Appalachia's Health Report

Dec 2010/Jan 2011

Also Inside: The Hemlocks! The Hemlocks! • Breaks Interstate Park • The History of Protest Songs
A Note From the Executive Director

Dear Readers,

In this issue of The Voice, we explore the topic of health in Appalachia, not to cast gloom upon the holiday season, but to inspire individuals to take part in the betterment and well-being of Appalachia.

The health of the land can not be separated from the health of the people. Health issues in Appalachia, caused in no small part by environmental factors and an economy weakened by industrial monopoly, are unsettlingly prevalent.

But there is a movement afoot to change this grim reality. The people of Appalachia are standing behind environmental legislation such as the Clean Water Protection Act (H.R. 1310) in the House and the Appalachia Restoration Act (S. 696) in the Senate. Both of these bills would curtail the devastating effects of mountaintop removal coal mining—and improve the health of the environment and the people of Appalachia. Even with a new Congress in 2011, providing the permanent protection our mountains and waters need is still possible in the years ahead, but we need you more than ever.

Bill McKibben, in his book Blessed Unrest, notes that organizations like Appalachian Voices “can be seen as humanity’s immune response to toxins like political corruption, economic disease, and ecological degradation.” Just as our bodies produce antibodies to ward off illness, humans likewise possess a natural inclination to work in concert against injustice.

It is in this spirit that I invite you to join us and become protectors of Appalachia’s health—both human and ecological.

Willa

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December 2010 / January 2011

www.AppalachianVoices.org
Sustaining Family Farms Conference

Want to learn how to start a farmer’s market? Or the best ways you can prepare for the upcoming 2012 Farm Bill? Then you should participate in the annual Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms Conference January 18 through 22 in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Sponsored by the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, the conference is a four day event created for farmers and advocates to gain practical tools and solutions for running sustainable family farms. A series of short, intensive mini-courses will kick off the conference, addressing organic vegetable start-up, production and marketing, mixing and matching cattle on pasture land and building a homestead from scratch, among other topics. One afternoon will be spent traveling to local organic and sustainable farms, and the ensuing night will take attendees on a virtual tour of ten “model” farms. Participants will also have the opportunity to exchange seeds and network with other farmers as well as enjoy the “Taste of Tennessee” with local foods at the conference’s closing ceremony. Over 1,200 farmers and advocates attend each year. So get out and help create a more vibrant community and food system with your own knowledge and questions! Visit ssawg.org to register.

Posana Cafe Meeting Room, Asheville, N.C. Registration required: $15; 10am-3pm. Visit: asapconnections.org/

Sugarfest
Dec 11-12: Attend the annual festival highlighting Sugar Mountain’s many winter activities including tubing, skiing, snowboarding and ice skating. Contests and gear demos will also be held. Sugar Mountain Ski Resort, N.C. Visit: seesugar.com/tourism/sugarfest/

Appalachian Voices D.C. Open House
Dec 16: Come join the AV DC office to meet your fellow activists, hear about all their great advocacy efforts and maybe learn something new about Appalachian! RSVP to kate@appvoices.org or call (202)266-0479.

Ski Beech Winterfest

Book Signing of Historic Photos of Appalachia
Jan 27: Beautiful historic photographs of Appalachia have been compiled into a new coffee-table book and text written by East Tennessee State University English professor, Dr. Kevin O’Donnell. For information on the book signing, e-mail: sanders@etsu.edu

Jeff Biggers Presentation on “Clean Energy Future”
Feb 1: Join author and journalist Jeff Biggers as he delivers his famed multimedia presentation, “Legacy: How Appalachians Can Lead the Nation Toward Clean Energy?” at East Tennessee State University. E-mail: odonnell@etsu.edu for more information.

World Wetlands Day
Feb 2: Celebrated annually, this day is dedicated to honoring wetlands and highlighting the benefits they provide for human and animal life. Check out ramsar.org for an event near you.

Community and Small Wind Energy Conference-Mid Atlantic Region
Feb 8-9: Two-day conference discussing wind energy policies and implementing a community clean energy project; Penn State’s Innovation Park, State College, Pa. Registration required. Contact: Catherine O’Neill at 612-870-3477 or catherine.oneill@windustry.org

18th Annual Organic Growers School Spring Conference
Mar 5-6: The southeast’s largest sustainable living conference. Registration opens in January. More details and a schedule will be posted soon. Held at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Visit: organicgrowersschool.org/content/1950

Ten-Month Ecological Leadership Training
Feb 28–Dec 16: Be part of a team of 10 that will learn about innovative design systems and practical solutions that create bioregional sovereignty and empower the human potential. Program costs $8,000. Class runs Tues–Fri, 10am-6pm in Asheville, N.C. Visit: ashevillage.org
A “Reduce/Reuse” Remodeled House

Local Lumber, Seconds and Hand-Me-Downs Highlight Home’s Expansion

Story by Jillian Randel

You don’t have to start from scratch to build green.

Nestled in the mountains of Ashe County, N.C., adjacent to fields grazed by donkeys, cows and sheep, you will find a beautiful poplar and hemlock-sided home with a wrap-around deck and staircase leading up to the second-floor front door—all sitting atop an older cement-block house.

When Beth and Ralph Sorell tried drainage repair around their old block home to fix a water and mold issue, they discovered the problem was relentless. When they decided to build rather than renovate, they didn’t realize that they would be building up rather than out.

Visitors to the house climb past the original concrete structure—now the basement—and up a simple locust staircase, built from wood harvested locally. “Locust decking lasts a few lifetimes,” said Beth Sorell. “Somebody local wanted these trees cut and taken off their land, so they weren’t cut just for the purpose of the house.”

That is the point of Ian Snyder’s company Mountain Works—sustainable forestry. Snyder selects trees to cut that are overcrowded or are split at the top, and uses draft horses instead of big machinery to pull the logs out of the forest. He brings homeowners on tours through their land and, together, they pick out the types of trees they want logged.

Snyder introduced the Sorells to a builder who not only agreed to build on their land—but told them they would be building up rather than out.

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Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention conditions such as ADD and ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

According to Louv, children have lost their connection to the earth. Direct experience has been cut off by machines, and children now experience higher rates of depression and anxiety. Concentration and learning problems manifest through conditions such as ADD and ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

Louv introduces the term “nature deficit disorder” in reference to the lack of time spent outside - for children to run wild and free.

What does nature do for us and why is it so important? Stress reduction, greater physical health, a deeper sense of spirit, more creativity and a sense of play are skills that can be learned in the type of hands-off environment found in classrooms today.

Inventiveness and imagination of nearly all creative people is rooted in early experiences of nature, argues Louv, stressing that unstructured time outside is vital to our children’s development.

“Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young,” writes Louv. “It travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save environmentalism, we must also save an endangered indicator species: the child in nature.”

Louv offers an intelligent commentary on the situation of today’s children and the future we are creating for them through the practices that we teach. By allowing children to get outside and play, we are fostering a wealth of knowledge and skills they would otherwise miss.

Last Child in the Woods is the seventh book for Louv, who is also founder of the Children and Nature Network. Visit childrenandnature.org for more information on his movement.

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder; Richard Louv, 2005, $14.95

More than Just A Documentary
Coal in Kentucky is an hour-long documentary providing a comprehensive overview of the role of the coal industry in historical and contemporary Kentucky society. Individuals from the coal industry, environmental activists, politicians, scholars and citizens weave a cohesive analysis of coal issues facing Kentucky today.

Presented by the University of Kentucky’s Center for Visualization and Virtual Environments and the Department of Mining Engineering, Coal in Kentucky is a well-rounded venture that focuses on the coal industry, highlighting its costs and benefits to the region while also addressing mountaintop removal coal mining issues.

Though the film does not come to any definitive conclusions about the future role of coal in Kentucky, commentators in the film insist that the demand for energy will keep coal alive until renewable energy resources are economically feasible for most of the country.

Go to coalinkentucky.com for more resources and information.

Coal Controversy Divides Communities
Deep Down: A Story from the Heart of Coal Country demonstrates the polarization and dichotomy of Appalachian coal issues—especially mountaintop removal—by characterizing two individuals on opposite ends of the issue spectrum.

Both Beverly May and Terry Ratliff grew up in the mountains of eastern Kentucky, but on opposite sides of a mountain ridge—and opposite sides of the coal issue. The film details Beverly’s new anti-coal activist lifestyle foiled with Terry’s struggle to decide whether he should keep or sell his property to mine owners.

Filmed in 2007, the documentary follows these two friends as they struggle to understand “who controls, consumes, and benefits from our planet’s shrinking supply of natural resources;” especially coal in eastern Kentucky.

Filmmakers Jen Gilomen and Sally Rubin explore how coal separates communities and friends who recognize the environmental and health consequences of mining, but who cannot escape the necessary evil of coal as a quick source of energy and work.

Visit deepdownfilm.org for resources and information.
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MINING OUR HERITAGE: Protest Songs Echo Coal Miners’ Lament Through the Decades

Editor’s Note: In the coming issues, The Appalachian Voice will examine the deep roots of Appalachian folk music and how the songs and lyrics that have resonated around these mountains affected everyday life throughout the region. In this issue, the link between coal mining protests and folk songs is examined.

Story by Jason Reagan

“Come, Daddy won’t you take me back to Muhlenberg County, Down by the Green River, where paradise lay. We’re only a miner, poor miner. Killed by an accident, no one can tell. Shut out from the daylight and the shading ones, too. He’s only a miner been killed in the ground. Only a miner and one more is found. Shut out from the daylight and their shading ones, too. He’s only a miner been killed in the ground. Only a miner and one more is found.

—“Only A Miner” (artist unknown)

Today, many folk singers owe a tremendous debt to Appalachian protest songs. Since the first recorded coal-mine disaster in Black Heath, Va. in 1839, musicians have expressed the pain and melancholy echoing through the stripped mountains and valleys.

