridge

Friends of Blackwater was invited to attend the Forest Service's **Grassy Ridge Stakeholder** meeting this January to discuss this proposed forest restoration and timbering plan. This Forest Service project seeks to expand red spruce communities and cut hardwoods, as well as manage areas for wildlife. Timber removal would be completed on up to 420 acres by opening up the canopy for red spruce by cutting vegetation surrounding them. The project area is located near Osceola, WV, in Randolph and Pendleton Counties, adjacent to the recent Spruce Mountain Management project area in the Potomac Ranger District.

Red spruce stands are habitat for the **WV Northern flying squirrel**, but a mixed spruce/hardwood forest, particularly one with old growth trees that provide the height the squirrels need for gliding long distances, are needed as well.

FOB's familiarity with the rare North Flying Squirrel and its ecological needs allowed us to advocate for those needs in this meeting, including the protection of buffer zones, the need for old growth forests and tall trees, and forested corridors throughout for the squirrels to travel through and use for dispersal and to ensure successful gene flow. Scoping comments on Grassy Ridge are due by March 13th. FOB plans to submit comments to protect the squirrel. Your support helps us review and potentially challenge these projects.

February 2020

# Help Protect Bumblebees & Crayfish

Thanks to individual donations and grants from organizations like Patagonia, FOB continues fighting for endangered and threatened WV species. But we need your help!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has created a draft recovery plan for the Rusty Patched Bumblebee open for comment until February 27, 2020. The Service listed the bee as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2017. Historically, the bee was broadly distributed across the eastern and upper Midwest and was a prominent pollinator, ensuring that many ecologically significant species, and some favorites, like blueberries, were properly pollinated. Prior to listing, the species experienced a widespread decline, with populations plummeting by about 87 percent in the past two decades. The species is likely to be present in only 0.1% of its historical range.

The rusty patched bumble bee is being stressed by climate change, bee diseases, land use changes and pesticides and now faces extinction. Pesticides, especially the kind called neonicotinoids, are incredibly toxic to bees and butterflies, and they're one of the main reasons the rusty patched bumblebee is now endangered.



*the endangered Rusty Patched Bumblebee*

The first step to saving these vital little creatures is simple: Rein in the use of toxic chemicals in their habitat. But the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to move forward with draft recovery plans that do nothing about pesticide use. Large land disturbing projects like highways and pipelines also have a negative impact and are not a focus of recovery.

Act now to insist that the Service fix glaring errors in the recovery plan and protect our pollinators

from pesticides and construction projects in their habitat. Comments are due by February 27. **Go to [saveblackwater.org](https://saveblackwater.org) to see our comment letter.**

There is a role for everyone in conserving this beneficial pollinator, including planting pollinator gardens, abstaining from pesticide and herbicide usage, and leaving forests and natural habitats intact. Some of the rusty patch bumblebee's favorite flowers that you can plant or protect include milkweed, thistle, coneflowers, jewelweed, bee balm, mountain mint, and cranberries.

The endangered Guyandotte River crayfish and threatened Big Sandy crayfish live in southwestern West Virginia. They've been lost from most of their historical ranges due to water pollution — but there's new hope for these crustaceans.

After decades of delay, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed robust protections for 446 stream miles of critical habitat for both species. This would protect their homes while also improving water quality for people.



*the endangered Guyandotte River Crayfish*

The Service is now taking comments from the public on the proposed protections. This is an unprecedented opportunity for us to push back against water polluting industries and the wave of extinction it's fueling.

Industry will fight these protections. That's why we need to speak up loudly and clearly for these imperiled crayfishes.

**Visit [saveblackwater.org](https://saveblackwater.org) to send your comments by March 30th.**

## Artist Features Rare WV Species

As part of her collection "Five Endangered Treasures of West Virginia", local artist Rosalie Haizlett featured both the rusty patched bumblebee and the Guyandotte River crayfish.

Check out those stickers and prints at [www.rosaliehaizlett.com/shop](http://www.rosaliehaizlett.com/shop) where 10% of the proceeds from her "Endangered Treasures" collection go toward FOB's work to protect unique WV species!



