

FREE

# The Appalachian VOICE

Dec 2010/Jan 2011

Appalachia's

## Health Report



ALSO INSIDE: The Hemlocks! The Hemlocks! • Breaks Interstate Park • The History of Protest Songs

# The APPALACHIAN VOICE



A publication of  
**AppalachianVoices**  
 191 Howard Street • Boone, NC 28607  
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Appalachian Voices is committed to protecting the land, air and water of the central and southern Appalachian region. Our mission is to empower people to defend our region's rich natural and cultural heritage by providing them with tools and strategies for successful grassroots campaigns. Appalachian Voices sponsors the Upper Watauga Riverkeeper® and is also a Member of the Waterkeeper® Alliance.

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## 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 to you to join us and become protectors of Appalachia’s health—both human and ecological.

*Willa*



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“Snow Frozen On,” a 3-D painting by Lowell Hayes, (photo by Andrew Miller).  
 See page 9 for full story.

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# GET INVOLVED environmental & cultural events in the region

To be included in our listing of environmental and cultural events, please email [voice@appvoices.org](mailto:voice@appvoices.org). Deadline for the next issue will be Friday, January 21, 2011 at 5 p.m. for events taking place between Feb. 5 and April 5.

## Masters of the Night: The True Story of Bats

Now-Jan 2: An exhibit to dispel popular misconceptions about bats, describe their ecological importance and give visitors an appreciation of the true wonders of the bat world through multi-sensory interactive displays, a Gothic castle and lifelike settings. Call: (866)202-6223 or visit: [grayfossilmuseum.com](http://grayfossilmuseum.com).

## Plume and Removing Mountains

Now-Jan 28: Daniel Shae narrates the social, political and cultural impacts of mountaintop removal and coal-fired power plants in West Virginia and Appalachia. The Appalachian Center, Berea College, Ky. Visit: [berea.edu/appalachiancenter/events/default.asp](http://berea.edu/appalachiancenter/events/default.asp).

## The Hemlocks! The Hemlocks! Grief and Celebration by Lowell Hayes

Dec 3-Mar 19: This series of paintings is a celebration of the life and beauty of the Tsuga canadensis, the Eastern Hemlock, and of the rare Tsuga caroliniana, the Carolina Hemlock, which only live in the mountains of N.C., S.C. and Ga. At the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts, Boone, N.C. Visit: [turchincenter.org/](http://turchincenter.org/)

## Community Owned Renewable Energy with AIRE

Dec 4: The Appalachian Institute for Renewable Energy will be holding a workshop on energy issues pertaining to small-scale security, sustainability and renewability. Class held from 1-3pm in Appalachia, Va. Visit: [wisecountylocal.org](http://wisecountylocal.org).

## Blue Mtn School Local Gifts Fundraiser

Dec 4 & 11: Shop for local and seasonal gifts. Blue Mountain School, Floyd, Va. Contact [shelly@blue-mountainschool.net](mailto:shelly@blue-mountainschool.net) or call (540)745-4234.

## Two-Part Permaculture Class

Dec 4 & 11: Foothills Connect Class on permaculture, poly-cropping, successful forest agriculture systems and farming perennial forest crops for commercial production. Cost: \$69 and runs 9-5pm in Rutherfordton, N.C. Email [ffanalyst@foothillsconnect.com](mailto:ffanalyst@foothillsconnect.com) or call (828)288-1650.

## Southeast Construction & Demolition Recycling Conference

Dec 8: Learn about recycling at residential and commercial construction sites, building products made from recycled materials, what other communities are doing and how you can implement alternative practices in your community. Charlotte, N.C. Contact the Carolina Recycling Association at (877)972-0007 or email [staff@cra-recycle.org](mailto:staff@cra-recycle.org).

## CSA Workshop

Dec 9: Learn about planning, marketing, record-keeping and post-harvest handling of CSAs.

## 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](http://ssawg.org) to register.



Jean Mills, Southern SAWG conference coordinator, harvesting lettuces on her farm near Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Posana Cafe Meeting Room, Asheville, N.C. Registration required: \$15; 10am-3pm. Visit: [asapconnections.org/](http://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/](http://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 Appalachia! RSVP to [kate@appvoices.org](mailto:kate@appvoices.org) or call (202)266-0479.

## Ski Beech Winterfest

Jan 8-9: Come enjoy live music, bathing beauty, big air contest, village rail jam, cardboard box derby, food cookouts, demos and ski beech sports sale. Beech Mountain, N.C. Visit: [skibeech.com](http://skibeech.com).

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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/1505](http://organicgrowersschool.org/content/1505)

## 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](http://ashevillage.org)

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# This GREEN House

## 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 top of their old house, but told them they wouldn’t even have to move out during the process. “Why destroy an old house and put all that [debris] in a landfill, then rebuild a foundation and basement again?” asked Sorrell.

### Keeping it Local

As you walk in the door, a mosaic of wood greets you. Pine wall paneling decorates the inside walls. Scarlet oak flooring—much of it fallen naturally on the Sorell’s land—stretches across the open-spaced, 1,200 square foot home. A long, sturdy birch kitchen table—handmade by Tom Sternal, owner of Elkland Handwerke—stands proudly next to the kitchen. Plain wood trim—reclaimed from their old roof—frames

the windows and doors.

“All of the pine and timbers inside, and a lot of the oak and maple flooring, is off our own land,” said Sorell. “You can go there now and you can’t tell that anything was cut.”

The tall, multi-colored maple cabinetry and the maple flooring lining the guest bedroom is not entirely from the Sorell’s land. “We didn’t have a lot of maple,” said Sorell. “But we also didn’t want to cut [more] maple from our own land.” Enter Snyder’s stock of wood.

“Different people have him cut trees from their yard that they don’t want,” explained Sorell. “But they also don’t need the wood, so he sells it for them.”

All of the wood was milled locally, some on their own land with a portable sawmill and some at a mill called the Sawdoctor, down the road from where they live.

“The cost is a little bit more, but it’s all local,” said Sorell. “When we started thinking about this project last January, everybody was out of work. The mills had shut down practically.”

“We were able to give them business and keep some of them going a bit longer.”

The countertops are comprised of recycled tiles mixed with marble squares of tile remainders from people’s orders at the local tile store. It is rustic and natural without being overdone.

### Solar Flair

The house is filled with natural light and heat, thanks to intentional passive solar methods. Sorell and her husband are adamant about solar heating.

“It was almost impossible to find windows that let heat in



but don’t let it back out,” said Sorell. Most windows are made to limit the heat that goes out, which also limits heat coming in. She persisted, and finally found Marvin, a company that carries a window model with a high solar heat gain.

“Every afternoon it is so warm in this house,” said Sorell. “We’ve hardly had to use the heat.” Sorell and her husband do have a woodstove that they use for heating and cooking in the winter, as well as a propane heater as backup. They also have a solar water heater attached to their metal roof.

### Finishing Touches

The house is insulated with structured insulated panels (SIPs). These are made of styrofoam encased in plywood, but are considered “green” because they are ef-

cient and airtight—and made in the U.S. SIPs are also structural, limiting the need for additional structural wood.

The guest bathroom adds a touch of Mexico to the house. The flooring is made of marmoleum—the original flax-seed, eco-friendly version of linoleum—that Sorell found in the left-over pile at Build it Naturally in Asheville, NC. The reasonably priced version of this natural coating had a price, however—it was mustard yellow.

“I had to go with the Mexican theme from there,” said Sorell. “So we did the [recycled] blue and yellow tiling in the shower.”

Completing the bathroom is a low flush toilet from the ReStore, Habitat for Humanity’s used and surplus building store, and a refinished antique cabinet with a Mexican sink bowl inserted into the top—colorful and fun and a perfect match with the tile.

A concoction of antique pieces, restored furniture and reused appliances fills the rest of the house. Mimicking the house’s outer shell, the inside is a perfect combination of local, old, new and used—proving that you don’t have to start new to go green.