The “progress” Prine vilified became the fertile soil for many songs by a diversity of folk musicians.

According to folklorist Archie Green, “Only a Miner” was one of the first publicly released recordings of a mining song. However, other sources say the very first was “The Dream of the Miner’s Child,” recorded by Vernon Dalhart in 1925.

An anonymous tune, “Only a Miner” details the dangers, isolation and hardships faced every day by coal miners and was released by Paramount in 1928.

“The hard-working miner; their dangers are great. Many while mining have met their sad fate. While doing their duties as miners all do. Shut out from the daylight and their shading ones, too. He’s only a miner been killed in the ground. Only a miner and one more is found. Shut out from the daylight and their shading ones, too. He’s only a miner been killed in the ground. Only a miner and one more is found. Shut out from the daylight and their shading ones, too. He’s only a miner been killed in the ground. Only a miner and one more is found.

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Them’s “The Breaks”

KY/VA Interstate Park Offers Little-Known Hiking Opportunities Any Time of the Year

Story by Daniel Hawkins

Within the coalfields, straddling the border of Southwestern Virginia and Eastern Kentucky, lies a little-known natural wonder of the Appalachian Mountains.

Known as the Grand Canyon of the South, Breaks Interstate Park is home to one of the deepest gorges east of the Mississippi. Over millions of years, the Russell Fork River cut a five-mile-long gorge through the Pine Mountains of Appalachia, creating a magnificent natural spectacle. With depths reaching 1,000 feet from the scenic overlooks to the river below, the gorge has attracted visitors from all over the world.

The “Breaks,” as it is called by local residents, provides visitors with breathtaking views from seven overlooks and offers an abundance of activities during spring, summer and fall. During these busier months, the park’s large amphitheatre plays host to a variety of weekly events and outdoor enthusiasts enjoy activities ranging from camping and horseback riding to mountain biking and swimming.

As the splendorous colors of fall foliage turn to brown and the abscission of leaves reveals many shades of grey bark, visitation to Breaks Interstate Park slows drastically. The few who do brave the cooler temperatures find winter is one of the best times of the year to enjoy the many wonders this seemingly dormant park has to offer.

I for one enjoy hiking the park in winter as much as any other season, and one of my favorite hikes begins on the Overlook Trail. Roughly a mile long, the trail stretches between the Clinchfield and State Line overlooks, skirting along the edge of the canyon; I can clearly hear the Russell Fork River make its rocky descent hundreds of feet below me. As I pass by the many unguarded overlooks that give the trail its name, I occasionally take a weak-kneed step out to their edge to catch amazing views of the gorge.

Once I’ve reached the State Line Overlook I link up with the Ridge Trail for a short hike through a grove of mountain ivy before intersecting with Laurel Branch Trail. Here a small crystal clear stream snakes through giant rock formations known as “The Notches.” I easily become lost in the peaceful solitude of nature as the moss covered stone walls separate me from the rest of the world.

I journey onward through thickets of mountain laurel and groves of hemlock which add a touch of green to the otherwise gray and brown hues of an Appalachian winter. My breath begins to fog as I deepen my descent below the northern side of the mountain. The crispness of the air feels refreshing and soon I can hear the water of a creek flowing rapidly. I link up with Grassy Creek Trail, perhaps one of my favorites within the park. As the trail leads me alongside the creek, I am continuously amazed with the beauty of a stream left mostly untouched by man—a rarity within the coalfields I call home.

I finally reach the river and rather than continue on River Trail I will turn around and make the ascent back to the warmth of the cabin I rented within the park. Tomorrow I may continue the journey from the Prospector Trail, but for this evening I plan on relaxing by a warm fire. Hopefully the snow that has been forecast will blanket the area, turning an already picturesque landscape into an enchanting winter wonderland.

For more information or to make reservations visit www.breakspark.com or call (276) 865-4413.
Hemlock Disappearance Puts Songbirds at Risk

Except from an article by Hannah Aleshnicken

(Read the complete version online at appvoices.org/thevoice/hemlocks)

With a face more yellow than green, the Black-throated Green Warbler can often be seen between delicatelyneedled hemlock branches. It is the second most common warbler in southern Appalachia.

This species—along with the Black-throated Blue Warbler, the Blue-headed Vireo and the Acadian Flycatcher—relies heavily on the Eastern Hemlock for nesting and breeding, a tree that is disappearing from the Appalachian landscape due to the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). David Buehler, a professor of wildlife sciences at the University of Tennessee, has been studying the effect of the HWA on birds in the Blue Ridge Mountains. “When the [HWA] started to become an issue in the early 2000’s and we saw what was happening further north, we started documenting the species [associated with the hemlocks].”

David Orwig, a Forest Ecologist at Harvard University, believes that Acadian Flycatcher populations will suffer as hemlocks decline. Orwig, who completed post-doctorate work 14 years ago on the effects of the HWA on northeastern forests, says that 90 percent of Acadian Flycatchers nest in the affected conifers. “If these species spend more of their time in hemlocks, and the majority of these hemlocks disappear, then their habitats are going to be restricted,” he says.

“Hemlocks are an important component of forest ecosystems, especially in the Smokies, says Dr. Buehler. “The significance here is tremendous.”

Black-throated blue warbler. © Paul Tessier

who don’t get into the forest very much.”

Viewing the massive paintings first-hand is a study in nature itself. Tree limbs, constructed moss and rocks, and sections of real hemlock bark loom off the canvas in realistic detail. The sheer size—the largest is 9 feet high by 19 feet long—dwarfs the viewer.

During the exhibition, the art will be complimented by a range of educational materials about the woolly adelgid and the demise of the hemlocks.

A two-story exhibition hall will also house a site-specific installation by Hayes that includes a nearly 40-foot section of a dying hemlock tree.

Hayes hopes to take the show on tour after the Turchin exhibition, and is seeking venues throughout the hemlock range, from Maine to Alabama and west to Minnesota.

“The finest thing that anyone says to me about my work is, ‘After seeing your work, I saw what you mean [out] in nature,’” he said.

“I like to say, ‘This is heaven, don’t miss it while you’re here.’”

Work by Lowell Hayes has been included in a touring exhibition by the National Museum of American Art and scores of other venues, including the University of North Carolina and the Tennessee State Museum.

The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts is located at 423 W. King Street, Boone, N.C., and is open Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is free.
Contamination Concerns Mount as Gas Fracking Heats Up

Story by Jillian Randel

The negative effects of fracking for natural gas just keep, well, stacking up. The impact of drilling in Appalachia has already been substantial. The Marcellus Shale formation, which stretches from New York to Pennsylvania and Ohio down to West Virginia, contains large reserves of natural gas, and instances of water contamination continue to mount. Adding fuel to the fire, President Obama delivered a controversial speech on Nov. 3, during which he voiced support for natural gas drilling.

Thirty-two states now have natural gas fracking.

Reigning in Methane

Judy Armstrong of Bradford County, Pa., recently filed suit against Chesapeake Appalachia, a company drilling for natural gas near her home. After drilling started in 2009, Armstrong began suffering from contact dermatitis, barium poisoning, pain and numbness in her face and hands, deformities of the bones in her hands and severe headaches. Her water tested positive for methane in September of 2009.

Uranium Unearthed During Fracking?

A recent study announced that uranium may be another heavy metal released during fracking. According to Tracy Bank, Ph.D, assistant professor of geology at the University of Buffalo and lead researcher of the study, shale rock naturally traps metals such as uranium. According to Bank’s report, fracking releases uranium into a soluble state, thus water released back to the surface during fracking could contain uranium, posing severe health risks.

“We need a fundamental understanding of how uranium exists in shale,” said Banks. “The more we understand about how it exists, the more we can better predict how it will react to fracking.”

Drilling in State Parks a Possibility

Pennsylvania’s Ohiopyle State Park, which sits atop the Marcellus Shale formation, is under threat as the natural gas industry eyes it for extraction. Pennsylvania does not own the subsurface rights of the park, increasing the potential for drilling to take place. This site is one of 35 national parks on or near the Marcellus Shale, raising the near-future question of public vs. private rights on the issue.

Haggling with Halliburton

In November, the EPA issued a subpoena to Halliburton for failing to submit a report of the chemicals they use during hydrofracturing. Calling the request “unreasonable,” Halliburton said it would negotiate with the EPA’s demands, but still refused to submit the requested data.

Tracking the Fracking

A community action group based out of Kentucky and Virginia created a network to address natural oil and gas issues emerging in Appalachia. The group is focused on reaching out to and educating landowners as well as working on ways to address policy makers about natural gas violations. Visit: fracturedappalachia.org for more information.

LAND TRUSTS TO PRESERVE 50,000 ACRES IN WESTERN NC

Nine regional land trusts have agreed to a five-year plan aimed at protecting 50,000 acres of Blue Ridge Mountains in western North Carolina. The coalition, known as Blue Ridge Forever, is expecting 8,000 additional acres to come under their protection by the end of 2010. Nearly $110 million in public funds, $32 million from private donations and over $196 million in cash or land value donations from individual property owners went to protect the land.

Blue Ridge Forever focuses on protecting North America’s most biologically diverse temperate forests to offset a 77% increase in development in the region over the last twenty years.

RUNNING FOR NATURE IN THE NEW RIVER TRAIL 50K

One hundred and thirty runners took to the trail for the Third Annual New River Trail 50k run at the New River State Park in Fries, Va., in October.

Prizes were awarded to the top three finalists for each gender in three categories: under 40, over 40, and over 55. Christopher Motta, 26, from Virginia, finished first overall with a time of 3 hours and 33 minutes. Kate Brun, 24, from Georgia, finished fifth overall and first in women’s with a time of 3 hours and 49 minutes.