# Flying Squirrel Report Disappointing

"Ginny," the West Virginia northern flying squirrel, was taken off the endangered species list in 2013 with zero evidence on actual squirrel populations. Three federal judges said that was an illegal decision, but they were outvoted.

The delisting decision was supposed to be followed by studies to analyze whether the delisting was having a negative impact on the squirrel. Now the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has issued a report – not of squirrel populations – but on red spruce plantings. Of course, red spruce forests are not enough for flying squirrels to survive. "Ginny" needs older growth hardwoods, tall trees for gliding, and moving between habitat patches to find mates and food like truffles which grow under a variety of older trees.

Let's look at some real numbers. We know that 285 acres of proven flying squirrel habitat on the Allegheny Front was destroyed in the construction of Corridor H. To make up for this, the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) put up and monitored 82 flying squirrel nest boxes which were never used by the squirrel. It's not a pretty picture.

The WVDOH also put \$762,000 a fund for grants for squirrel research, but 90% of the money was given to the Nature Conservancy to purchase red spruce habitat, instead of being used for flying squirrel research. The nest box program on the MON was discontinued for lack of funds, and the squirrel counting program in the Greenbrier Ranger district was stopped due to lack of staffing.

With no squirrel counts going on, the Fish and Wildlife

Service returned to some older data to claim that Ginny and her clan are doing ok. They claim this data shows a growth curve. But the data is in fact unreliable and was not used in the official delisting document for this reason. Actual squirrel count numbers for the most



recent review period are not given. USFWS says the numbers are not relevant because there are still a few squirrels around.

This latest USFWS report is extremely disappointing. We need to see real research and real population counts! With your support, Friends of Blackwater vows to redouble our efforts for Ginny" and her babies. With the climate in Washington, this is hard, but we are determined. Thanks for your help in fighting for the creatures of the Highlands.

## Forest Service Meeting Overview

On January 30, 2020, the U.S. Forest Service ("USFS") hosted a number of non-profits, private organizations, timber companies, and government agencies to learn about the new USFS strategy for the Monongahela National Forest ("the Mon"). Friends of Blackwater was there.

While these generalized talking points were encouraging, the repeated focus by the USFS in the meeting on the "age class distribution in the forest" made it clear that the USFS basically intends to cut lots and lots of older trees that are worth a lot of money now -- although those trees have many, many decades left in their natural growth cycles.

Former WV DNR Director Frank Jezioro explained that combining this kind of mass timbering with "conservation

messaging" helps push projects through with less public comment or objection.

This meeting heightened our sense of urgency in our work of protecting wildlife and our public lands. It appears that feel-good conservation rhetoric and unscientific "wishful thinking" are being mobilized to cut huge acreages of magnificent older trees that are storing carbon for all of us.

Rare and precious species, pristine watersheds, and more, are at grave risk. Only close public attention, independent scientific scrutiny, and full comment and participation – yes, lawsuits if necessary -- can bring a proper balance to the management of our public lands. Friends of Blackwater, with your support, is working on this important task.

February 2020

# Engineering Building Work Begins

Friends of Blackwater is partnering with Vandalia Heritage on a grant from the West Virginia State Historic preservation Office to restore the Davis Coal and Coke Engineering Building next to the old Company Store now



WVGS removes core samples from the Engineering Building

renovations before it can be used again. We expect to announce our first Request for Proposals in March with work to begin in April.

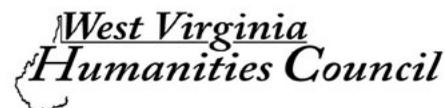
the B&L Gallery and offices. This used to be the administration and engineering headquarters for the Davis Coal and Coke Company. It has not been used since the 1980's and requires a lot of

restoration and

Most of this work will begin later this spring, but until then, FOB and the WV Geological Survey have been taking inventory of what was left in the building after many of the maps and valuable materials were removed over a decade ago by different universities in the region. The WVGS visited Thomas several times this winter and collected hundreds of core samples-wooden boxes filled with samples of rock, soil, and coal taken from around WV and MD mining sites.