### RESOURCES

To learn more about the products, builders and materials the Sorells used for their house, please visit the sites below.

**DALTILE**.....daltile.com  
**LAND ARK**.....landarknw.com  
**BUILD IT NATURALLY**.....builditnaturally.com  
**BLUE RIDGE BUILDING SUPPLY**.....brbs.net/v3  
**ReStore**.....habitat.org/restores  
**MARVIN WINDOWS & DOORS**.....marvin.com  
**MOUNTAIN WORKS**.....mtnworks.prayaga.org  
**ELKLAND HANDWERKE**.....elkland.com



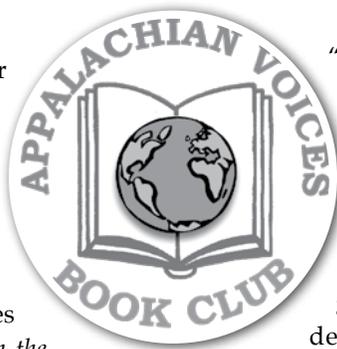
Above: Local stoneworker T.T. Walker created a rock climbing wall to serve as a chimney, personally fetching the rocks from local water sources. Sorell gave him freedom of creativity, asking only that he incorporate a sunbeam or sunburst into his artistic creation. Left: the restored antique cabinet that was turned into a bathroom sink.

# Last Child in the Woods: Nature Nurtures Creativity

Review by Jillian Randel

Increased outdoor playtime translates to higher levels of creativity, better critical thinking skills and a greater sense of confidence for today's children, Richard Louv poses in his book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit 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 not 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.

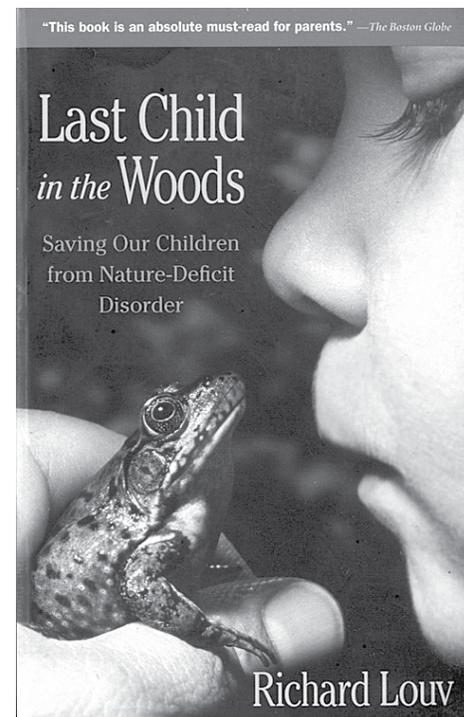
"Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young,"

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](http://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.

**MOVIE REVIEWS**  
by Megan Perdue

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](http://coalinkentucky.com) for more resources and information.

## Coal Controversy Divides Communities

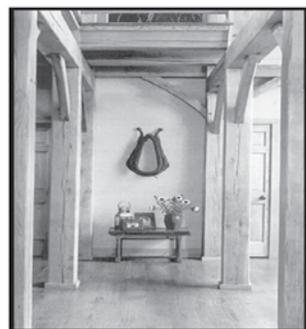
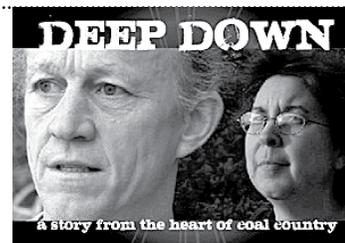
*Deep Down: A Story from the Heart of Coal Country* demonstrates the polarization and dichotomy of Appalachian coal issues—especially mountaintop removal—by characterizing two individuals on opposite ends of the issue spectrum.

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](http://deepdownfilm.org) for resources and information.



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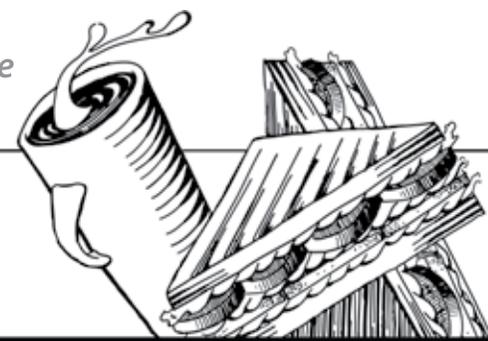
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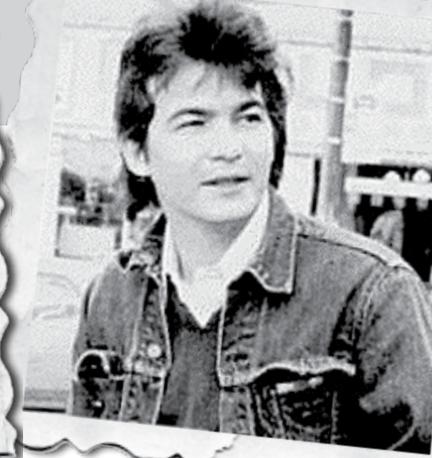
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# MINING OUR HERITAGE: Protest Songs Echo Coal Miners' Lament Through the Decades

*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

"And Paddy won't you take me  
back to Muhlenberg County,  
Down by the Green River, where  
paradise lay.  
Well I'm sorry, my son, but  
you're too late in askin'.  
Mr. Peabody's coal train has  
hauled it away."



Songwriters of old (and new) times who have sung about the struggles of coal miners include (l-r): Billy Edd Wheeler, Vernon Dalhart and John Prine.

Ask anyone if they know a song about coal mining and chances are they'll mention "Paradise," by John Prine—a lament for the lost innocence of the award-winning singer's beloved Kentucky birthplace before it was ravaged and sullied by coal-mining giant Peabody Energy.

But Prine's elegy, recorded in 1971, is only one example in a long lineage of songs that sprang from social upheaval in Appalachia. And, often the target of such upheaval landed in the deep shafts and dangerous strip mines of the coal industry.

At the turn of the 20th Century, the people of Appalachia faced a double-pronged paradox—the struggle between being forced to work in the mines for lack of better income and the knowledge that the process took a tremendous physical toll on the people and on the pristine mountain landscapes their forebears had known so well.

Because unionization was often non-existent or the cause of violent bloodshed, residents found more creative outlets in an attempt to express their pain and often outrage of the atrocities wrought by Big Coal.

"The songs and ballads which sprang from the soil of the anthracite coal region have in them the crude strength, the naturalness and freshness of things that grow in the earth," George Gershon Korson wrote in his seminal 1960s work, "Minstrels of the Mine Patch."

"Then the coal company came  
with the world's largest  
shovel  
And they tortured the timber and  
stripped all the land,  
Well, they dug for their coal 'til  
the land was forsaken,  
Then they wrote it all down as  
the progress of man.

— Paradise, John Prine

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 darling ones, too,  
He's only a miner been killed in the ground,  
Only a miner and one more is found,  
Killed by an accident, no one can tell,  
His mining's all over, poor miner farewell.

— "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.

Jason Reagan is a freelance writer living in the mountains of western North Carolina. He can be reached at [jasonpreagan@gmail.com](mailto:jasonpreagan@gmail.com).

"Appalachian protest songs have always interested me. I have always been drawn to the story or the worker or common man and feel that those stories need to be told," Tennessee-based singer-songwriter Richard Stooksbury said.

"Though there have been many to draw inspiration from over the years, my favorite continues to be Billy Edd Wheeler's 'Coal Tattoo,'" he said.

Stooksbury's sophomore album "South" features the track "Kudzu," detailing temptations the coal mines often used.