The 31.1 mile ultramarathon used local and minimal waste products and donated all of its proceeds to the National Committee for the New River.

WVU NAMED TO EPA’S SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

West Virginia University recently became the newest member of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Sustainability Partnership Program (SPP), a project that designs sustainability plans for organizations in mid-Atlantic states that use large quantities of energy, water and natural resources. The university will help promote the program throughout the state. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/spp/.

WINTER STOKES FEARS OF BAT-KILLING FUNGUS

With the onset of winter and bat hibernation, scientists are cautioning spelunkers to take extra care in cleaning equipment and clothing between outings to prevent the spread of white nose syndrome in bats. The fatal fungus attacks bats as they hibernate; once the fungus infests a cave, 90 to 100 percent of the bats die. Experts are still uncertain what causes the disease or how to combat it, but believe the disease is spread from cave to cave by human activity.

SIGN UP FOR NATIONAL BROWNFIELDS CONFERENCE

Registration is underway for the 14th annual Brownfields Conference, scheduled for April 3-5, 2011 in Philadelphia. Co-sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the International City/County Management Association, the conference focuses on cleaning up and redeveloping abandoned, underutilized and potentially contaminated properties. The three-day event offers educational sessions on issues facing brownfield practitioners, policy makers and communities.

For more details or to register, visit www.brownfields2011.org.
The Chestnut: Restoring an American Classic

Story by Jillian Randel

A century ago, one in four trees in the forests of Appalachia and throughout the eastern United States was an American chestnut, providing a reliable source of food and timber for humans and animals. Now it may grow once more.

Since 1983, The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) has been working to restore the American chestnut to its original habitat.

Scientists working with TACF have been able to cross and then backcross the American and Chinese species to develop a tree that is fifteen-sixteenths American chestnut. Characteristics of the Chinese species make the new tree resistant to blight while retaining dominant characteristics of the American species.

In 1904, the first signs of Cryphonectri parasitica, known as chestnut blight, appeared. The blight came to America through Japanese and Chinese chestnuts that were transplanted here. It spread throughout northern forests rapidly. A second pathogen called Phytophthora had also been invading southern forests. Within fifty years, the two blights had killed four billion trees.

One of the approaches employed for chestnut tree revival is planting on reclaimed mine sites, which will restore the tree to its native region and also help reforest the mine sites—re-mediation and re-vegetation is a federally required law for mining companies.

"While some make the claim that it is not our true American chestnut, without doing something like this, we won’t have any adult chestnuts," said Dr. Neufeld, biology professor at Appalachian State University. “Given how important this species was in the 19th and early 20th century, I think having a fifteen-sixteenths chestnut is better than none.”

It could take 75 to 100 years to complete reintroduction efforts and even longer to return the American chestnut to the full extent of their natural range, but success in growing other hardwood trees on reclaimed sites provides a promising outlook for a successful reintroduction program in Appalachia.

Visit acf.org for more information.

Regional Universities Improve Sustainability Grades, But Still Lag Behind National Average

Story by Megan Perdue

Universities in Appalachian states still lag behind in sustainability efforts, according to the latest College Sustainability Report Card. Released in late October, the annual report grades universities on their dedication to and implementation of campus sustainability.

For the first time since the report card’s inception, seven schools achieved the highest grade of A, but none were in Appalachia. Schools with grades of A- or higher are distinguished as “Overall College Sustainability Leaders.”

The Report Card grades schools on nine categories: administration, climate change and energy, food and recycling, green building, student involvement, transportation, endowment transparency, investment priorities and shareholder engagement.

To view additional scores, visit www.greenreportcard.org.

Appalachia Flunks State Energy Ratings... Again

Story by Megan Perdue

The results are in from the annual State Energy Efficiency Report Card by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, and once again most Appalachian states fared poorly.

North Carolina lead the region, coming in at 24 overall. Other nearby states showed improvement in their rankings, with the exception of Kentucky and South Carolina. West Virginia performed the worst, coming in at 43rd.

California was the leader again this year, scoring in first place, while North Dakota finished in the 51st position.

The Energy Efficiency Report Card reviews all 50 states and the District of Columbia on best practices and leadership in energy efficiency measures. Country-wide, the 2010 ratings found a near doubling of state energy efficiency budgets from the 2007 spending levels.

Visit www.accee.org/sector/state-polic/iscocard to view the complete list.
Eastern Kentucky Power Halts Proposed Smith Power Plant

Story by Jamie Goodman

Environmental groups in Kentucky are celebrating a major victory over a proposed coal-fired power plant slated for Clark County.

Eastern Kentucky Power Cooperative (EKPC) reached a settlement with environmental groups, three individual co-op members, the Kentucky attorney general and Gallatin Steel—EKPC’s largest industrial customer—agreeing to halt plans for the utility’s proposed Smith coal-fired power plant.

EKPC also agreed to com-
The mid-term elections this November will have mixed results for efforts to end mountaintop removal coal mining, with Republicans gaining control of the U.S. House of Representatives for the next two years and Democrats retaining leadership in the U.S. Senate.

### House of Representatives

The Clean Water Protection Act (CWPA) had 173 bipartisan cosponsors at the end of the 111th Congress. With 17 CWPA cosponsors already scheduled to retire or leave for higher office, most supporters of the bill maintained their seats during the election shift and will be supportive during the 112th Congress starting in January 2011.

Pro-mountaintop removal mining Democrats from Appalachia took a hit, with incumbents Rick Boucher (VA), Mike Oliverio (WV), Lincoln Davis (TN), Zack Space (OH), and Charlie Wilson (OH) all losing their seats. Nick Rahall (WV) remains the only Democrat Congressman in central Appalachia.

Fifteen cosponsors of the Clean Water Protection Act lost their re-election battles, including Tom Perriello of Virginia. Numerous regional supporters of the bill, however, regained their seats, including Shuler, Chandler, Yarmuth, Cooper and Connolly.

On average, the Democrats remaining in Congress for the 112th session will tend to be more progressive than the previous caucus. Of the roughly 54 conservative blue dogs from the 111th Congress, a whopping 29 will not be returning.

Bi-partisan support for the Clean Water Protection Act seems strong and will still be supported by six returning Republican cosponsors in the House, eight “bluedog” Democrats and eight bipartisan members from mountaintop removal states. Rep. Nick Rahall will no longer serve as chairman for House Natural Resources Committee, and his pro-mountaintop removal position will have less influence over other Democrats. Many Republicans will be looking for popular bipartisan bills such as the Clean Water Protection Act as they gear up for tough reelection fights in two years.

### Senate

The lead sponsor of anti-mountaintop removal legislation in the Senate—the Appalachia Restoration Act (S 696)—is also a member of the Republican leadership, lending significant credibility to the bill. Although Joe Manchin, a very pro-mountaintop removal Democrat, won easily in West Virginia, all of the original cosponsors of the ARA won their re-elections, and a Republican Congressman and CWPA supporter from Illinois, Mark Kirk, was promoted to the Senate. Barbara Boxer, who is chairwoman of the Environmental Committee and has often been outspoken on mountaintop removal mining in the past, also won her re-election easily.

### Mediation in Rawl Water Lawsuit Fails

**Story by J.W. Randolph & Bill Kovarik**

More than 600 Mingo County plaintiffs were required to appear at a mediation hearing in hopes of resolving a massive class-action lawsuit that was first filed in 2004.

Hundreds of residents and former residents of what is locally known as the “Forgotten Communities of Rt. 49” gathered at the West Virginia Supreme Court on November 15, in Charleston, W.Va. The plaintiffs allege that Massey Energy’s Rawl Sales and Processing poisoned them through years of documented underground coal slurry injections into the region’s drinking water supply, claiming that massive illnesses that swept through their community were the result of “drinking coal sludge.”

After more than two days of meetings, the mediation efforts failed. The case will go to trial in August, 2011.

How much money would you take in exchange for 40 years of your life? $1 million? $1 billion? Would any sum of money be sufficient to replace the years with your family and friends, the laughter and the love we all hope to share? In Appalachia, there is an alarming trend of lower life expectancy and higher disease rate than in most other parts of the country. Poverty, lack of education, a spotty regional medical infrastructure and polluting industry are all contributors to the numbers that are stacking up against us. The real question is, how do we reverse the trend?

Story by Parker Stevens and Jeff Deal

I t’s often remarked that if you have your health, you’ve got every- thing. As I watched my grand- mother die of bone cancer at 63 years of age, I realized just how profound, for me, this cliché is to health.

When you think of the ancient roll- ing tree-clad mountains that form the backdrop of the Eastern seaboard, what do you imagine? Most think Appalachia a premier vacation destination, a land of flora, fauna and four distinct seasons—a landscape of near indescribable loveliness, where one can relax, “get away” and “breathe easy” while fishing a trout stream, swimming in a mountain pasture.

What do you imagine? Most find Appalachian people with respect to health care profession- als. According to the study, some residents fear being taken advantage of or ex- ploited by the health care system—or being unfairly, unkindly, stereotyped. Many Appalachians are reluctant or lack the time and means to partici- pate in preventive screenings—such as mammograms—without showing acute symptoms of an illness.

Exposure to harmful substances in coal mines, chemical factories, and agriculture—common occupations in Appalachian counties as “high pov- erty.” Per capita income in Appalachia consistently falls below the national average. Impoverished residents in the region have a life expectancy equal to that of Panama and Mexico. A report released by the ARC indicates that people in poverty and without health insurance are more likely to die prematurely, particularly from cancer or cardiovascular disease, than people with higher incomes.

Exposure to harmful substances in coal mines, chemical factories, and agriculture—common occupations in the region—can also prove damaging to the health of an individual.

A study published in the Cali- fornia Journal of Health Promotion found that, on a cultural level, there is a general sentiment of mistrust among Appala- chian communities from urban ones, where health care resources are more abundant. According to the ARC, nearly half of all rural Appalachian counties have academic medical centers or a teaching hospital.