Some core samples were taken by the Maryland Geological Survey. All will be inventoried and archived. There are still artifacts leftover- all relics of a once booming coal industry in Tucker County. Once these are cleaned out, we will start the work of stabilizing the first floor and basement. Friends of Blackwater is also in the process of looking for an Americorps Vista member to focus on heritage and restoration. It's a long road ahead, but we're excited to turn this building into a usable space to highlight local history and show off this beautiful building!

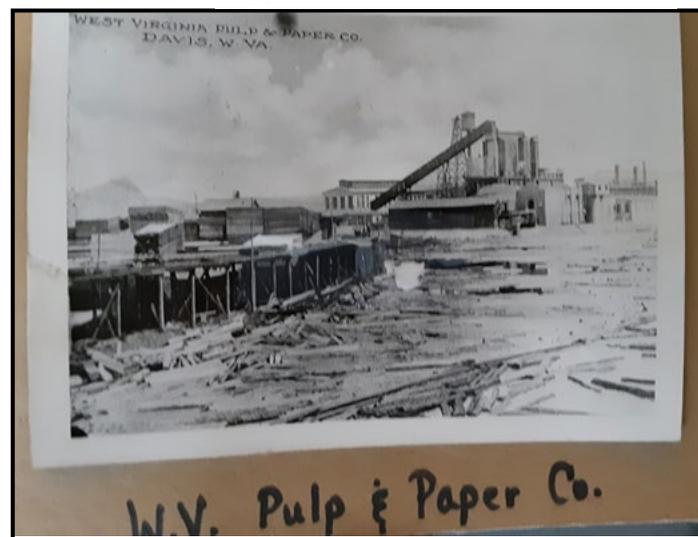
## Plans for Historic Davis Sawmill Signs



Friends of Blackwater thanks to a grant from the West Virginia Humanities Council (logo) has begun planning signs for Davis Riverfront Park. The focus of the signs will be the huge sawmill located along the river from 1886 to 1924. The Davis Renaissance Committee is helping with sign planning. Pat Cooper and Jeanette Ware shared photos from the Tekavec/Zadell family collection to help with the historic wayside marker project. (see sample photo).

Many of their photos were used by their mother, Francis Tekavec, who visited local schools and lectured on Tucker County History. We also hope to put a sign kiosk across the river in Blackwater Falls State Park which will explain all the industries along the river including the pulp mill and the tannery. Once we have covered the main industries and the railroad we will work on signs highlighting the historic downtown businesses.

**If you have good photos of historic Davis, WV please let us know! Contact us at 304-345-7663 or send an e-mail to [info@saveblackwater.org](mailto:info@saveblackwater.org).**



## Volunteer WV

This winter, Friends of Blackwater was awarded a Volunteer Generation Fund grant, administered by Volunteer West Virginia. These funds will help us continue to grow, engage, and mobilize our amazing community of volunteers,



optimize our internal systems for training and managing volunteers, and more.

Tucker County has a rich and proud heritage, and

it is important that this legacy is protected. Volunteers are a huge part of the work we do to preserve industrial and cultural landmarks (such as industrial foundations, early 20th Century coal and timber industry artifacts, historic buildings, trails, etc.) and improve the public's awareness of them.

We're excited to dedicate time and energy to advancing our volunteer network and management practices and providing our volunteers with a meaningful (and enjoyable) role in our projects!

# Water Monitoring is Fun! by Emmie Cornell

Water monitoring and sampling is fine and dandy in the summer and fall, when temperatures hover in the 70s and you can dry off on a sunny day in less than an hour. These are the days when volunteers abound and the day goes by quickly because we're enjoying the weather and eating wild blueberries as we walk between monitoring sites.



*Testing pH and temp in Sand Run in Thomas City Park*

Water monitoring and sampling November-March is another story. I put on my waders and layers at the beginning of the day and brace myself for numb fingers for the next four hours. These are the

days when volunteers are hard to come by and I don't blame them! However, Judith, FOB's trustiest winter monitoring volunteer, never fails to show up and brave the cold and the snow with me. Her rescue

dog, Queenie, naps in the trunk as we drive from site to site, slipping as we scramble to the water's edge to grab a sample or measure water flow in the North Fork, Beaver Creek, or in Sand Run. Even though we're chilly, we still manage to have a good time!