"We were falsely promised riches  
with coal mines,  
And forests with spruce trees to spare,  
And the mills and the industry  
and the progress,  
We were given a shake that's  
never been fair,"

— "Kudzu" (Richard Stooksbury)

Now based in Nashville, Stooksbury grew up near Anderson County, at one time Tennessee's leading coal-producing region—just a stone's throw from the infamous Coal Creek labor dispute of the late 19th Century.

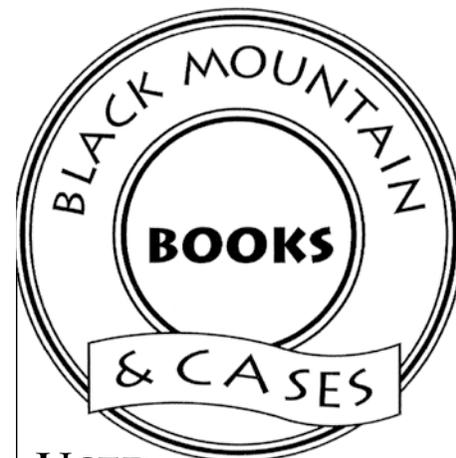
"Although I had read a lot about coal miners and their struggles, as well as having heard the oral traditions, it was not until I discovered songs like 'Coal Tattoo' that it took on the visceral emotion that only a song can deliver," Stooksbury said.

"When Hazel Dickens sings it - well, the floodgates just bust wide open," he said.

For more information on Appalachian protest songs as they related to coal-mining, see Archie Green's excellent book, "Only a Coal Miner" (University of Illinois

Press, 1972).

For more information about Richard Stooksbury, visit [richardstooksbury.com](http://richardstooksbury.com).



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# Hiking the Highlands

## 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 decent 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



Evergreens and rhododendron, above, provide a green setting for "The Notches" on Laurel Branch Trail, even in the deepest winter. Photo by R.L. Mullins. At left, the view of the Towers from the Overlook Trail is wrapped in a blanket of freshly fallen snow. Photo by Jenny Leigh O'Quinn, Breaks Interstate Park

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 decent 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](http://www.breakspark.com) or call (276) 865-4413.

### "THE BREAKS" TRAIL HIGHLIGHTS

**OVERLOOK TRAIL**—.75 miles, difficult. Exposed cliff edges require additional caution. For amazing views of the gorge this trail is an absolute must.

**RIDGE TRAIL**—.5 miles, easy then becomes difficult. Mountain Ivy and Laurel thickets make this an excellent trail for bird watchers.

**LAUREL BRANCH TRAIL**—1.25 miles, easy

then becoming difficult in the last .5 miles. Experience the natural beauty of the Appalachian mountains along with some amazing rock formations.

**GRASSY CREEK TRAIL**—.5 miles, moderate. Enjoy the sounds of rushing water as Grassy Creek tumbles down this seemingly secluded hollow.

### IN-PARK ACCOMMODATIONS

**THE LODGE & RHODODENDRON RESTAURANT**—81-room hotel with 30 rooms overlooking the gorge. \$60 to \$90 per night.

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**COTTAGES**—Two-room units with views of the gorge, complete with full kitchen. \$90 to \$125 per night.

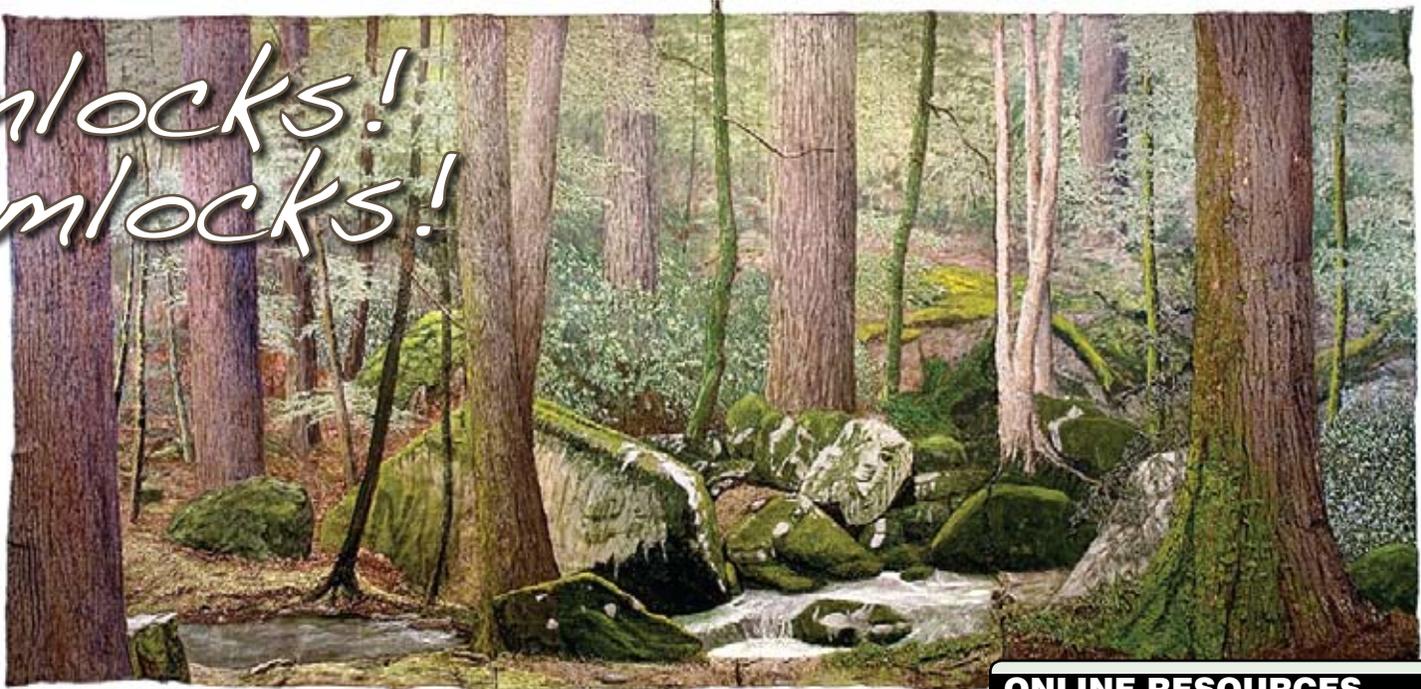
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# The Hemlocks! The Hemlocks!



The bas-relief style paintings by artist Lowell Hayes incorporate gathered hemlock bark and twigs for a striking 3-D rendition of Appalachian forest on a "floating" canvas. The largest, "Imagining Old Growth," above, measures 9 feet tall by 19 feet wide. Photo by Andrew Miller

## Artist Lowell Hayes Raises Awareness of the Threatened Evergreen In A 3-D Painting Exhibition

Story by Jamie Goodman

A striking new art exhibit has captured the life and death of the great eastern hemlock, bringing the plight of this threatened tree to indoor audiences.

Internationally-renowned artist Lowell Hayes, a resident of Valle Crucis, N.C., has created eleven large-scale constructed-canvas paintings that incorporate natural materials such as bark and tree limbs for a striking 3-dimensional representation.

"The exhibition is really not about the blight. [It's] about the life of the hemlock, rather than the death of it," Hayes said.

"The Hemlocks! The Hemlocks!" exhibit will show in the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts at Appalachian State University from December 3 through March 19, 2011.

Across the eastern seaboard, a tiny invasive bug is wiping out the mighty hemlock tree. Known as the hemlock woolly adelgid, the pest was first noticed in 1951 near Richmond, Va., and has since decimated evergreen populations from Vermont to Georgia. Unconfirmed reports place the sap-sucking adelgid as far west as Wisconsin.

"Maybe we won't have a time here in the South when we will be [without] hemlocks, but we already have lost about

half of them," Hayes said.

Hayes has worked on the project for over four years, during which time he experienced the loss of his mother to cancer.

"There I was immersed in the loss of the hemlocks, and [my mother] had cancer and she was not getting any better," he said. "We knew it was only a matter of time."

