Forty years ago, a wave of coal slurry swept away communities along Buffalo Creek, killing 125. Some problems from our past have improved — others seem stuck in time. Have we learned our lesson?

ALSO INSIDE: The Habits of Hibernating Bears • Georgia’s Historic Blood Mountain • Standing Up for Clean Water
Yesterday and Today: Defending the Clean Water Act

By Jamie Goldman

Forty years ago, it took a flaming river to spur our nation to protect its waterways.

The river that played a prominent role in the creation of the Clean Water Act and the Environmental Protection Agency is thought to have emerged in flames on thirteen separate occasions in a one-hundred-year period, ending with a modification in June of 1969 that captured the attention of Time magazine, and subsequently the rest of the country.

At the time, Ohio’s Cuyahoga River was so polluted with industrial runoff it displayed no visible signs of life for miles. In a June 1969, Time magazine described the river as “Chocolate-brown, oily, bubbling with a ‘suburban gas’” and “a constant fire hazard” due to the large quantities of oil and other pollutants smothering the surface. The ’69 fire, which nearly destroyed two railroad bridges, was not even the largest the river had endured.

Sadly, the problem wasn’t contained to the Cuyahoga. Due to lax water regulations, industrial pollution at the time was rampant in streams and lakes. Bacteria levels in New York’s Hudson River were 170 times the safe limit, and Lake Erie was, according to a Time article in the same year, “in danger of dying by suffocation.”

An environmental senator from Maine led the charge on the 1972 federal bill — a sequel of state legislation — that would undermine the EPA’s attempts to protect our water.

Carl Pope of the Sierra Club told PBS journalist David Brancaccio in an 2004 interview, “For the first time since the Clean Water Act was passed…EPA reported last year that America’s waterways are getting dirtier.”

In the 2002-2003 study Brancaccio referenced, 39 percent of the 40,000 streams were listed in “poor biological health.” That number rose to 42 percent in the agency’s 2008 report, with 23 percent of streams in Southern Appalachia receiving a “poor” rating.

Mercury pollution has also experienced a dramatic increase. Scientific findings by the Eighth International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant found that, “on average, three times more mercury is falling from the sky today than before the Industrial Revolution 200 years ago.” And a 2009 EPA study found that issue in game fish exceeded health-based limits of mercury in 40 percent of U.S. lakes.

New threats arise in the 2010s as well. A massive spill from a Harrim man, Texas, coal-fired power plant into the Clinch and Emory rivers in 2018 was, according to the agency, the worst coal ash — an asbestos-like byproduct of burning coal that has to date been treated as hazardous waste. EPA efforts to regulate coal ash have received tremendous backlash from industry and pro-coal representatives in Congress.

In fact, since 2010 and the start of the 112th congressional term, industry-friendly representatives from both the Senate and House have waged what seems like a full-on war against the Clean Water Act, the EPA. Bills such as the Clean Water Cooperative Fed eralism Act of 2012 — which environmental groups dubbed the “Dirty Water Act,” the REINS Act (H.R. 10) — and numerous amendments all attempted to eliminate the EPA’s ability to regulate federal clean water and other environmental laws and remove barriers to repealing mistakes of the past.

Forty years ago, it took a flaming river to spur our nation to protect its waterways. What will it take today?
Plant your Feet on the Battleground

By Robert Sutherland

Google “Blood Mountain” and you’ll find enough fodder for any armchair traveler. But like any other escape to the outdoors, Blood Mountain cannot be appreciated online.

Named for a battle waged nearby between the Cherokee and Creek Indians, Blood Mountain is the highest peak on the Appalachian Trail in Georgia, and the sixth highest spot in the state. The mountain majestically graces northeastern Georgia’s Blue Ridge Mountains, peaks included as part of the American colonies by King George III when he defined the boundaries of England’s occupation in 1763.

The southern sections of the Blue Ridge Mountains enjoy one of the world’s most botanically rich mixtures of temperate climate plants, with northern species mixing with their southern kin. Once alpine tundra, the ridge line of Blood Mountain is now blanketed in Catawba rhododendron, mountain ash and dwarf willow.

Along the trail to the summit, a variety of rock await the amateur and expert geologist alike. Hikers will pass over low-to-high-grade metamorphic rocks, including igneous deposits of Corbin metagranite, Fort Mountain gneiss, mafic and ultramafic rocks, and Proterozoic and Paleozoic sedimentary rocks.

Trivia about the trail, however, isn’t much better than showing a dry garden a picture of rain. You must hike Blood Mountain to see for yourself.