*Judith measures the water quality at a site along the North Fork of the Blackwater*

Every monitoring opportunity is one that I am grateful for because that data that I collect shows the health of that body

of water. Sometimes it is encouraging- Beaver Creek is getting better! And sometimes it's sobering, but it reinforces FOB's mission to keep restoring and protecting the polluted tributaries of the Blackwater River so that one day we can fish and swim in clean, healthy water.

## North Fork of the Blackwater Restoration Update

FOB's November 2019 newsletter described our shift from reconstructing the defunct passive water treatment system, the WALD, to working with the WV DEP's Office of Abandoned Mine Lands (OSMLR) and Reclamation (OAMLR) to design and construct an active treatment site along the Blackwater Rail Trail, just beside Middle Run. Construction is still pending, so FOB is getting a jump on the preliminary piping of bad water to the treatment site. We will be working with engineers in 2020 to design a way to pipe all of the Acid Mine Drainage Pollution from their discharges at Mine Portal 29 and Burn's Blowout (near where the Rail Trail intersects with Douglas Road) down the length of the WALD to its final destination. Once this preliminary piping is completed, OAMLR can

proceed with the construction of the treatment facility. The new project will clean the water of heavy metals.



*Emmie and WVU students, photo from WVU's Eberly College*

The clean water will go back into the North Fork and the resulting sludge will be trucked away. Friends of Blackwater is excited to be part of this new technology.

## YOU ARE INVITED! Beaver Creek Stakeholders Meeting: 3-11-20

Twice a year, Friends of Blackwater hosts "Beaver Creek Stakeholder Meetings" where we invite members of agencies and groups who have an interest in the restoration, recreation, education, etc. of the Beaver Creek watershed share ideas. In the past, this has included members of the Department of Natural Resources, National Youth Science Center, International Mountain Biking Association, the Department of Highways, and Canaan Valley Institute. Together, we discuss the health of the watershed and what each of our groups are doing to continually better the ecological health, educational opportunities, and awareness surrounding Beaver Creek. As a result of these meetings, groups have been able to

work together and team up to accomplish more in this watershed than we could alone!

We would like to extend an invitation to everyone who has an interest in learning more about Beaver Creek or becoming more involved in some of the work groups and agencies are doing.

The next meeting is on March 11th at 1 pm at our offices in the Buxton and Landstreet Gallery at 571 Douglas Road, Thomas, WV 26292.

**Email Emmie at [emmie@saveblackwater.org](mailto:emmie@saveblackwater.org) with questions or for more information.**

# Underground Injection Well Hearing Announced!



*the Cheat River*

Nearly 1,500 FOB supporters and concerned citizens signed a petition against allowing a fracking waste injection well along Horseshoe Run just before it enters the fabulous Cheat River.

This outpouring of concern led the WV DEP Oil and Gas division to set up a public hearing on the issue. Please come and voice your opposition in person on MARCH 5th from 6:00 to 8:00 PM in Parsons. We couldn't have secured this public hearing without you!

In December, Friends of Blackwater learned about an underground injection petition renewal permit submitted to the DEP's Office of Oil and Gas to inject AT LEAST 590 barrels of FRACKING gas waste water per day, into a well next to Horseshoe Run near St. George. This toxic mixture of noxious chemicals could potentially leak into the ground water or Horseshoe Run and the Cheat River, undermining MILLIONS OF DOLLARS of the restoration work that has been done to restore ecological health to the watershed.



*snorkeling Horseshoe Run, photo: Friends of the Cheat*

We must stop this project!