"You don't sit around and weep with your mother [while she is dying]," he said. "You might have some tears, but when you are with your mother you are trying to contribute to her having a good life so long as she has it."

Hayes realized he did not want to focus on the death of the hemlocks, but to appreciate the tree while it lives. "What I am painting in the representations and the interpretations of hemlocks is our being with them," Hayes said.

Hayes, now in his 70s, has been

painting the Appalachian landscape and its people for 40 years, but the bas relief hemlock canvases are considered his most evocative and focused work to date. He credits the project with encouraging him to get out in the forest and relate to nature more intimately. "There have been a lot of blessings involved," he said. "That is a tremendous life experience, and I am very privileged, grateful to be able to do that."

The ultimate goal of the exhibit is to connect viewers spiritually and emotionally to the plight of this magnificent tree.

"It's one thing to read about the devastation, or even to go into the field and observe it, but it's another... to have an artist's take on how you feel when you are with these hemlocks," he said.

"I hope this does get a chance to [create] contact between people and hemlocks, especially between people in urban situations

### ONLINE RESOURCES

**U.S. Forest Service website on hemlock woolly adelgid invasion:** [na.fs.fed.us/fhnp/hwa](http://na.fs.fed.us/fhnp/hwa)

**Lowell Hayes' website:** [lowellhayesartist.com](http://lowellhayesartist.com)

**Turchin Center for Visual Arts:** [turchincenter.org](http://turchincenter.org)

**Schedule the tour:** Email Brook Bower, [greeneab@appstate.edu](mailto:greeneab@appstate.edu)

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 graces numerous private and public collections, 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.

## Hemlock Disappearance Puts Songbirds at Risk

Except from an article by Hannah Aleshnick  
(Read the complete version online at [appvoices.org/thevoice/hemlocks](http://appvoices.org/thevoice/hemlocks))

With a face more yellow than green, the Black-throated Green Warbler can often be seen between delicately needled 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



# Across Appalachia

Environmental News From Around The Region

## 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 Banks' 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](http://fracturedappalachia.org) for more information.

## NOTES FROM ALL OVER

### 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.

### Clean Water Back in the Taps for Penn. Borough

Residents of Bally, Penn., will soon no longer rely on bottled water, thanks to the Environmental Protection Agency's addition of a new well connected to their public water system. Approximately 1,000 residents have depended on bottled water since the 2003 discovery of local groundwater contamination by 1, 4-dioxane, a substance the EPA considers a probable hu-

man carcinogen. Bally's water supply was polluted during the sixty-year operation of Bally Engineered Structures manufacturing plant, which closed in the mid-90s.

### 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/](http://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](http://www.brownfields2011.org).

### AARP's Operation Energy Save Helps Elderly

This winter, the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) is launching a new program to help older Virginians modify their homes for energy efficiency and save money on energy bills. For elderly or disabled folks, applying modifications to a home is a daunting—if not impossible—task. AARP's Operation



Energy Save is a program to mobilize volunteers across the state to donate time toward winterizing the homes of neighbors, friends and family who need help. The program also encourages participation and sponsorship by local service clubs and organizations. For more information, visit [www.aarp.org/energysave](http://www.aarp.org/energysave).

# Across Appalachia

Environmental News From Around The Region

## 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—remediation 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



The catkins of the American chestnut tree. Today’s commercially-sold chestnuts are imported mostly from Europe, where the blight was less effective in destroying the trees.

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](http://acf.org) for more information.

## 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

Energy Report Card		
	2010	2009
Georgia	37	44
Kentucky	36	33
North Carolina	24	26
South Carolina	40	37
Tennessee	35	38
Virginia	34	34
West Virginia	43	45

ranking is out of 51 & includes District of Columbia

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.aceee.org/sector/state-policy/scorecard](http://www.aceee.org/sector/state-policy/scorecard) to view the complete list.

## 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 designated 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](http://www.greenreportcard.org).

Regional Schools by Grade	
Dickinson College	A-
Furman University	A-
Virginia Commonwealth University	A-
Berea College	B+
Clemson University	B+
Davidson University	B+
Berry College	B+
Virginia Tech	B+
University of Tennessee-Knoxville	B
University of Virginia	B
West Virginia University	B-
East Kentucky University	C+
University of Kentucky	C+

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# The COAL REPORT From Appalachia and Beyond

## 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.



Kentucky citizens attend an air permit hearing press conference for the Smith plant last February. Eastern Kentucky Power Cooperative reached a settlement with several groups and agreed to cancel plans to build the 278MW power plant. Photo by Kentuckians for the Commonwealth

EKPC also agreed to com-

mit \$125,000 toward a joint effort between the involved parties to evaluate and recommend new energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

In exchange, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), Kentucky Environmental Foundation and the Sierra Club agreed to drop a number of lawsuits and administrative challenges against the cooperative.

According to EKPC representatives, the decision was based on financial concerns and not environmental pressure. Estimates for the total cost of constructing the Smith plant were around \$819 million, with \$150 mil-

lion already spent on materials.

"I believe this decision by EKPC is the right one for Kentucky," said KFTC member Tona Barkley. "I am heartened by this new development and the commitment EKPC has made to work in a collaborative fashion with co-op members and the other parties to the agreement."

"This new openness and more democratic method will, I believe, help bring the co-ops back to their original purpose—serving its rural members in a transparent fashion," Barley said.

The groups involved in the settlement also agreed to not oppose the utility's efforts to recover costs already spent on the plant, including selling turbines and other parts that were already purchased.

### WVDEP Required to Obtain Discharge Permits

According to the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection is required to obtain permits to discharge pollutants at abandoned coal mines. The decision upholds a ruling by a U.S. District court which faulted the DEP for violating the Clean Water Act with acid mine drainage.

The DEP appealed the initial decision in 2009, stating that since the agency did not create an abandoned site it was attempting to clean up, it should not have to obtain a permit to discharge acid mine drainage. The agency has not commented on future plans to appeal the new decision.

### EPA Weighs 'Major' Discharge Classification For Select Coal Mine Water Permits

Compiled by Jamie Goodman

The EPA is considering reclassifying select coal mines as "major" dischargers under the Clean Water Act. The reclassification could render existing general permits ineligible and require mines to obtain individual water permits that include possible increased monitoring and enforcement.

Mining states could benefit from the new designation, gaining additional Clean Water Act grant money designed for water law programs. The reclassification, however, may meet resistance from industry of-

ficials opposing stricter controls and more frequent inspections by the EPA or authorized state regulators.



While states with a heavy mining presence could benefit from the change in designation, possibly gaining additional Clean Water Act grant monies aimed at helping states run delegated water law programs, some feel industry would likely fight such a move as it might force mine

operators to comply with stricter controls and more frequent inspections by the EPA or state water law authorities.

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Judy Bonds, winner of the 2004 Goldman Environmental prize and an iconic member in the movement to end mountaintop removal coal mining, is currently facing a different and more personal struggle. The Rock Creek, WV native-turned-activist is undergoing chemotherapy treatments for stage 4 cancer. Individuals interested in sending well-wishes to Judy are encouraged to write her at P.O. Box 135, Rock Creek, WV, 25174.



# The COAL REPORT

From Appalachia and Beyond

## After The Hoopla: What The 2010 Elections Mean for Mountaintop Removal

Story by J.W. Randolph & Bill Kovarik

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 reelections, 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.

### TIDBITS

**PROTEST BY PLANTING:** More than 50 people from Mountain Justice and Climate Ground Zero attended a non-violent protest on Kayford Mountain in October. About 20 protesters walked on to Patriot Coal's mine site and planted hemlock, walnut, red oak and tulip poplar trees in protest of mountaintop removal coal mining. No arrests were made.