The shortage of doctors is particularly difficult for Medicaid patients, as many doctors will not accept Medicaid due to low reimbursement rates. Patients often have to travel long distances to larger cities and urban areas in order to seek treatment covered by Medicaid.

Education improvements do provide access to jobs that raise families and communities above poverty and ill- ness, but must develop apace with other economic opportunities—or the newly educated have few prospects.

With the betterment of health care access and public campaigns encouraging healthy lifestyles, Appalachian communities can gain prosperity, good health, and well-being.

Cancer mortality rates are higher in Appalachian counties than in any other part or our nation. The Cancer Institute of Virginia, which compiles the data, notes that 4 out of 5 deaths in Virginia are due to cancer. In Appalachian counties, the number of deaths due to cancer is twice as high as in other parts of the state.

An ARC report on mental health disorders in Appalachia reveals a higher prevalence of psychological issues in the region compared to the rest of the nation, and even higher rates in central Appalachian counties compared to northern and southern parts of the region. The disparity is even more acute in economically dis- tressed areas. According to the re- port, hospital admission rates for depression and other mental health disorders are higher in poorer areas and with greater cancer mortality rates for inhabitants.

In areas of Appalachia where coal is mined, the study found higher mortality rates for non-mining residents, and not simply those working in the coal mines. The work of the ARC and the U.S. Department of Health and Hu- man Services show that people living with asthma in Appalachian counties have a higher prevalence of asthma than those in other parts of the state.

A recent study by Dr. Michael Hendryx and other researchers at the West Virginia Rural Health Research Center found that rural areas in Appala- chia have more exposure to agriculture-related pol- lution than urban and metropolitan areas. The study also found a significant correlation between areas with water pollution and both cancer and total death rates. In addition, sites within these rural regions that are monitored as air pollution sources “were associated with greater cancer mortality rates” for inhabitants.

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A report by the CDC and the U.S. Department of Health and Hu- man Services shows that people living with asthma in Appalachian counties have a higher prevalence of asthma than those in other parts of the state.

People living in economically distressed areas are more likely to smoke and use tobacco products and less likely to engage in physical activity. These same behaviors increase the likeli- hood of cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

The Appalachian Regional Com- mission (ARC) classifies one in four Appalachian counties as “high pov- erty.” Per capita income in Appalachia consistently falls below the national average. Impoverished residents in the region have a life expectancy equal to that of Panama and Mexico. A report released by the ARC indicates that people in poverty and without health insurance are more likely to die prematurely, particularly from cancer or cardiovascular disease, than people with higher incomes.

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Health Fairs & Clinics: Neighbors Healing Neighbors

Story by Jeff Deal

While the U.S. Congress wrestled with the question of uninsured Americans, many Appalachian residents were without health insurance in 2008 and 2009.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey, the number of insured residents in the region ranges between one out of every five people in Georgia to one out of eight in Virginia, compared to a national average of one out of six. Growing concern regarding access to substantive health care is nationwide.

In addition to the volunteer medical providers team up with volunteers to donate their medical expertise to those lacking these critical services.

Wise, Va.—lying in the southwestern corner of the state—hosted two Remote Area Medical Volunteer Corp “RAM” clinics in July. In just two and a half days, the confederation of volunteer community members and professionals met with more than 1,250 patients seeking treatment for ailments ranging from depression to pulmonary disease in the improvised examining rooms of the county’s fairgrounds.

Wise will once again offer this service when they hold the 11th annual health clinic July 22-24, 2011. Volunteers seeking to assist with the fair may submit their applications in April, 2011.

Grundy, Va.—an hour and half northeast of Wise—is also the site of a yearly RAM clinic, taking place each October. According to RAM, his year’s Grundy clinic treated 766 patients an estimated $89,000 worth of medical care in just two days.

“Volunteering with RAM was a powerful experience that helped me decide to go to medical school,” says Patricia Feeney, a student at the Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg, Va., who volunteered at a Union, Tenn., RAM event last year. “We need more accessible and affordable long term care in Appalachia, and while we work for that, RAM gives us all a way to reach out to our neighbors and help meet immediate needs.”

Tennesseans in need of health services had opportunities to attend RAM clinics in Oneida, Knoxville, Nashville, Pigeon Forge, and Clinton; these sites will once again offer clinics during 2011.

RAM accepts all volunteers, in addition to physicians and health care professionals. RAM clinics provide eye exams, prescription eye glasses, and dental care, as well as primary care visits. For more information on the Remote Area Medical Volunteer Corp, visit www.ramus.org or call 1-877-5RAM-USA.

For a comprehensive step-by-step guide to available health insurance options by state, as well as an explanation of the health care reform legislation enacted by the U.S. Congress, visit www.healthcare.gov.

A number of organizations are working to combat health disparities and improve the physical and emotional well-being of people in Appalachia. From public universities to statewide nonprofits to community clinics, there are programs throughout the region that provide medical care to the uninsured, advocate for healthcare legislation and educate children about the importance of healthy behaviors.

Appalachia Community Cancer Network is an initiative funded by the National Caner Institute aimed at reducing cancer disparities in the region through community participation in education, research, and training. They focus on the prevention and early detection of cervical, lung and colorectal cancers, all of which have high incidence rates in the region. Based at the University of Kentucky, ACCN serves the northern and central Appalachian regions. www.accnweb.com

Health Kentucky works with a statewide network of volunteer health care providers, dentists, pharmacies, and pharmaceutical companies to provide free health care and medication to uninsured residents of Kentucky. Since 1984, they have provided free health care to more than 300,000 patients. www.healthkentucky.org

Appalachian Regional Healthcare operates a system of hospitals in eastern Kentucky and southwestern Virginia. In 2010 they were named an Outstanding Rural Health Organization by the National Rural Health Association. www.arh.org

Healthy Appalachia Institute – part of UVa-Wise – provides policy makers, healthcare workers, educators and community members the necessary tools, resources, ideas and strategies to foster a healthy population. They provide community based research opportunities, service learning and health education. www.healthappalachia.org

The Center for Rural Health Development, Inc. provides leadership on rural health issues in West Virginia. They work with community health centers, hospitals, private physicians and dentists to improve the health of WV residents. They also work with banks to provide financing for healthcare providers strengthening rural health infrastructure. www.wvrruralhealth.org

Rural Health Association of Tennessee advocates and educates on rural health issues including substance abuse, mental health, health professional education, disease prevention, oral health and emergency preparedness. www.rhat.org
Combating A Culture of Substance Abuse in Appalachia

Story by Jared Schultz

At the Grandfather Home for Children in Watauga County, N.C., evidence of the devastation that addiction can wreak on families and communities resides in the residents, some as young as infants.

One baby, less than a year old, went through a multi-week detox process when he first arrived—his mother had shared her drugs with him as a way to lull him to sleep. The boy was removed from a home drenched in chemicals used to make meth; exposed to the harsh chemicals, his skin was so sensitive and painful he would not allow anybody to touch him.

Three siblings between the ages of three and six also reside in the center; the Department of Social Services took them into custody when they were found wandering the streets alone at two o’clock in the morning. Their parents were out doing drugs.

“The vast majority of children have come here not because of their particular actions but because of things that have been done to them,” said Jim Swinkola, CEO of the Grandfather Home for Children. “If you’re a kid, it’s unfair that you’re the one who has to go to a new school or a new place to sleep.”

The problem is not unique to the children of the Grandfather Home, or to Watauga County. Family and cultural disintegration due to substance abuse and addiction have been booming in Appalachia over the past ten to fifteen years. The term ‘meth orphan’—now regularly used in stories such as these—has become more and more common.

This image of a region full of families shattered by meth addiction is only enhanced by reports of dramatically increasing numbers of meth lab busts. Maps found on the United States Drug Enforcement Administration website of meth lab incidents show that, in Kentucky alone, the number of lab incidents more than doubled between 2007 and 2009.

Pharmaceutical Abuse

Appalachia’s decade-long increase in substance abuse-related problems can be attributed to one specific development—the advent of opiates.

A study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center on health disparities in Appalachia found painkiller abuse between 2002 and 2005 to be of primary concern, contradicting beliefs about methamphetamine abuse as the biggest problem. Most telling was the finding that painkiller abuse was particularly bad in central Appalachia, where the coal mining regions of eastern Kentucky and southern West Virginia had the highest rates.

“In Appalachia, we have a number of hard labor kinds of jobs that tend to produce injuries or long-term effects for which prescription painkillers are often prescribed,” explained Kris Bowers of the Coalition on Appalachian Substance Abuse and Policy.

In addition to the mining industry, Bowers pointed a finger at jobs such as long distance trucking, as well as at increasing numbers of cancer and arthritic patients.

“Those kinds of things require heavy doses of pain meds which can also be subverted to sell on the street,” Bowers said.

“The problem is the culture of substance use in Appalachia which then turns into substance abuse,” said Bruce Behringer of the Division of Health Sciences at Eastern Tennessee State University. When policies are created to crack down on illegal substances like meth, lab busts go up and when the meth becomes scarce, the drug problem appears to initially go away.

Unfortunately, taking away one drug does not take away the substance abuse culture. People still have easy access to equally addictive and destructive substances like opiates that are legal and advertised.

High rates of painkiller abuse, mental illness and poverty afflicting the same regions in Appalachia suggest that regardless if the abused substance is meth, cocaine or painkillers, the overarching problem is not one of illegal substances or crime, but lack of economic and social opportunities. “We have a lot of people who have painful, debilitating lives filled with sorrow,” said Louise Howell, Executive Director of Kentucky River Community Care (KRCC).

Searching for Solutions

Advocates like Behringer are trying to take a ground-up approach to combating substance abuse in Appalachia by working with communities to identify and improve social and economic problems that could lead to substance abuse.