## Concerns:

- If any waste water/fracking fluid leaked into the ground water or aquifer, the drinking water for nearby residents would be contaminated.
- The narrow, winding roads and small bridges are not designed to accommodate the heavy traffic of large brine trucks bringing waste water to the injection well.
- Brine trucks carrying fluids from 14 well sites (2 as far away as Seneca Rocks) could leak or wreck, spilling fluid into the Cheat River.
- When the well was drilled, the rocks, metals, radioactive materials, earth, etc. that were dug 4000 feet out of the earth were buried around the injection well site. Exposing workers to this material could negatively impact their health.
- The lining of this old well may not be sufficiently sealed to prevent brine and chemicals from leaking out of the well and into surrounding fractured strata.
- Containment of injection fluid tanks is not sufficiently strong to prevent spills.



*kayaking the Cheat River*

**Come to the public hearing on March 5th at the Tucker County Board of Education Gym, located at 100 Education Ln, Parsons, WV 26287. DEP personnel from the Office of Oil and Gas will be present from 5:00-6:00PM to answer any questions. Public comment from 6:00 to 8:00.**

## Some Comments from the Petition

"This is a disaster waiting to happen when the containment structure fails and empties disastrous chemicals into the Horseshoe Run which empties into the Cheat River. This disaster would destroy all of the affected fish and other water life. It would render the Horseshoe Run and Cheat useless to wildlife, humans, and farm animals alike. We as humans are killing our planet, and it must be stopped. I vote no to the injection well referenced, and any others in Tucker County, as well as any proposed fracking."

"I grew up fishing this stream, it is a great fishery that will be completely ruined. This must be stopped. Beautiful scenery and water."

"I work on environmental studies of fracking wastes, and I know from personal experience that there are always leaks, spills, and accidents that contaminate surface and ground water with these operations, not to mention potential for triggering low-level earthquakes. As a native West Virginian, I am opposed to allowing fracking waste disposal in this scenic area of WV."

"DEP, do your job & PROTECT the environment."

"Public health in the form of clean drinking water matters more than profits for a company that wants to threaten West Virginians' water. Please vote to protect us, the citizens of West Virginia."

"Outrageous!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

"WATER IS LIFE. NO INJECTION WELLS"

# Proposed Keystone Mine on Corridor H Threatens Beaver Creek Restoration



*the surface mine view from Corridor H*

Friends of Blackwater is requesting a hearing on the Keystone Coal Resources strip mine permit application along Beaver Creek of the Blackwater River. The mine is located near Gatzmer across Corridor H from the Mettiki Coal Plant. The area is recognizable for the deep pits filled with water and denuded mountainside beside the new highway.

Friends of Blackwater has written a restoration plan for Beaver Creek and is concerned that our plans to improve water quality in Beaver Creek could be undermined by this proposal. The West Virginia Department of Natural Resources is working to improve Beaver Creek with limestone sands along the stream banks to raise the pH under an agreement with Corridor H. This mitigation project is going so well that brown trout have been

introduced into the stream. Dominion Energy has joined the Beaver Creek improvement project by opening up a limestone sands dumping spot on their property. Local mountain bikers are using the bike path along the Corridor and would like to see it improved and extended. A careful review of this permit is needed to ensure that mining activity doesn't negatively impact the new



*an aerial view of the permit area*

fishery, recreational opportunities and water quality in Beaver Creek.

Join our call for a hearing on the mine permit by signing the petition on our website: [saveblackwater.org](http://saveblackwater.org)

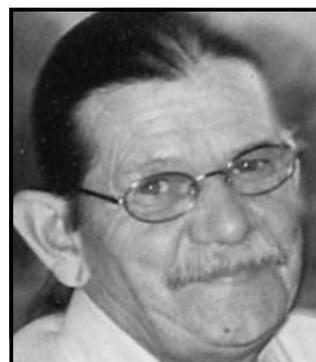
## In Memoriam

### H. John "Herb" Rogers



H. John "Herb" Rogers, a well-known West Virginia lawyer, passed away on February 1, 2020. He had a long career as an advocate and gadfly, and he was a continuous supporter of Friends of Blackwater.

Herb led a citizens' march through the Blackwater Canyon in 1997 to oppose the sale of 3000 acres in the Canyon to a timber company. Herb, we will miss you -- but we are still working hard to protect this magnificent Canyon and we are as committed as ever, as we know you would wish us to be. Rest in peace.