**FOUL WATERS:** Officials in Mecklenburg County, N.C., twice detected arsenic levels above state standards near an ash pond discharge pipe from the Riverbend power plant during October. The incident prompted a call for state regulators to enforce stricter regulations at the Duke Energy facility, situated upstream from Charlotte, N.C.'s main water supply.

**CUMBERLAND PLATEAU PROTECTION:** U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) filed a petition with the Department of the Interior requesting that a 1,200-foot, 67,000-acre Northern Cumberland Plateau ridgetop be considered unsuitable for surface coal mining.

**MASSEY FOR SALE?:** On November 22, *The New York Times* reported that the Massey Energy board of directors were "conducting a review of strategic alternatives," possibly resulting in the sale of the company, "despite the objection of the company's executive, Don Blankenship." Several companies have expressed interest in buying Massey Energy, which holds some of the largest reserves of metallurgical coal.

**VIRTUAL ENERGY POLICY:** Makers of the documentary *Deep Down* teamed up with the popular computer game Second Life to create a virtual 3-D mountaintop removal coal mine and power plant, complete with an emerging power crisis for gamers to solve. The project includes videos and a curriculum for teachers. See <http://>

[deepdownfilm.org/virtualmine](http://deepdownfilm.org/virtualmine).

**CARBON CAPTURE CAPITAL:** The U.S. Department of Energy has officially committed \$1 billion to FutureGen, the controversial carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) pilot project. The new Illinois facility would capture carbon dioxide typically released into the atmosphere by its coal-fired power plant and store the greenhouse gas deep inside the earth. Critics of CCS say it would take decades to realistically implement the technology on U.S. coal-fired power plants, numbering nearly 600.

**BO WITH A PURPOSE:** Bo Webb of Coal River Mountain Watch was honored with a \$50,000 Purpose Prize, a national award granted to social entrepreneurs over 60 who are "using their experience and passion to make an extraordinary impact on society's biggest challenges." Webb works on the campaign to end mountaintop removal coal mining in his native West Virginia.

**COAL GETS A REALITY SHOW:** Producers of the popular reality shows 'Deadliest Catch,' 'Ice Road Truckers' and 'Ax Men' will go underground with coal miners in the new show, 'Coal,' scheduled to debut in April 2011. The 10 episode series will follow miners and owners of the Cobalt Mine in Westchester, W.Va.

**BOILER MACT AT THE BOILING POINT?:** A bi-partisan panel of 41 senators oppose the EPA "Boiler MACT" rule, which requires the employment of special technology to filter toxic air pollutants, like mercury, from boiler emissions. In the letter to the EPA, senators expressed their concern that the blanket regulations would indirectly effect hundreds of jobs and do little to help the environment, and that the environmental safeguards for US boilers could rise into the tens of billions of dollars.



### Mediation in Rawl Water Lawsuit Fails

Photo and story by Antrim Caskey

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.

Check out Caskey's Mountaintop Mining Watch series at [www.bagnews.com](http://www.bagnews.com).



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# Appalachian Health Report



## An End-of-the-Decade Checkup on the Wellbeing of Our Region

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**

It's often remarked that if you have your health, you've got everything. As I watched my grandmother die of bone cancer at 63 years of age, I realized just how profound, for me, this cliché is.

When you think of the ancient rolling green tree clad mountains that form the backbone of the Eastern seaboard, what do you imagine? Most find Appalachia a premiere vacation destination, a land of flora, fauna and four distinct seasons—a landscape of near indescribable loveliness, where one can relax, “get away” and “breath easy” while fishing a trout stream, swimming in a hole, hiking to a waterfall or daydreaming lazily under the lone tree of a serene mountain pasture.

It is ironic to consider the health challenges faced by many living in or near this most enchanted natural wonder.

Poverty and poor health have long plagued Appalachia. Quality of health concerns in the region have been influenced by issues of prosperity, education, physical landscape, culture, history, medical infrastructure, health insurance, occupation and daily behaviors.

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) classifies one in four Appalachian counties as “high poverty.” 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 living 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 Californian Journal of Health Promotion found that, on a cultural level, there is a general sentiment of mistrust among Appalachian people with respect to health care professionals.

According to the study, some residents fear being taken advantage of or ex-

ploited by the health care system—or being unfairly, or unjustly, stereotyped. Many Appalachians are reluctant or lack the time and means to participate in preventive screenings—such as mammograms—without showing acute symptoms of an illness.

Geography also isolates Appalachian communities from urban ones, where health care resources are more abundant. According to the ARC, nearly half of all rural Appalachian counties are designated as health professional shortage areas.

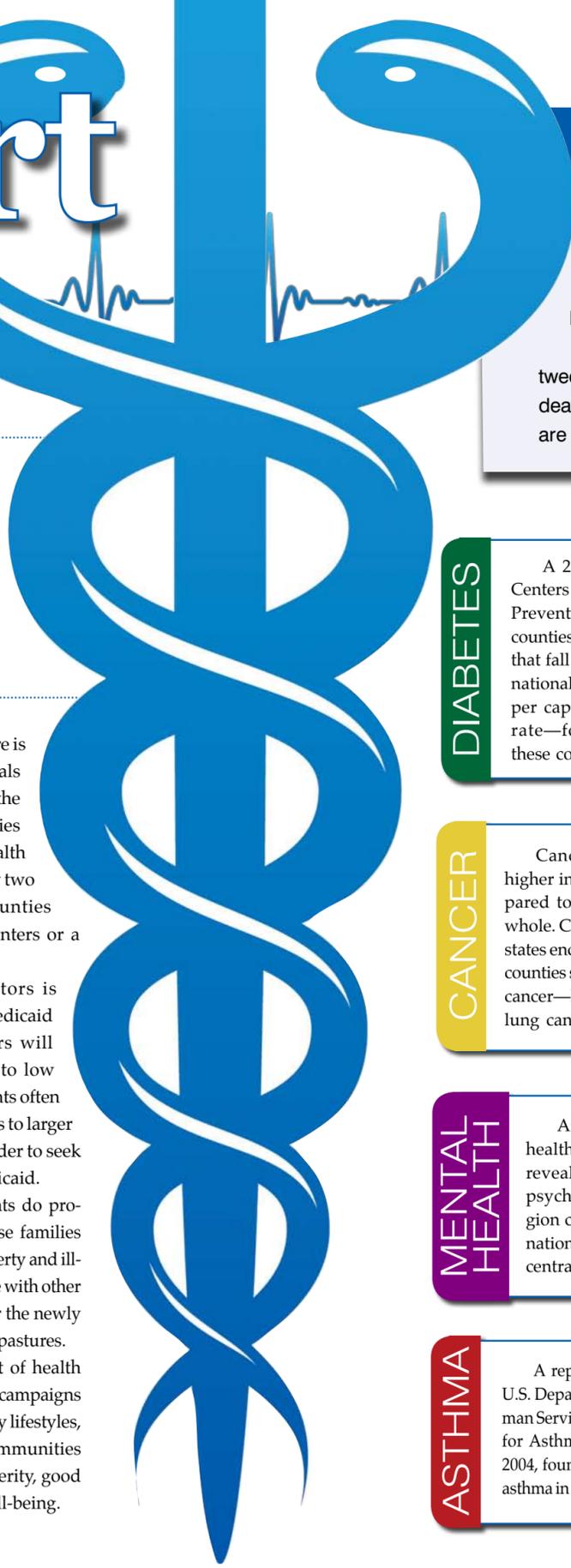
Wayne Myers, founder of the University of Kentucky Center for

Rural Health, says that there is a lack of municipal hospitals and community clinics in the region. “Most rural counties don’t have community health centers,” Myers says. “Only two or three 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 illness, but must develop apace with other economic opportunities—or the newly educated leave for greener pastures.

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



## Environmental Degradation and Pollution

A recent study by Dr. Michael Hendryx and other researchers at the West Virginia Rural Health Research Center found that rural areas in Appalachia have more exposure to agriculture-related pollution 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.