During a 2006 conference run by Behringer and colleagues, 26 different groups of people from six different states and a variety of professional backgrounds—including doctors and journalists—came together to brainstorm options for dealing with the problem. Following the conference, Behringer and colleagues received approximately $400,000 worth of regional grants to develop 16 different community programs to combat substance abuse.

Initiatives that emerged included project PEP, a program designed to instill community participation and Appalachian pride in the citizens of Lee County, Ky.

Despite this progress in developing community programs, one cultural barrier to a ground-up approach is ingrained in the mountains of Appalachia, according to Behringer; the view that substance abuse is an individual family’s private problem, rather than a community problem. “How are we going to address substance abuse issues if you can’t get people to think beyond the individual impact?” Behringer said.

A political culture that does not look at Appalachia as a region, but instead confines both data collection and actions to individual states, poses yet another barrier to decisive action at the community level.

Each state has different policies and laws for addressing substance abuse, raising the potential for finger-pointing between elected officials over who passed what laws. But substance traffickers and substance abusers do not care about state boundaries, particularly in a region as tightly knit as Appalachia.

The goal, according to Behringer and Bowers, is to draw different professions working together at the community level in order to address the problem of substance abuse, and then to convince lawmakers to work together across state lines.

The key to making all of this work, says Howell, is for professions and states to make the appropriate policy changes, such as integrating psychological health into physical health care, and to shift funding from correctional institutions to prevention and treatment programs.

“There are a lot of policy shifts that are pending and need to take place,” said Howell. “That’s where it’s at.”

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State Meth Lab Incidents Per Year

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</tr>
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</table>

Source: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
Elisa Young walked to the front of the room, slammed down a jar of blackberry ginger crepe syrup and a ziploc bag of coal ash in front of the three Environmental Protection Agency government officials.

“Think about the blackberries growing in the unlined coal ash ditches of Meigs County when you eat that,” she said. “And the chickens who can’t free range anymore for fear of drinking out of the puddles, or dusting their feathers in the coal ash.”

**Forces on the Front**

Elisa Young is an eighth generation Appalachian. Her German ancestors—a group of nine brothers—all fought in the revolutionary war. Six generations ago, her Welsh ancestors immigrated here and started a boarding house for Welsh miners and a school for local young women. She is the great-great-granddaughter of a coal miner. Young’s roots are as embedded in this land as the coal itself.

In 2000, Young moved to Meigs County, Ohio, to be caretaker of her family’s farm. Meigs County lies on the Ohio River, separating Ohio and West Virginia. The area is home to the second largest concentration of coal-fired power plants in the country. Four of the 18 plants along the Ohio River are located within 12 miles of Young’s home.

Young’s grandfather ran a dairy farm on their land. When she moved, Young brought her chickens and heirloom plants with her. She had plans to turn the farm into a sustainable living and teaching center.

“Since I had as much to learn as anyone it made sense to me to start with workshops to bring people in to teach so that many of us could learn together,” said Young. She began hosting native teachers to do herb walks and started construction on a straw bale structure.

Her plans were soon dashed when she discovered coal ash in her community.

“I had seen those smoke stacks on the horizon for as long as I can remember as a child, but I never thought anything about it,” said Young. “When I asked my grandma what they were, she shrugged and said, ‘Oh, honey, that’s just where they make the electricity.’”

**Coal Ash Communities**

Coal ash is the waste produced from burning coal. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that approximately 150 million tons of coal ash is produced each year, most produced from coal-fired electric power plants. Coal ash is laden with heavy metals and poisons such as arsenic, lead, barium, cadmium, mercury and chromium.

Coal ash is currently disposed of in impoundments known as coal ash ponds, or as a “beneficial use” product. The coal ash labeled as beneficial use can be applied to fill in road gullies, to build up land for construction, as fill for abandoned mines, or in products such as cinder blocks, running tracks and roofing shingles. Young first noticed coal ash being used in her county for road maintenance.

“The coal ash that comes into Meigs County proper is from the power plants in Mason County, W.Va., and across the Meigs County line in Gallia County, Ohio,” said Young. “None of it is being generated in Meigs. We have no idea how much is making its way into our county, or where it’s coming from—including outside of our direct area.”

Mason and Gallia County are littered with coal ash ponds and landfills, some of which are on the EPA’s potential high hazard list. There is currently no federal regulation on lining the ponds and landfills, which would add a barrier between the earth and ground and water supplies. A report by Earth Justice confirmed toxic leaching at 137 coal ash ponds in 34 states.

Further complicating the matter is that Meigs County is the only county in the state that does not have a Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) report.

“If you were a power plant and wanted to get rid of waste where no one would have to keep a record of receiving it, do you think you might prefer a county with no TRI inventory accounting?” questioned Young. “I do.”

Coal ash became a widely recognized toxic when it hit the media during the 2008 Tennessee Valley Authority coal ash spill—5.4 million cubic yards of coal ash broke out of an impoundment and flooded 300 acres of land and two nearby rivers.

**Two years after the coal ash disaster: Class action lawsuits target TVA and others**

**Story by Bill Kovarik**

Lawsuits against the Tennessee Valley Authority are continuing in the wake of the coal ash disaster two years ago.

Currently, 58 lawsuits against TVA have been consolidated into a class action suit alleging various health, economic and environmental damages from the collapse of a poorly-built dam and release of one billion gallons of coal ash on Dec. 22, 2008.

The suit will be heard by a federal district court judge—not a jury as plaintiffs requested—sometime in 2011 or 2012 in eastern Tennessee. The court denied TVA’s earlier attempt to dismiss the lawsuits.

At present, plaintiffs are taking pre-trial depositions from Tom Kilgore, chief executive officer of TVA, and other TVA officials, according to the law firm Beasley-Allen. Among the evidence to be presented at the trial are positive tests for heavy metals in some residents’ bloodstream, Beasley-Allen said.

In a related lawsuit, federal courts dismissed a request for an injunction this September that would have compelled better handling procedures in the Perry County, Ala., waste dump that is receiving the TVA coal ash waste. The firms handling the waste have declared bankruptcy and must deal with bankruptcy before they can be sued on other matters, the court said.

Dr. Robert D. Bullard, director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark University in Atlanta, and a coalition of Southeastern environmental groups issued an urgent call for the reform of the EPA’s regional regulatory agency this November, noting the need for more transparency and accountability. According to Bullard, these and other coal-ash issues need to be seen in the context of the struggle for environmental justice.

Meanwhile, a decision on whether to regulate coal ash as a hazardous waste is due from the EPA sometime in December, 2010 following a round of public hearings this summer and fall.

Continued on page 23
New Coal Dust Regs Aimed at Black Lung Disease Resurgence

Story by Bill Kovarik

An alarming rise in new cases of black lung disease inspired new Mine Safety and Health Administration regulations announced this fall by the Obama Administration.

The new regulations come 15 years after occupational safety and disease control agencies recommended a tightening of standards. They also come seven years after the Bush administration loosened coal dust safety standards.

The regulations are designed to improve safety for 72,000 miners working in more than 400 underground mines and more than 1,100 surface mines. Technically, the regulations require coal mines to cut coal dust in half, to 1.0 mg/m³ (milligrams per cubic meter).

The regulations also require changes in sampling procedures, which have been a source of contention. Federal investigators have repeatedly caught mine operators falsifying coal dust samples, and the old system with a weeks-long delay in providing results will be replaced by real-time monitoring systems under the new regulations.

Although widely hailed, the regulations are a relatively small step in changing dangerous working conditions in coal mines. Especially troubling for public health advocates are the estimated 1,500 deaths per year from black lung disease. While most of these have been retired coal miners, the Centers for Disease Control recently found that cases of black lung disease had stopped falling and started rising again among younger, active coal miners.

Black lung disease is a centuries-old problem going back to the dawn of coal mining. The need for protection and compensation for miners inspired the 1969 Coal Mine Health and Safety Act, which set up a black lung payments system funded by a small tax on coal. But the system has been subject to corruption and abuse over the years, and most individual claims are still routinely fought by teams of coal industry doctors and lawyers.

Currently, only about 13 percent of initial black lung claims are approved, and three quarters of claims take three to six years to approve, according to a 2009 study by the Government Accountability Office.

Shirley Stewart Burns, author of Bringing Down the Mountains and daughter of a black lung victim, hopes the new coal dust standards are enough to reduce black lung disease. “If these new standards keep even one other family from having to experience what my family has experienced, they will have an enormously positive impact.”

—Shirley Stewart Burns, author of Bringing Down the Mountains
Appalachian Alternatives

HOME REMEDIES BOTH OLD & NEW*

Story by Jillian Randel

Cold and flu givin’ you the blues? According to Natural Medicines Database, Americans contract close to a billion colds per year and around 50 million people in the U.S. get the flu annually.

Natural remedies are resurfacing in pharmacies and health stores across the country. They often have less side effects and can be a more wholesome form of medicine.

“Many people who seek alternative medicine have not received the relief they desire from conventional medicine or have experienced negative effects from it,” said Janelle Humphrey-Rowan, ND, of Alternatives Holistic Health Consulting in Fairmont, W.Va. “A principle of naturopathic medicine is to ‘identify and treat the cause.’”

We have listed some of the most common herbal and natural remedies below to help you get started. Check with your local health professionals or do your own research to create the perfect cold and flu care package that suits your body and lifestyle.

**Echinacea** *(Echinacea purpurea)* has traditionally been used for its immune and antiviral stimulating properties and is effective for prevention and treatment of upper respiratory tract infections such as cold and influenza. Most often taken in pill form or tea.

**Goldenseal** *(Hydrastis canadensis L.)* is a popular treatment for the common cold and upper respiratory tract infections. It was also a natural antibiotic used by Cherokees and is often combined with echinacea, as it is said to enhance the effectiveness of the former. Neither goldenseal nor echinacea should be used long-term. Most often taken in pill form or tea.