### Barry Baumgardner

Barry Baumgardner was born March 27, 1946 in Johnston, Pennsylvania, died on Feb. 11, 2020 at his home in Thomas, WV. Barry was the legendary Mountain Manager at White Grass Ski Touring Center in Canaan Valley for 25 years. Barry was an avid caver and fisherman. He was a jack of

all trades and found happiness in the outdoors and he helped Friends of Blackwater with their Blackwater River restoration program.

February 2020

# WVU Students Take Blackwater Outing

In late fall 2019, a WVU Interdisciplinary studies class visited the Blackwater Canyon to learn how climate change is impacting the Allegheny Highlands. FOB Board member Tom Rodd, WV Center on Climate Change ("WV3C") Director Logan Thorne, and FOB Watershed Director Emmie Cornell joined WVU Professor Andrea Soccorsi -- and a bustling busload of WVU students -- on a day-long adventure.

We started the day at the Buxton and Landstreet Company Store, and then meandered down to the coke ovens on the Canyon Rail Trail. Then we hiked out to Lindy Point, where Tom led a "Kitchen Klimate Science" lesson, complete with banjo and singing and dancing on the Overlook. Then we stopped by the "Gentle Trail" Falls overlook, and hiked the Elakala Falls trail, discussing vulnerable species in the Highlands and the challenges of conservation in light of climate change.

We wrapped up the day with a great meal at the Blackwater Falls Lodge, and got to hear about the innovative projects around Morgantown that the class is



Tom teaches students about climate change, photo from WVU's Eberly College

working on as a part of their curriculum. This spring, Professor Soccorsi's interdisciplinary class is partnering with the WV3C to work on climate-related events in Morgantown.

Thanks! to the WVU students and everyone else for such a great outing! And thanks! to the FOB supporters who make these programs possible.

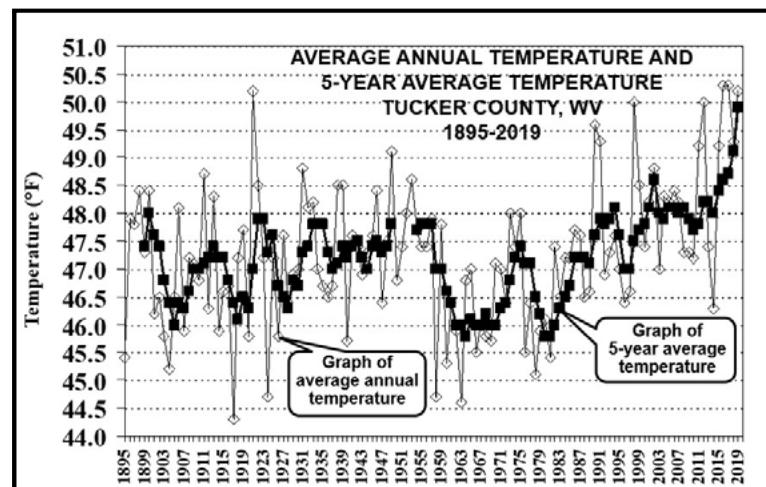
## Highlands Warming Continues

Dave Lesher is a long-time resident of Canaan Valley who has been reporting on weather and climate in the Highlands region for many years. Dave's latest report contains a lot of information: here are some excerpts that should interest Friends of Blackwater supporters. We will be posting the entire report on our website.

"[I]n the eastern third of the [USA], 2019 brought record-setting warmth. . . . To get a sense of the extent of temperature trends over the past 125 years here in our part of West Virginia, a full set of average annual temperature data for Tucker County for the period 1895 to 2019 was obtained from the Climate at a Glance site. . . . the yearly temperature data was converted into a set of five-year average temperatures. . . . The graph shown here is a plot of both average annual temperatures (diamonds) and five-year average temperatures (solid squares).