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 report concluded that health care professionals working in rural Appalachia will need “appropriate training and resources to diagnose and treat environmentally-instigated or mediated disease.”

**DIABETES**

A 2009 study done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of distressed counties in Appalachia—counties that fall in the bottom 10 percent nationally for employment rate, per capita income and poverty rate—found that residents in these counties were 62.5 percent more likely to have diabetes than the rest of the country.

While eight percent of the U.S. population has diabetes, 10 percent of Appalachian residents suffer from diabetes. In distressed Appalachian counties, the number grows to 13 percent.

Obesity—a major factor in the onset of diabetes—and poor nutrition, common in the region, contribute to the prevalence of the disease. According to one CDC study, there are fewer full-service grocery stores in Appalachia than in many other parts of the country. As businesses such as grocery stores retreat from poverty stricken areas, “food deserts” are created, forcing individuals to rely on convenience stores and gas stations for their daily food supplies—limiting their access to fresh produce and nutritious food.

**CANCER**

Cancer mortality rates are higher in Appalachia when compared to the United States as a whole. Cancer statistics from U.S. states encompassing Appalachian counties show that certain types of cancer—like cervical, colon, and lung cancer—are more common in the Appalachian portions of the states.

Those living in Appalachia generally receive fewer preventive screenings than individuals in other parts of the nation. According to the ARC, women in Appalachia over the past several years have undergone fewer mammograms and Pap smears, and fewer adults on the whole have sought colonoscopies to screen for colon cancer. Late-stage cancer diagnoses is more prevalent in Appalachia than in most of the country.

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

**MENTAL HEALTH**

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 Appalachia compared to northern and southern parts of the region. The disparity is even more acute in economically distressed areas. According to the report, hospital admission rates for opiate abuse and other synthetic drugs are higher in poorer areas and those with coal mining.

The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being index considers a number of physical and emotional factors, ranking congressional districts and states by the overall health and happiness of the residents. Of the 50 states, Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia come in 47th, 49th and 50th, respectively. Seventy-five percent of Appalachian states fall in the bottom half of the rankings.

**ASTHMA**

A report by the CDC and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Surveillance for Asthma—United States, 1980–2004, found more deaths caused by asthma in the southern United States than in any other part of our nation. The same study estimates that 1 out of every 3 people living with asthma reside in the same region.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services in Kentucky notes that Kentuckians living in the Appalachian region have a greater diagnosis rate of asthma—and “consistently experienced a higher death rate from asthma” between 2000 and 2008—than those in other parts of the state.

The Virginia Department of Health notes that 22 of its 35 health districts had adult asthma rates 7.3 percent higher than the 2004 state average.

# 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 mounting.

To address the limited access to affordable healthcare, health professionals have united with local communities to address the shortfall of medical services within their communities at free health fairs and clinics around the region. Doctors, nurses and other



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2007 to 2010 Annual Social and Economic Supplements

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 a 2010 Remote Area Medical Volunteer Corp "RAM" clinic 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.ramusa.org](http://www.ramusa.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](http://www.healthcare.gov).

## COMMUNITY CAREGIVERS

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 Cancer 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](http://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](http://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](http://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.healthyappalachia.org](http://www.healthyappalachia.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.wvruralhealth.org](http://www.wvruralhealth.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](http://www.rhat.org)

## Clinics Around the Region

In addition to the volunteer medical clinics organized by RAM, other free and/or accessible clinics offer health care for Appalachian residents in need.

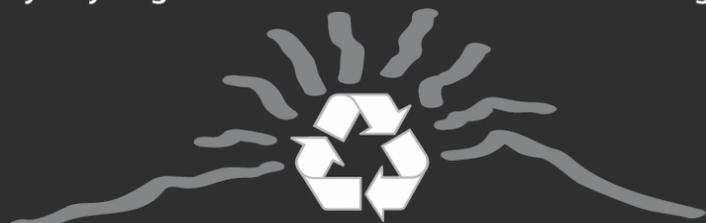
- The West Virginia Association of Free Clinics offers medical services at 13 sites throughout the state ([www.wvafc.org](http://www.wvafc.org) or call 304-414-5941).
- Fifty-nine member clinics, spread over the state, make up The Virginia Association of Free

Clinics ([www.vafreeclinics.org](http://www.vafreeclinics.org) or call 804-340-3434).

- North Carolina also has an Association of Free Clinics ([www.ncfreeclinics.org](http://www.ncfreeclinics.org) or call 336-251-1111).
- Residents without health insurance in Kentucky may contact Health Kentucky to gain information regarding health care opportunities in their area ([www.healthkentucky.org](http://www.healthkentucky.org) or call 1-800-633-8100).

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# 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

## State Meth Lab Incidents Per Year

	2007	2008	2009
Kentucky	202	428	707
Tennessee	560	586	589
North Carolina	156	196	209
Virginia	22	19	28
West Virginia	44	50	52

Source: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

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.

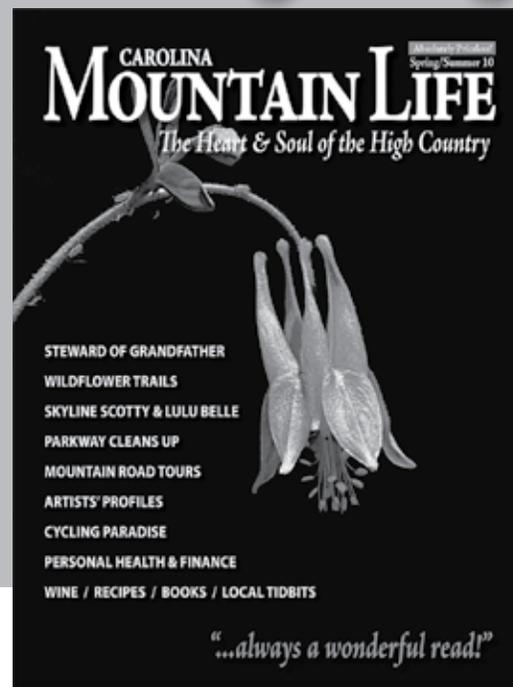
Each state has different policies and laws for addressing substance abuse, raising the potential for finger-pointing between elected officials over who passed what laws. But substance traffickers and substance abusers do not care about state boundaries, particularly in a region as tightly knit as Appalachia.

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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# Coal Ash: One Woman's Fight To Save A Community

Story by Jillian Randel

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."

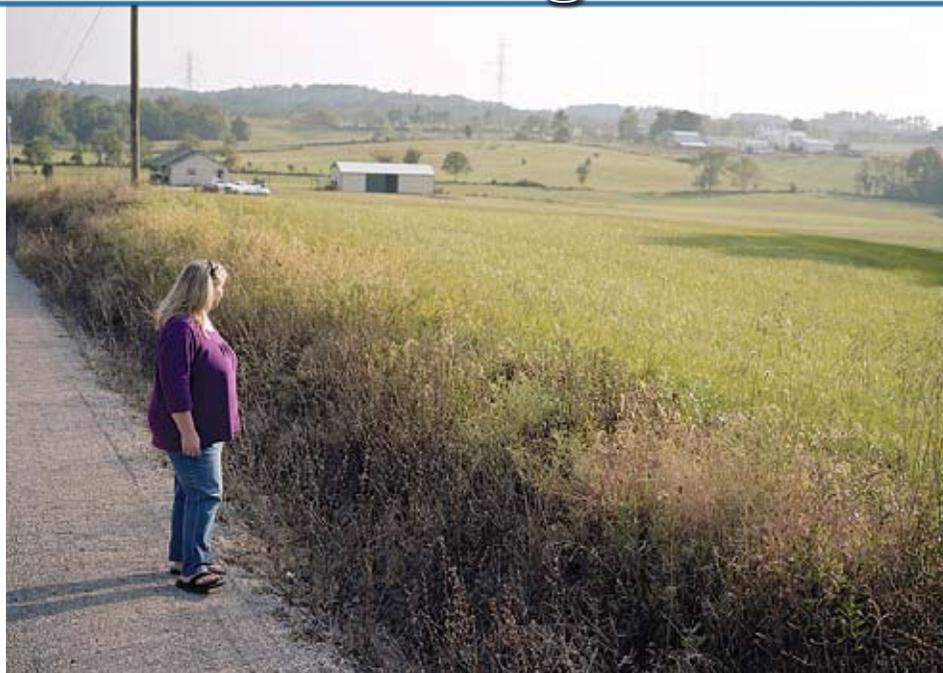
## Forces on the Front

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



Elisa Young discovered coal ash inundating her community of Meigs County, Ohio, shortly after moving to her family's farm. She has since dedicated her life's work to stopping the discriminate dumping of the ash in her community. Photo by Daniel Shea (dsheaphoto.net)

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 toxin 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.