**Elderberry** *(Sambucus nigra)* are small, dark berries used to help reduce flu-like symptoms. They come in liquid capsules and a syrup form.

**Sage** *(Salvia officinalis)* is native to the Mediterranean and is an alternative medicine used to treat sore throat, inflammation, colds, headaches and flu. It is said to be effective for the throat when used as a mouthwash or gargle.

**Zinc** is an essential mineral claimed to have immune-enhancing and antiviral effects, and can be beneficial in treating the common cold. Most often taken as lozenge or in pill form.

**Ginseng** *(American)* *(Panax quinqufolius L.)* is known as the green gold of the forests. It is a slow-growing plant, valued for it’s roots and is most commonly used for immune system enhancement. Most often taken as a tonic or in pill form.

**Eucalyptus** *(E. tereticornis)* steam inhalation is said to relieve nasal and sinus congestion and clear coughs and throat infections. It can be done with the dried leaves boiled in water two to four times a day to relieve symptoms. Eucalyptus cough drops are also said to help with coughing caused from cold.

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Mtn Garden Offers Herbal Learning

Story by Yuri Woodstock

Mountain Gardens is a botanical garden nestled in the Black Mountains of North Carolina that offers visitors a chance to work hands-on with Chinese and native herbal medicines.

Originally a paradise garden planted by owner Joe Hollis over twenty-five years ago, Mountain Gardens now boasts the widest variety of medicinal herbs on the East coast.

A constantly shifting community runs the nursery. The center offers an involved eleven-week apprenticeship program, and also hosts shorter term stays for participants willing to work in trade for their food. The environment at Mountain Gardens is radically holistic; apprentices live together in alternative housing ranging from antique cabins to yurts, cultivating wild food and cooking communal meals in an outdoor kitchen.

One unique feature at Mountain Gardens is the help-yourself library and tincture lab. Guests are invited to educate and diagnose themselves, if they wish, with a massive variety of dried ingredients ready to be mixed into medicinal remedies.

The concept of paradise gardening is a movement toward evolving the gardener into more of a caretaker than an owner. The ultimate goal is to alter the natural ecology slightly, so that it sustains benefits while not depleting itself.

Mountain Gardens also offers workshops and tinctures, seeds and dried herbs for sale. For more info visit mountaingardensherbs.com.

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*Please remember that most natural remedies are not FDA approved, and are not a substitute to regularly prescribed drugs or doctor recommendations. Conduct thorough research and check all labels for any side effects before taking any and all herbal and natural substances included on this page.

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Folk Remedies: Useful Plants From Your Backyard

Story by Yuri Woodstock

There exists, under our feet, a cornucopia of edible or medicinal plants, fungi and algae. The wide variety of beneficial species in Appalachia—and their application to a multitude of ailments—comprises a massive realm of knowledge. A Peterson field guide lists wild sarsaparilla root, for example, as a folk remedy for stomachaches, coughs, burns, boils, ulcers, fevers, infections and rheumatism, among others.

The trick is to start somewhere, with herbs that are already abundant in your surroundings. The following is a brief guide to using a few common Appalachian plants in less-than-common ways. Information was gathered from Peterson’s Guide to Medicinal Plants and Herbs and plant expert Joe Hollis.

The first on our list is already propagated for consumption and found ubiquitous in the American diet. **Corn (Zea mays)**, however, has another side altogether, contained in its silk. A simple tea from corn silk strands is known as a diuretic and is beneficial to the urinary tract. It is used to treat cystitis, urethritis and prostatitis, and prevents the formation of bladder stones. Corn silk is also considered useful in childbirth, encouraging contractions of the uterus. Corn seeds contain allantoin, a cell-proliferant (in common with comfrey) that speeds the healing of wounds.

Another vegetable with uncommon uses is **pumpkin** *(Cucurbita pepo)*. The crushed seeds are considered a powerful anti-worming remedy. Mix with milk and honey and drink at breakfast for three days, then purge with castor oil. Pumpkin is also rich in immunity-building zinc, and the juice is beneficial externally for burns and rashes.

One extremely widespread species is **Plantago major**, or **common plantain**, a plant usually found in domestic lawns. A tea from the leaves is thought to ease stomach ailments and diarrhea. Plantain is known as an antibacterial, expectorant (cleanses lungs), an astringent (discourages bleeding) and an anti-inflammatory.

Continued on next page
Home Remedies Both Old & New

Vinegar

White vinegar is made by fermenting and then purifying corn alcohol. Vinegar’s high acidity makes it an effective home cleaning agent for killing mold, bacteria and other germs. It also leaves surfaces shiny and clean without leaving behind any chemical residue. Five uses for vinegar include:

1. Mix equal parts vinegar and water to clean no-wax floors, windows, refrigerators, microwaves, kitchen and bathroom countertops, grills and cutting boards.
2. Add 1 cup of vinegar to your toilet bowl, let sit 1/2 an hour and scrub clean.
3. Add 1 cup vinegar to the bottom of your dishwasher before starting the cycle.
4. Spray vinegar near outside openings like doorways or window sills to deter ants. Placing a bowl of vinegar on kitchen countertops will kill fruit flies.
5. Soak sponges, loofahs and dishrags in vinegar overnight to remove smells and stains.

Vinegar in your laundry

Adding 1/4 to 1/2 cup of white distilled vinegar to your rinse cycle will be gentle on fabrics, but strong enough to break up soap and detergent residues. Use vinegar to remove: soap buildup that makes black clothes look dull; campfire or musty smells; armpit smells from athletic clothes; mold; mustard and tomato sauce stains; or renew colors in bright clothing.

Baking Soda

Baking soda is amphoteric, meaning it can react as either an acid or a base. This allows it to regulate the pH of substances that it comes in contact with. If a substance is too acidic or too alkaline, baking soda can neutralize it, making it an effective home cleaning product. Five uses for baking soda around the house include:

1. Sprinkle on carpet stains or smells and let sit before vacuuming.
2. Sprinkle on the bottom of garbage or recycling cans, litter boxes or pet beds.
3. Add to washing machine to boost your detergent’s power and balance pH.
4. Mix baking soda with water and use as a scrub to get tea and coffee stains out of kitchenware.
5. Remove burned-on food from pots and pans by soaking them in baking soda and water.

Uses of baking soda for beauty include:

1. Dip your toothbrush into baking soda to neutralize mouth odors and whiten teeth.
2. Pat on your underarms for an all-natural deodorant.
3. Mix with water and use to exfoliate your skin.

Lemons

Lemons are acidic and have both antibacterial and antiseptic properties. Lemon juice can also be combined with baking soda or vinegar for better cleaning results. BEWARE: never leave lemon juice sitting too long, because it is very powerful! Five uses for lemons include:

1. Wood furniture: mix equal parts lemon juice and olive oil for a deep clean and shine.
2. Clean cutting boards by rubbing lemon across surfaces.
3. Remove tupperware stains by squeezing lemon and sprinkling baking soda into containers.
4. Remove dark mold and mildew spots with a one part lemon juice, one part baking soda paste. Allow to sit for 2 hours, then rinse off.
5. Submerge lemon slices in a bowl of water and microwave for 30 seconds to remove odors and break up stain in microwave.

Lemons in your Laundry

Remove blood, grass and rust stains on clothing by rubbing lemon juice and salt onto the mark, let sit, rinse thoroughly, then wash as usual. Soak whites in 1/2 cup lemon juice and one gallon of hot water or add 1/2 cup lemon juice during the rinse cycle to brighten your whites!

Useful Plants From Your Backyard

Continued from previous page

Externally, this plant is especially useful for bug bites and stings. Chew up a leaf and press the substance on a bee sting; the pain usually stops within a minute.

If you’ve ever encountered stinging nettle (Urtica dioica), you probably knew it all too well. But nettle sting is actually known to promote circulation, and has been used to treat arthritis. A leaf tea is also considered useful against any sort of itch, anemia, gout, glandular diseases and spleen ailments. It is also a depressant, and has a relaxing effect.

St. John’s Wort (Hypericum perforatum) is a yellow flowering herb common to this region but originally from Europe. Tinctures and oil extracts can be used externally on wounds, burns, sores and varicose veins. St. John’s Wort is thought to be especially useful in healing areas where nerve damage has occurred. Internally, this remedy has been used to treat depression, anxiety and PMS.

Quick tip: use the lemon itself to scrub surfaces.
Editorial

Appalachia’s Christmas Future

If Charles Dickens were alive today spinning Christmas yarns, he would be writing about the health and well-being of Appalachia. He wouldn’t write about how industries “keep the lights on.” He’d worry about the grim conditions that keep the hospitals full and the environment foul.

As Dickens heard demands for cuts in environmental and safety regulations—as well as health care access for working Americans—his attention would turn to the calls of struggling families seeking hope and a new era.

Dickens might not be tempted to wax rhapsodic about the ingenuity of American industry. Instead, he would expound on the frailty of human nature in the face of overwhelming greed.

In A Christmas Carol for our time, Scrooge would be a wholly-owned self-interested corporation focused exclusively on the bottom line.

And of course, he would be visited by the three Christmas ghosts.

Appalachian Christmas Past would take Scrooge on a tour of the public health, labor and environmental justice movements. He’d see the moments when people fought for their rights, but lost to the financial power of small super-affluent special interests.

Appalachian Christmas Present would float Scrooge through the grotesquely dismal insurance claims process for black lung disease and cancer...and the many insults and treatment denials the current health care system hurls at the dying.

Appalachian Christmas Future would bring Scrooge to an isolated graveyard, surrounded by sterile rocky fields where toxic streams flow down to a dead and oily sea.

But how does the redemption that Dickens writes into the Victorian-era tale come to Appalachia?