"[T]he overall trend of the smoothed five-year average temperatures is steadily rising, broken only by two remarkable cold periods, one in the mid-1960s and the other in the late-1970s. What's more, the trend of 5-year average temperatures in the past few decades has turned sharply upward, reflected in the occurrence of six of the seven warmest years since 1990.

"It is remarkable that for the 40-year period from



Average annual temp of Tucker Co by: Dave Lescher

1979 to 2019, Tucker County's five-year average annual temperature has risen almost 4 degrees Fahrenheit. In terms of climate change, that is enormous and there's no reason to believe that it won't continue rising in the years ahead. With the addition of 2020 temperature data a year from now, perhaps there will be good reason to have another discussion of this topic here in this space."

Thanks, Dave Lesher, for your conscientious work in collecting and reporting this important data. And thanks to FOB supporters who are helping us work on solving global warming and the climate crisis – in the Highlands, and around the world.

# Charleston Climate Transition Program Has Big Crowd, Big Ideas

On a rainy night in February 2020, more than 120 people packed into a meeting room at the Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center for a climate-concerned program titled "LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: ENSURING A FAIR TRANSITION FOR WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES."

The program was sponsored by Friends of Blackwater's West Virginia Center on Climate Change, the WVU College of Law Center for Energy and Sustainable Development, and the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy.

The keynote speaker was Adele Morris, a senior fellow and policy director for Climate and Energy Economics at the Brookings Institution. Her talk was learned, creative, and even funny at times!

She was joined by James Van Nostrand of the WVU Law Center; Ann M. Eisenberg, J.D., Assistant Professor of Law, University of South Carolina; Evan Hansen, Principal at Downstream Strategies and a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates; and Ted Boettner, Co-founder and Executive Director of the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. All gave excellent talks with lots of good audience questions.

The bottom-line takeaway from these presentations was that a tax on carbon emissions could generate lots of money to assist coal-dependent workers and communities, as America and the world transition to a

low-carbon-emissions energy economy. That would be good for West Virginia; and it would be good for the Allegheny Highlands and the climate-driven ecology and



*program attendees*

economy of the region.

There will be photos and Powerpoints from the Charleston event on our new website, [wvclimate.org](http://wvclimate.org) – plus info on upcoming climate programs in April in Morgantown! Thanks from FOB to everyone who came out in Charleston, and to folks who are supporting FOB's climate-concerned work. And special thanks! from "Ginny" the flying squirrel and her Highlands buddies!

## New Climate Website and Earth Day Programs

We just finished up a new website – [wvclimate.org](http://wvclimate.org) – that will be the home base for FOB's West Virginia Center on Climate Change. We are planning four exciting climate programs in Morgantown in April 2020, to help celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day. Check out the new website today and thanks for all your support!

check out our new site at:

[www.wvclimate.org](http://www.wvclimate.org)

### APRIL EVENTS:

All events are in Morgantown at various locations. Please visit [wvclimate.org](http://wvclimate.org) for more information.

**APRIL 6**

**APRIL 18**

**APRIL 25**

"What Do We Tell the Kids, and What are They Telling Us?"

"Who Speaks for the Trees? How West Virginia Forests Can Help Save the Planet."

"Bipartisan Climate Solutions and a Fair Energy Transition."

# Support State Park Funding Bill

## West Virginia State Parks Foundation, Inc.



*Office of the President*

Greg Bray  
WVSPF President  
88 State Park Road  
Fairmont, WV 26554

January 28, 2020

### STATE PARK ENDOWMENT FUND -SENATE BILL 517

West Virginia State Parks are a wonderful and important part of our state. They protect irreplaceable natural, scenic, historic and cultural resources as a legacy for generations to come, while providing recreational opportunities to our citizens. Further, they are one of our foremost tourism attractions and hence, a powerful stimulator of the state's economy. They provide a significant amount of employment opportunity, both in the parks themselves as well as in nearby private businesses which depend upon the tourists they draw. A 2015 study showed that our park system generates up to \$248 million in total annual economic significance, \$189 million in direct economic impact, 3209 jobs, and \$91.6 million in worker pay. Let's also not forget the positive image of West Virginia fostered nationally by our park system which helps contradict negative stereotypes at times unfairly assigned to our state.