*Continued on page 23*

### According to the Physicians for Social Responsibility report on coal ash:

*"If eaten, drunk or inhaled, these toxicants can cause cancer and nervous system impacts such as cognitive deficits, developmental delays and behavioral problems. They can also cause heart damage, lung disease, respiratory distress, kidney disease, reproductive problems, gastrointestinal illness, birth defects, and impaired bone growth in children."*

## 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.

# A Coal Miner's Health

## SHORT TERM GAINS AND LONG TERM LOSS

Story and photo by D.A. Hawkins

Coal mining is dangerous work.

Spend any length of time talking with a group of underground coal miners and you are sure to hear "war stories" about close calls with severe injury or even death. Every aspect of the job requires a constant vigilance for potential hazards. Numerous miners have been killed by sections of the mine roof or coal ribs falling suddenly on them. Many others have been killed when crushed by heavy machinery in confined spaces.

As a coal miner, for the longest time

I worried more about the easiest ways to be killed suddenly rather than the long term debilitating health effects of mining. Whenever the subject did come up, it often centered upon Coal Worker's Pneumoconiosis (CWP), also known as "black lung." I eventually realized there was a much bigger picture, with CWP being the tip of the iceberg. Underground mining not only fills a miner's lungs with dust, it wears their body out and can even give them cancer.

With ever increasing production quotas, coal mining has become faster paced during recent years.

The rigorous work required in confined spaces leads to joint deterioration, especially within the lower back, knees, shoulders and neck.

Newer generation miners suffer from such injuries despite only a few years of experience in the mines. Those who are financially bound to their jobs rely upon pain medications to continue working. As a result, prescription medication abuse within the coal industry has steadily risen over the past decade and spread throughout the surrounding communities.

"I can't get on disability," one young miner, wishing to keep his anonymity, explained. "There is no way I can afford my house



A continuous miner operator does his pre-operational checks at the start of shift.

payments and support my family on social security checks. I have to do what is necessary to keep going and keep working."

Also of concern is the constant exposure to various chemicals in the mines. Ted Mullins, a retired electrician who worked in an underground coal mine/prep plant complex in eastern Kentucky, is fighting an ongoing battle with leukemia.

"I sometimes wonder if a lot of the cancer me and many of my friends have been diagnosed with came from chemicals we were exposed to in and around the mines," Mullins, who now lives in Lexington, Ky., said. He listed off several names; all were men he knew from the mines who have since died from cancer.

"Miners today don't think about their health years down the road," he said. "I'm

just glad I retired union and have [United Mine Worker's Association] retirement medical coverage. If I didn't, there is no way I could afford to fight my leukemia."

To make matters worse, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has lately examined the increased usage of diesel equipment in underground mining. A website published by NIOSH on the subject of diesel exhaust reveals potential links between diesel exhaust and cancer. According to the website, underground miners may be exposed to 100 times the amount of diesel exhaust as compared to the rest of the population.

While the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration and various state mining agencies have put various laws regarding

*Continued on page 23*

### Dangers On the Surface

Surface mining, while not as unhealthy as its underground counterpart, is still considered one of the more hazardous professions in America.

According to a Department of Labor coal fatality report, surface mining incidents accounted for approximately 30% of total "on-the-job" coal mining deaths in the last 5 years. The most common surface mining risks include falling from highwalls, electrocution and crushing injuries from heavy machinery or large rocks.

Additionally, a report by NIOSH shows that during a special screening between 1996-97, 6.7% of surface miners were diagnosed with silicosis, a potentially fatal lung disease caused by exposure to silica dust. Dust samplings taken by the MSHA from 2003-2008 showed that dust overexposures continued to occur, with drillers and driller helpers having the highest risk of exposure.

#### Instant-Death Coal Mine Fatalities, 2006-2010

	U*	S
2006	36	9
2007	18	14
2008	15	12
2009	6	10
2010**	41	6

Underground / Surface  
\*\* as of November 26, 2010

## 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/m<sup>3</sup> (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

"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 Mountain* and daughter of a black lung victim

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*, 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

*Continued on page 23*

# 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 stimulant 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.

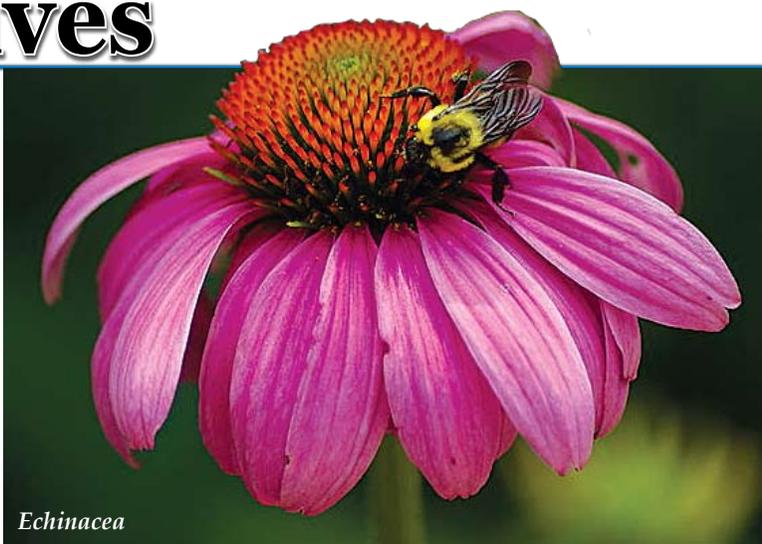
**Goldenseal** (*Hydrastis canadensis* L.) is a popular treatment for the common cold and upper respiratory tract infections. It was

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-enhanc-



Echinacea

ing and antiviral effects, and can be beneficial in treating the common cold. Most often taken as lozenge or in pill form.

**Ginseng** (American) (*Panax quinquefolius* L.) is known as the green gold of the forests. It is a slow-growing plant, valued for its 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.



Figures at Mountain Gardens

## 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 sustainably benefits while not depleting itself.

Mountain Gardens also offers workshops and tinctures, seeds and dried herbs for sale. For more info visit [mountaingardensherbs.com](http://mountaingardensherbs.com).

\*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.

## 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



Stinging Nettle

# Get Clean and Green Around the House

## Home Remedies Both Old & New

Story by Jillian Randel

Walk through the cleaning aisle in the grocery store and you will find shelves upon shelves stocked with cleaning products.

Gels meant to clean the toilet bowl, window spray for the mirror, a leave-on concoction for the shower and a separate solution for the sink. Four bottles of chemically-laden cleaning agents meant to clean one tiny room in your house... what happened to cleaning the old fashioned way—with vinegar, baking soda and lemons?

The EPA listed household cleaning products as a contributing factor to poor indoor air quality. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), are gases emitted from chemical substances—including home cleaning products. VOCs have documented short and long-term health effects associated with organs such as the liver and kidneys, as well as respiratory and reproductive systems.