Picture our Scrooge, flinging open the window Christmas morning, realizing that its not too late. Imagine the now-reformed-geezer rallying bipartisan support for environmental protection and humane health-care policies. Imagine his campaigns to put new life into local businesses like home weatherization, renewable energy and farmers markets.

Most of all, imagine Scrooge on his knees, praying for forgiveness, remembering what Marley told him: “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business.”

As the joy of the moment fills us with blessings for each and every one of us, let’s take the pen from Dickens and help draft the happy ending—and new beginning—for our Treasured Appalachia.

Season’s Greetings, Appalachia—here’s a toast to a New Year working together for a healthier future.

Viewpoint

A Broken Relationship in Southern Appalachia

By Rev. Pat Watkins

As Christians on this earth, we are called to be in relationships with God, with each other and with creation. We care for God’s people with a special place in our hearts for the poor, the oppressed, children and those who have no voice. But with so many other problems facing us, who has time to think about the planet?

In truth, the earth also has no voice, and in recent history has begun to be oppressed. It is time for Christians to stand up in defense of God’s creation.

The prophet Hosea took the three relationships with God to a new level; he knew the connection between our relationship with the Almighty and our relationship with His creation. When the Israelites had failed in their relationships with God and each other, Hosea indicted them: “There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea are perishing.” (Hosea 4:1a-3 NRSV)

Hosea connected these relationships in such a way that if our connections with God and each other are not right, then God’s creation will actually provide the evidence.

Mountaintop removal coal mining, taking place in central Appalachia, provides evidence that the land is mourning, the wild animals and birds of the air are languishing and even the fish of the sea are perishing. To use Hosea’s theology, perhaps the evidence of mountaintop removal points to a failure, not just of our relationship to God’s creation, but also a failure in our relationships with each other and with God.

Mountaintop removal mining is an environmental disaster, no doubt. But could it also be a relationship disaster? Relationships are hard; none are perfect. We all make relationship mistakes that cause pain and hurt and suffering for ourselves, others—even those we love the most—and for the planet itself.

As the health of the mountains in Appalachia deteriorates, so dwindles the health of the people who live there. It is no coincidence that when our relationship with God’s creation suffers, our relationships with each other suffer as well.

Our desire for cheap electricity somehow has given us “permission” to abuse not only our neighbors in Appalachia but also God’s mountains. Somehow we have come to believe the mountains belong to us to do with as we please, but the Psalmist says otherwise; “In God’s hands are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are God’s also.” (Psalm 95:4 NRSV)

Faith speaks to abusive and broken relationships, whether with each other or the planet. But isn’t faith about healing broken relationships?

Perhaps faith can be and maybe even has to be part of the solution. Faith heals broken relationships; faith directs us in how to appropriately live out our connection with God through our ties with each other and with God’s creation.

When our relationships with God and each other are redeemed, God’s creation will celebrate, even the mountains of Appalachia will celebrate. Thanks be to God, the creator of heaven and earth!

*Rev. Pat Watkins is the executive director for Caretakers of God’s Creation, a church and community ministry of the United Methodist Church. He can be reached at caretakersofcreation@me.com.*
Coal Ash: One Woman’s Fight To Save A Community  
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A Likely Carcinogen

According to EPA reports, “If you live near an unlined wet ash pond and you get your water from a well, you may have as much as a 1 in 50 chance of getting cancer from drinking arsenic-contaminated water.” It didn’t take long for Young to realize that something was seriously wrong. “I’ve lost 6 neighbors to cancer,” said Young. “Every Sunday more people are added to the prayer list.”

“I’ve had melanoma,” continued Young. “I’m past the seven year mark for survival, but I also now have precancerous conditions for breast and thyroid cancer, but no health insurance to get the recommended follow-up treatment since the biopsies. I try not to think about it.”

Ohio Department of Health reports show that Meigs County has the highest rate of death from cancer in the state (second to Perry County, also a large coal-producing area) and the highest rate of death for lung and bronchus cancer.

Young obtained the tax plot map of the townships in her county and started highlighting the people on her road that had been touched by cancer. Most of the lands were highlighted.

“I remember when Helen got cancer, she lived just around the corner—less than a 1/2 mile away,” said Young. “My heart sank. She was the closest person to a saint I’ve ever known.”

“You could see the power plant emissions from [Helen’s] porch. It’s a hard thing. Her husband retired from AEP (American Electric Power) as an electrician. There are several people on our road who worked for them. But we all feel the consequences—whether it was us that collected the paycheck or not.”

Another factor contributing to poor health in Meigs County is the high rates of uninsured residents. The state health department lists Meigs among the eight Ohio counties with the fewest primary care physicians per person.

The county also suffers from one of the highest rates of asthma incidence in the state and has no hospital. Without primary care physicians or health insurance, people in Meigs County are less likely to have early detection of illness and have less of an ability to afford care once they have been diagnosed.

It isn’t just humans that are affected by coal ash either. Several of Young’s neighbors report cattle and poultry losses to coal ash, and many hunters have found tumors in the deer they’ve shot. Young’s dog, Charlie, was found with inoperable cancer in his brain and throughout his digestive tract and lungs. She lost him six months after he was diagnosed.

Rewriting the Regulations

Last fall, the EPA held several public hearings and commentary on two proposed regulations for handling coal ash. One option would require that coal ash be federally regulated and would classify the ash as a hazardous material. A second option will allow coal ash to remain a non-hazardous waste and would continue to be regulated state by state.

Young favors the first option, but only if there are additional regulations for beneficial use. Stricter regulations will make storing the ash more costly for the coal industry, so without any provisions for this, more of it will be applied as beneficial use in communities like hers.

“It may be beneficial to industry,” said Young. “But not to us.”

Taking Action

Young is among the most outspoken opponents of the coal industry, focusing her most recent efforts on coal ash. “The people who get active are the people who know how they are being affected,” she said.

She has been involved in community organizing and educational outreach to civic, state and national groups, and worked on various documentaries including Coal Country. In 2006, she received the Women of Peace Power Foundation Award for her activity in the True Cost of Coal tours.

“Every time another person dies, it’s made it harder for me to ignore what the consequences of trying to stay here are,” said Young. “But, I don’t think any industry has the right to render an entire region unsuitable to sustain life. No one has that right.”

To find the distribution of coal ash ponds in your area, visit www.sierraclub.org/coal/coalash.

Coal Miner’s Health  
Continued from page 19

diesel equipment in place, miners are left to wonder if it will be enough. “NIOSH cannot definitely determine that current diesel regulations will result in the elimination of all diesel health concerns,” stated Ed Blosser, Public Affairs Officer for NIOSH. “The reason for this uncertainty is that there is still incomplete information concerning the level of exposure to diesel emissions that may cause health effects.”

Anyone living within the coalfields will tell you that a coal miner who spends his or her life working in mines will be left with little health to enjoy retirement. Many miners make every effort to warn their children about following their footsteps into the mines, hoping the next generation will strive for a better education and avoid a similar fate.

As life would have it, many of those children become enticed by the high wages of coal mining as compared to other jobs in the coalfields. They look only at the short-term gains while ignoring the long-term losses.

As one of those young miners so eloquently put it, “You’ve got to die someday.”

Black Lung Disease  
Continued from page 19

experienced, they will have an enormously positive impact.”

Burns, who grew up in Matheny, West Virginia, lost her father to black lung disease. “I was still a teenager,” Burns said. “The magnitude of his loss on me and my family cannot possibly be put into words. It is a reality that is experienced all over the coalfields, far away from the urban centers that benefit from the ultimate sacrifices of coal miners like my father.”

“Like so many other families, we never received any money from federal black lung payments,” Burns said. “It is a cumbersome system with an extremely low number of people who actually benefit... The system is set up to turn down many people who actually have the disease.”

ACCORDING TO THE OHIO DEPT. OF HEALTH:

Meigs County has the highest rate of uninsured children (18.6% compared to the state average of 9.8%) and second highest rate of uninsured people for all ages (17.9% compared to the state average of 11.2%). Patient ratio: 3,852 people per physician compared to the state average of 852 people per physician.

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December 2010 / January 2011
Music on the Mountaintop Donates $5,500 to Help Appalachian Voices

The burgeoning annual Music on the Mountaintop festival (MOTM) recently donated $5,500 of their 2010 profits to Appalachian Voices.

Festival organizer Jimmy Hunt shook hands with Appalachian Voices’ Executive Director Willa Mays (pictured center) to seal the deal in a special function attended by AV staff and board.

Although new to the mountaintop removal activism scene, Jimmy Hunt said he chose Appalachian Voices because of our dedication to the environmental and cultural integrity of the Appalachian region.

“I am super thrilled to work with a great group of people working in the Boone area and fighting the same cause,”’ Jimmy said. “[Appalachian Voices does] a good job of encouraging people to be excited and is such a good cause to fight for because it has such a ripple effect.”

MOTM grew to a larger and more extensive music festival this year, adding two days to a larger musical line up. Jimmy still sees improvements in the future, however, like continuing the sustainability initiative of the festival by aiming for more recycling, combating festival consumption and bridging the connection between music, community and the environment.

AV Helps RAN Secure a Benny

PNC and USB are the latest banks to issue strong statements about severely limiting their funding of mountaintop removal mining. Rainforest Action Network (RAN) has been the main force behind this grassroots campaign to pressure banks to cease public financing of mountaintop removal mining projects.

The Business Ethic Network recently awarded RAN a Benny Award for their work; Appalachian Voices received a supporting award for providing the data on coal companies that made RAN’s campaign possible.

Trees On Fire: Music for the Mountains

Trees on Fire, a band based in Charlotteville, Va., plays an unique, passionate and danceable blend of “reggae, hip hop, rock, electronica, classical, klezmer, funk and beyond.” They have recently been touring the Southeast and blowing listeners away with their high-energy performances, including a special show in our hometown of Boone, N.C., at Galileo’s Bar and Cafe. Trees on Fire is donating 5% of the proceeds of their new album, Organica, to Appalachian Voices. Check them out on www.myspace.com/treesonfiremusic.