How fortunate we are to have one of the finest state park systems in the nation. Given the magnitude and age of its infrastructure, our challenge is to keep it operating at a high and productive standard by not allowing its luster and appeal to diminish. The Governor and Legislature deserve great credit for a current bond issue that is being used to address \$60 million of an estimated \$100 million dollar backlog of infrastructure repair and replacement needs. In addition, we now have a tremendous opportunity to address the remaining current \$40 million dollars in needs while also making sure that such a deficiency never recurs in the future. I refer to Senate Bill 517 which is now in the Legislature for consideration. Heartfelt thanks to Senators Hamilton, Prezioso, Beach, and Stollings for sponsoring this legislation.

Senate Bill 517 assures an additional new and dedicated source of regular funding for our state parks. Specifically, it would channel royalties received from leases of state-owned gas, oil, and other mineral rights below the Ohio River and its tributaries to a newly created "State Parks and Recreation Endowment Fund" which would build up a principal balance under the custodianship of the State Treasurer. The Treasurer would invest Fund assets to generate revenues which would be dedicated to maintaining, improving, and preserving the park system and its facilities. The proposed legislation would create a Board of Trustees made up of the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) Director and other key DNR fiscal staff, Parks Chief, the President of the WV State Parks Foundation, two park superintendents, and four citizen members from some of the individual foundations dedicated to the support of specific parks. If future natural gas production and prices proceed in the hoped for positive direction it could well assure that our state park system never falls again into such a bottomless pit of unfunded, overdue infrastructure repairs.

In closing, let us all as individual citizens get behind this superbly positive legislative bill to help assure that our wonderful state park system moves forward with our personal guarantee. A guarantee that its infrastructure will be protected and maintained while assuring the continuation of all the great benefits it provides to our state and citizens. Call, email, or otherwise contact your legislators right away to let them know that Senate Bill 517 and West Virginia State Parks have your enthusiastic support.



*Pipestem State Park*



*Babcock State Park*



*Cacapon State Park*



*Blackwater Falls State Park*

Greg Bray  
WVSPF President



# Friends of Blackwater THANKS YOU

## FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN 2019



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February 2020



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## **CONTENTS**

PAGE 2: FOB PEOPLE

PAGE 3: EMORY KEMP/FOREST SERVICE

PAGE 4: ENDANGERED SPECIES

PAGE 5: GINNY/MON NATIONAL FOREST

PAGE 6: HERITAGE

PAGE 7: WATERSHED WORK

PAGE 8: INJECTION WELL

PAGE 9: KEYSTONE STRIP MINE/OBITUARIES

PAGES 10+11: CLIMATE CHANGE

PAGE 12: STATE PARK FUNDING

PAGE 13-15: DONORS

PAGE 16: EVENTS



*photo: Steve Shaluta*

# SPRING/SUMMER EVENTS

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>MARCH 5</b>        | Underground Injection Well Public Hearing, 5-8pm, Parsons, WV              |
| <b>MARCH 6</b>        | Keystone Surface Mining Permit signatures and comments submitted           |
| <b>MARCH 9</b>        | Rail Trail Heritage Signage Open House, 5-7pm, Parsons, WV                 |
| <b>MARCH 11</b>       | Beaver Creek Stakeholders Meeting, 1pm, FOB Office                         |
| <b>MARCH 30</b>       | Crayfish petition signatures and comments submitted                        |
| <b>APRIL 4</b>        | Camp 70 Rd/Beaver Creek Clean Up, 9a-12p, Nation Youth Science Center      |
| <b>APRIL 22+25</b>    | Nature Conservancy Spring Planting, 9:30a-12:30p, Canaan Valley State Park |
| <b>MAY/JUNE (TBA)</b> | “Shoot out at the Depot” original play, Parsons, WV                        |
| <b>JUNE 6</b>         | National Trails Day- Nature Hike along the Blackwater Rail Trail, 10am     |

**Visit [www.saveblackwater.org](http://www.saveblackwater.org) to learn more about these upcoming events!**