Hiking Blood Mountain is more like a team sport than lonely immersion into the wild. If you’re not in the best physical shape, you can still make it to the top — although you’ll be surprised by how many “old” people pass you along the way. Before you hit the strenuous sections of the summit trail, spend some time taking in one of the most celebrated portions of the Appalachian Trail's southern reaches.

Unfortunately in 2008, the trail gained some notoriety when a woman named Meredith Emerson was murdered while hiking alone. In Meredith’s memory, a group called Right To Hike, Inc., was created. The group works tirelessly to keep trails safe by purchasing emergency solar and wireless phones for greenways, parks and trailheads and encouraging hikers to defend themselves and protect others.

The views waiting at the summit are worth every step. In truth, the wilderness area surrounding Blood Mountain is 7,800 acres of peaceful pulchritude. Hike beautiful Blood Mountain. Plant your feet on the summit, and take a stand for your health and for the right to hike safely in Appalachia.
The ability of black bears to hibernate without developing osteoporosis or eliminating nitrogen and other wastes. If not, that person would at least show signs of essentially dormant for up to six months while attempting. A person who laid eggs and gorge themselves instead. Ryan says that 2010 was a bumper winter for active. There wasn’t as much food this winter, so most bears have remained in their dens. Black bears have also found a way to integrate hibernation into their reproductive cycles. Typically female black bears weigh between 90 and 300 pounds, and males can weigh up to 500 pounds. If cool, they lose 100 pounds during the winter months when there is no hunting. Ryan and Daniel’s hypothesis proves correct, making the reader put down the book and wonder, “What can I do to help?” This is the type of read that will have anyone hooked until the very last page.
In the Piedmont region, lawmakers are concerned by the presence of coal ash in leaky landfills. North Carolina, Virginia and Southeastern states bordering Appalachian have seen environmental impacts of mountain removal and culturally rich areas throughout the region.

The annual Top 10 Endangered Places list by the Southern Appalachian Law Center recently released its fourth page. Among the threats are dead zones incapable of supporting life and huge areas of wetlands and coastal marshes that have been drained and filled.

N.C. Proposes to Develop Offshore Wind Energy with Governor’s Support

A 15-member panel, including North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue has made official proposals to develop wind energy within the state of North Carolina’s coast provide vast potential for clean energy production. A report released by the Governor’s office said the coast the state’s largest off-shore wind resource on the East Coast. According to the panel, areas in North Carolina suited for wind farms have proposed $650 million reservoir that would provide clean energy to support Atlanta’s increasing water needs.

Spruce Pine Residents Reject Proposed Re-Zoning

A group of concerned residents in Spruce Pine, N.C. attended a town meeting on February 13 to express discontent with a proposed re-zoning of land that would allow the disposal of industrial fly ash and processed mineral waste at a toxic site.

At the town meeting, questions about long-term health effects from exposure to radon gas, and the effect of contaminated groundwater on the area were raised. The town council, the local booming trout population were answered by Feldspar with general promises of preventing negative and inappropriate zoning needed, and expressed concern for more than $1 million without the appropriate zoning needed, and expressed concern over the possibility that the rezoning decision had already been made by the town council.

Friends of Smokies Receives $10,000 from REI for Trails Forward Program

The Friends of Smoky Mountains National Park have received a grant for $10,000 from the national outdoor retailer REI for the Trails Forward Program, which supports trail improvements throughout the national parks. Funds will help finance a new equipment trailer to transport tools and supplies needed for trail improvement projects.

Va State Parks’ 75th Anniversary Sets Oversight Visit Record

Contest, special events and near-record attendance highlights a big year for Virginia State Parks as they are being released across the United States. The Virginia Tourism Corporation announced that the number of visitors increased by 10.3% in 2011 and resulted in over 2.300 million in Virginia State Parks to 2011 and in result over 2011 visitation increase. A three percent increase in overnight attendance in state park cabins, compounds and lodges raised numbers to 1,053,875 visitors in 2011. The overall attendance in 2011 of 7,836,246 visitors was the second highest in the state’s history after a record high of 8,065,558 in 2010. Virginia State Parks say that with attracting visitors from in and out-of-state, they provide economic stimulus to the state, through the purchase of local products and supplies.

King’s Grant Causes Controversy

Over Jackson River Rights

Iberdrola Renewables Inc., the second largest wind operator in the U.S. is available online at cfpub.epa.gov/dmr. The Pollutant Loading Tool allows individuals to browse EPA data from 2007 to 2010 to help users find out who is discharging pollutants, in what amounts and where.