Household cleaning products also contribute to polluted water systems. Every day, runoff from household activities enters our lakes, rivers and streams as we wash and flush chemicals down our drains. Using nontoxic household products whenever possible is an important way to stop water pollution in our communities.

Vinegar, baking soda and lemons are inexpensive, healthy for you and have a variety of uses around the house. Just one of these three can clean an entire room in your house. So, grab your rags, turn on your favorite tunes and get scrubbing!

### 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 de-

### Toothpaste Recipe

Combine 1 part baking soda to one part hydrogen peroxide. Add a few drops of peppermint or spearmint oil to flavor and freshen your paste. A few drops of tea tree oil will help soothe and disinfect. Do not swallow.



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 even 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.

## 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

odorant.

3. Mix with water and use to exfoliate your skin.

### Lemons

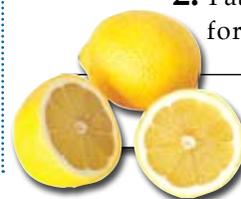
Lemons are acidic and have both antibacterial and antiseptic properties. Lemon juice can also be combined with baking soda or vinegar for better cleaning results. BEWARE: never leave lemon juice sitting too long, because it is very powerful! Five uses for lemons include:

1. Wood furniture: mix equals 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!

**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.

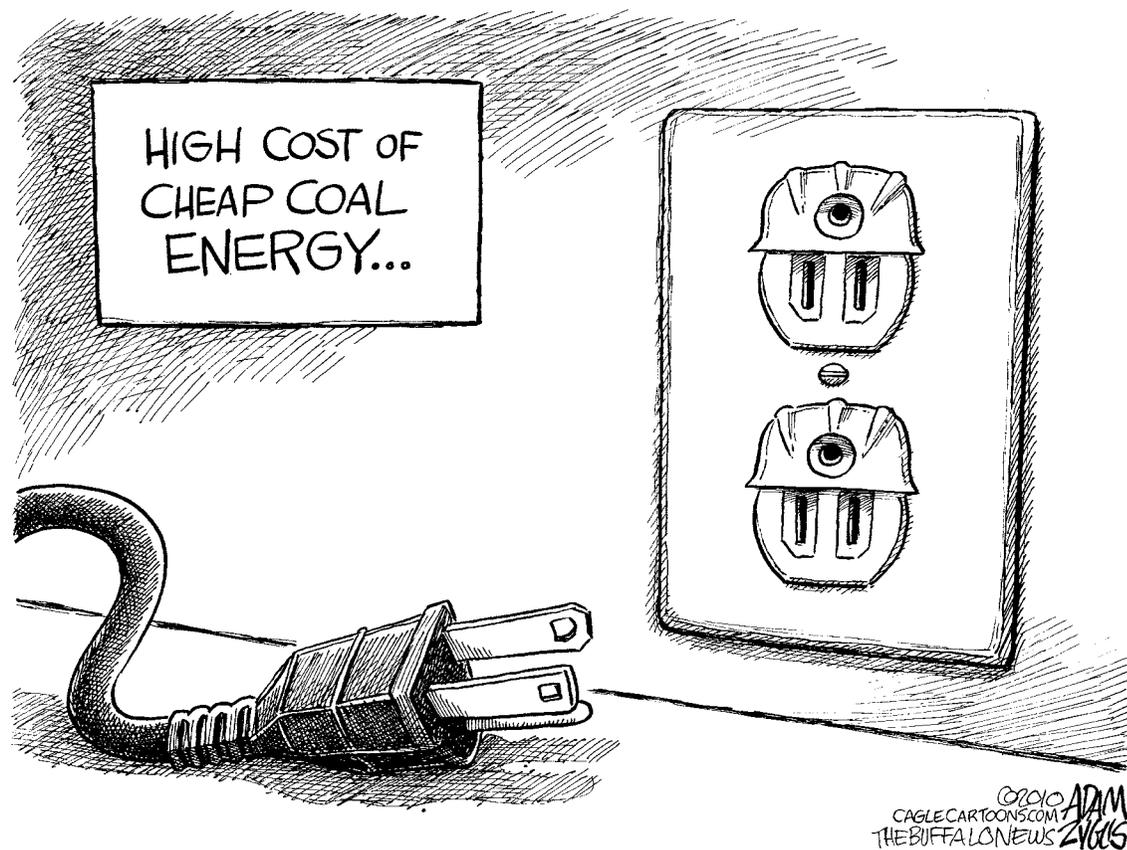
But how does the redemption that Dickens writes into the Victorian-era tale come to Appalachia?

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](mailto:CaretakersOfCreation@me.com).

# Coal Ash: One Woman's Fight To Save A Community

Continued from page 18

## 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 second 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 cancer, 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 track 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

## 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).

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](http://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."

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."

## 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

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# INSIDE APPALACHIAN VOICES

## 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 and a larger musical line up. Jimmy still sees improvements in the future, however, like continuing the sustainability initiative of



Members of Appalachian Voices' board and staff join with Music on the Mountaintop founder Jimmy Hunt to celebrate the \$5,500 the festival was able to donate from proceeds. L-R: Kathy Selvage, Jeff Deal, Liz Aycock, Jimmy Hunt, Bunk Spann, Willa Mays, Benji Burrell, Christina Howe, Dot Griffith, Lauren Waterworth. Photo by Jamie Goodman

the festival by aiming for more recycling, combating festival consumption and bridging the connection between music, community and the environment.

MOTM 2010 took place the last weekend in August and brought national and regional music acts together for two days of music and fun with an environmental approach.

## 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 Charlottesville, 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](http://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.

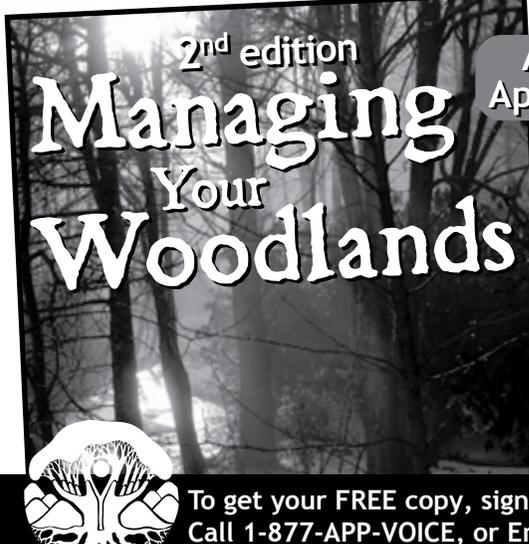
"The TVA coal ash spill was the most horrific and gutwrenching environmental disaster I've ever seen on a waterway," Donna Lisenby said during the interview. The Riverkeeper was one of the first and only independent scientists to paddle

through the TVA spill shortly after it occurred.

Expedition Blue Planet is presented by National Geographic. Visit [alexandracousteau.org](http://alexandracousteau.org) and [nationalgeographic.com/water](http://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](http://plowsharegroup.com/media_downloads/ala_ozone_push.php)



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# DOUBLE



# INSIDE APPALACHIAN VOICES

## 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 dis-

charge 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



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 IGC Knott and IGC Hazard, responded that they would promptly investigate the allegations violations of the Clean Water Act, stating that

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

"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](http://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 con-

tinue 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

*Citizens and Appalachian Voices staff gathered in Washington to talk to representatives about mountaintop removal coal mining. Left-right: John Humphrey, AV volunteer; Amber Davidson, AV intern; Carl Shoupe of Benham, Ky.; Vickie Terry of Campbell County, Tenn.; Austin Hall, AV Field Coordinator; David Beatty of Fentress, Tenn.*

## AppalachianVoices



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# Naturalist's Notebook

## 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 poults 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 west-



A male turkey on display during mating season.



Female wild turkeys have great eye-sight and are extremely alert and wary of their surroundings. Photo by D. Gordon E. Robertson

ward. 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 1900s 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](http://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.

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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.

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