Riverkeeper Featured on Expedition Blue Planet

In September, Appalachian Voices’ Upper Watauga Riverkeeper traveled back to Harriman, Tenn., to meet with Alexandra Cousteau and Expedition Blue Planet to film an episode about the TVA coal ash disaster.

The team, along with research partners at the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute, spent the day testing fish on the Emory River and conducting interviews in the shadow of the Kingston coal-fired power plant.

“The TVA coal ash spill was the most horrific and gutwrenching environmental disaster I’ve ever seen on a waterway,” Donna Lisenby said during the interview. The Riverkeeper was one of the first and only independent scientists to paddle through the TVA spill shortly after it occurred.

Expedition Blue Planet is presented by National Geographic. Visit alexandra coustea.org and nationalgeographic.com/water.

AV Joins Coalition to Urge for Stronger Ozone Regulations

Appalachian Voices joined a national coalition of over 200 organizations in urging the EPA to adopt stronger proposed ground-level ozone regulations. According to the coalition, stricter rules on smog pollution would save 12,000 lives and prevent tens of thousands of asthma and heart attacks each year. Top national groups that signed on include the American Lung Association, Interfaith Power and Light, Sierra Club, National Latino Coalition on Climate Change and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Visit plowsharegroup.com/media_downloads/ala_ozone_push.php
AV’s Riverkeeper Initiates Case Against Kentucky Coal Companies

Coalition Files NOIS Over Claims of Falsified Monitoring Data

Appalachian Voices’ Upper Watauga Riverkeeper team assembled a lineup of heavy-hitting environmental groups in October to file suit against three Kentucky mining companies for violating the Clean Water Act.

A coalition including Appalachian Voices, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, Kentucky Riverkeeper and Waterkeeper Alliance filed a sixty day “intent to sue” notice letter alleging that three companies operating in eastern Kentucky exceeded pollution discharge limits in their permits, consistently failed to conduct the required monitoring of their discharges and, in many cases, submitted false monitoring data to the state agencies charged with protecting the public.

Joining in the lawsuit were several local residents impacted by the dumping of mining waste into Kentucky’s waterways.

The three companies, IGC Knott, IGC Hazard and Fraser Creek Mining, were cited for inaccurate or false discharge monitoring reports (DMRs), water quality monitoring reporting required by the Environmental Protection Agency. The reports are supposed to be monitored for accuracy by the Kentucky Division of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement with enforcement oversight by the Kentucky Division of Water. Permits issued by the state allow coal mining companies to discharge limited amounts of pollutants into nearby streams and rivers; those same permits, however, also require industries to carefully monitor and report pollution discharges—such as manganese, iron, total suspended solids and pH—to state officials.

“The sheer number of violations we found while looking over these companies’ monitoring reports is astounding,” said Donna Lisenby of Appalachian Voices. “It shows a systematic and pervasive pattern of misinformation. These companies are making a mockery of their legal responsibility under the Clean Water Act and, more troubling, their moral obligation to the people of the state of Kentucky.”

According to Donna Lisenby, the claims brought, “may just be the tip of the iceberg when it comes to irresponsible mining reporting practices and a failure in the state’s monitoring program.” When the Riverkeeper team was in the London regional offices of the Kentucky Department of Surface Mining, they found stack after stack of DMRs from more than 60 coal mines and processing facilities covered in dust on desks.

“We don’t think they had been reviewed for three years.” said Donna Lisenby.

The plaintiffs are being represented by lawyers with the Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center, the Capua Law Firm and the Pace Environmental Litigation Clinic.

ICG, owner of subsidiaries ICG Knott and ICG Hazard, responded that they would promptly investigate the allegations violations of the Clean Water Act, stating that “The company is completely committed to conducting its operations in accordance with applicable laws.”

Under the Clean Water Act, the companies have sixty days to respond to the allegations made in the notice letter, after which the plaintiffs have stated that if all violations have not been corrected, the coalition plans to file complaint in federal district court. The 60-day time period ends in early December with more legal filings expected shortly after The Voice press date. For the most current updates, visit AppalachianVoices.org/ky-litigation.

D.C. Team Thanks Citizens For Their Help in Congress

It is critical that the Appalachian people receive permanent protection in the form of a federal law that bans mountaintop removal because whatever the Obama Administration may choose to do, it could always be overturned by the next President.

Congressional election season may be over, but that doesn’t mean the work for the Appalachian Voices team in D.C. stops for a minute. As Congress reconvened for the lame duck session in November, we teamed up with citizens who are directly impacted by mountaintop removal to continue delivering our message to Congress - “They’re blowing up our mountains and there oughta be a law to stop them.”

Residents from Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia met with the offices of more than two dozen key political leaders to discuss the urgent need to address toxic waste from mountaintop removal. Mountain residents spoke with the offices of Senate Majority leader Harry Reid, Majority Whip Dick Durbin, Environment and Public Works Committee Chair Barbara Boxer and many other critical committee members and target Senators.

The fight continues into the 112th Congress, and we’re going to need all of your assistance encouraging officials in Washington to protect Appalachia.

Thank you for being a part of our shared effort to end mountaintop removal.

Sincerely,
Appalachian Voices’ D.C. Team

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AppalachianVoices

BUSINESS LEAGUE MEMBERS
NEW & RENEWING FOR SEPT/OCT/NOV 2010
Abigail Higgins Gardening Services.......Vineyard Haven, MA
Early Girl Eatery.......Asheville, N.C.
Town & Country Landscaping.......Hickory, N.C.

& Special Thanks to Music on the Mountaintop!

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To become a business member visit www.AppalachianVoices.org or call us toll free at 877-APP-VOICE

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your impact
See page 28 to learn how
Since November 2009, Grandfather Mountain has been operated by a non-profit foundation. Our goal is to protect the natural wonder of this magnificent landmark while offering the public access to its fantastic scenery. We invite you to join us in protecting this amazing place. Find out how you can help preserve Grandfather’s legacy for future generations by visiting, volunteering or making a donation.

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The Eastern Wild Turkey
TREKKING THROUGH THE WINTER TERRAIN

Story by Jillian Randel

As I rambled up the hill through the tree farm near my house, my dog heard the crunching noise before I did. It was the distinct sound of thousands of newly fallen leaves shuffling around. Something was trampling through the woods to our left. I saw the first one.

Wild turkeys! They were foraging the ground for insects, fruits, acorns, nuts and little bugs, scratching to see what hidden treasures they could find.

My dog whined then gave a bark, the foragers all stopped in their tracks. Eyeing us through the trees, the first one took off in flight, then the second, third... ten turkeys total, all female. The females are much plainer than the males. They lack a beard, which on a turkey is a small tuft of feathers on his chest. Females are also missing a wattle, the red bunch of skin that hangs from a turkey's chin. Most interestingly, the male's head changes from red, blue, or white depending on the season. The males have an added bonus of an extra spur, or claw, on their long, stocky, pink or gray legs.

The male struts around, fanning out his tail feathers, and making a distinct gobble, which can be heard up to a mile away (these male birds demand attention, oh yes they do). He lowers his wings and seductively drags the tips of his feathers along the ground, to attract the female turkeys. (And yes, that was plural. Male turkeys mate with many females in a season, not just one.)

Females lay anywhere from 4 to 18 eggs, incubating them in shallow depressions hidden under brush for a month before the young turkey poult's hatch. The poults learn to fend for themselves quickly, as female turkeys bear sole responsibility for raising their young.

The Eastern Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*) is the most abundant of the five subspecies of native turkeys that exist in the United States. They range the entire eastern side of the country from southern Canada to Mexico, thriving in mixed hardwood forests with wide openings, large pastures, fields and marshes.

During pre-colonial times, the turkey was a staple in Native American diets and became a necessity to the first Europeans arriving in America in the 1600s. The birds were found across all of America as Europeans pushed westward. Throughout the 1700 and 1800s, as woodland habitat disappeared and population demands increased hunting, the wild turkey began to disappear from its habitat. By 1920, the wild turkey had been hunted to near extinction and could only be found in the most remote places. It disappeared completely from 18 of the original 39 states it once occupied.

After the Great Depression and following World War II, reintroduction projects were implemented to restore the wild turkey. The species made a huge comeback as a result of trap and transplant programs. The wild turkeys were captured from their remote hideouts, bred and brought back to thrive on their native lands, which were simultaneously undergoing reforestation projects.

Populations were estimated to be around 30,000 in the early 1990s and today's estimates are around seven million. With the exception of Alaska, every state in the U.S. now has huntable turkey populations.

Unlike domesticated turkeys, wild turkeys are a smart bunch. They have great eye-sight and are extremely alert and wary of their surroundings. It often takes two men, one to call the bird and one ready and waiting with a gun, to bag a wild turkey.

Hunting seasons officially began in 1991, with each state setting the rules on bag limits and hunting season dates. Check out nwtf.org for details on your state’s regulations.

Since my original sighting of the turkeys, I have seen these ladies on almost every walk through the tree farm near my house. Perhaps there is good foraging up there, or maybe, somehow, they know that area is protected from hunting. I can say one thing, I like having my own little flock in the woods to keep an eye on, and I think they keep my dog daydreaming about having his own little turkey flock too.
The above photograph detail was taken as part of Daniel Shea’s 2009 Plume exhibit, a series of images documenting what he considers “an unusually dense concentration of coal-fired power plants” in southeast Ohio. Plume is a follow-up to Shea’s 2007 exhibit, Removing Mountains, in which he examined the “cultural implications of extracting coal from Appalachian mountains.” Both exhibits are on display now through January 28, 2011 at Berea College’s Appalachian Center in Kentucky.