By Madison Hismin

The Southern Environmental Law Center recently released its fourth-annual Top 10 Endangered Places list for 2012, highlighting the ecologically and culturally rich areas throughout the Southeast that are threatened by development, water issues and the environmental impacts of mountain removal and hydraulic fracturing.

Southern Appalachia is a biodiversity hotspot. Appalachia, North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee are each featured in the list.

In southwestern Virginia and eastern Tennessee, mountaintop removal and other damaging mining practices have already destroyed at least 500 miles of streams in Tennessee and other Central Appalachian states, and pressure continues to mount. On the Virginia coast, decades of pollution in the Chesapeake Bay estuary has created dead zones incapable of supporting life.

New EPA Tool Points Citizens to Worst Polluters

The 2012 Ford Fusion Hybrid is able to get over 70 miles on a tank of fuel. The Fusion Hybrid delivers up to 41 city mpg. The 2012 Ford Fusion Hybrid is able to get over 70 miles on a tank of fuel.

Alfred G. Boone Ford Lincoln
828-264-6111
booneford.com
300 New Market St, Boone, NC 28607

By Meg Karvin

The developer of the River’s Edge golf community in Covington, Va., filed a civil trespassing lawsuit against three fishermen, hunters and paddlers to contact Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli to support ability of the people of Virginia to enjoy fishing rights when describing the property conveyed. The state, through the purchase of local products and supplies.

Spruce Pine Forest: A Place of Natural Beauty and Wildness

In February, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a tool designed to help users find out if their drinking water is safe, and where they are being released across the United States. The Discharge Monitoring Report Pollutant Loading Tool allows individuals to browse EPA data from 2007 to 2012 to identify the facilities contributing to the pollution of surface waters. The tool is available online at cfpub.epa.gov/dmr.

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Is There A Kumbaya Moment Coming for the National Forests?

By Randy Johnson

As wildfires and blazes break out this spring in the Southern Appalachians, hope that a greener fate for Appalachian timber management plans, but a long way to go. Clear cuts are out, but for the folks who wanted clearcutting—and there are serious pro-timber folks still there—even ecological restoration has been a tough pill to swallow. We’ve changed, the Forest Service is changing, but it has a way to go.

That’s where the new restoration ethos of the National Forest Service comes in. Warburton pointed out this year in February of last year, comes in. There is significant money to be made by promoting non-native species, increase forest species diversity, treat important stands of clearcutting of the Southern Appalachians.

A tract in Pisgah’s Grandfather Ranger District has seen its share of controversy, but the “grandaddy” of all timber controversies exploded in 1988 just below the tourism town of Blowing Rock. But the “grandaddy” of all timber controversies exploded in 1988 in this same area. That battle and the following dispute over clearcutting allowed the course of forest management practices not only in the east, but the entire United States.

A Clear Cut Issue

The clearcuts first surfaced in the 1970s when massive clearcuts in Pisgah’s 12,000-acre Moomaw’s Mountain proposal forced congressional action that mandated the new routine forest planning process.

By the 1980s, many forests had offered timber management plans, but the continued clearcutting brought challenges from the public.

By late May 1988,gap timber cuts were visible in Pisgah National Forest under the laws of the Endangered Species Act. Ensuing overhead above the pristine scene of the Southern Appalachians, hope that a greener fate for Appalachian destroyed one clearcutting of the Southern Appalachian forests?

The emphasis then shifted to the opposition, including the use of prescribed fire. The Forest Service and the community is now common, and it’s an awesome emergence from controversy to conservation and beauty of forest. Prater says. “This is a great reflection that the future holds a focus on reengineering ecological diversity and working with local communities.”

The Forest Service is a resource extraction era, after all,” he says, “but the Obama Administration is funding this effort and it’s a mammoth project for our region.”

When Marianne Hilliard recently retired as forest supervisor in North Carolina, she said one of the things she was most pleased with was the eventual end result of the Globe timber.

“While the timber sale was controversial at first, I believe it worked out for the best. We made the decision to do it as a Balanced and Sustainable Use sale, and the Forest Service and the community are now common, and it’s an awesome emergence from controversy to conservation and beauty of forest,” Prater says. “This is a great reflection that the future holds a focus on reengineering ecological diversity and working with local communities.”

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“While the timber sale was controversial at first, I believe it worked out well in the end,” Hilliard said. “The biggest lesson I learned is that you need to take time and slow down to make sure that things are done right.”

No one knows for certain, but perhaps the time will come when all groups involved will sing a nursing version of “Kumbaya” together around a campfire. There’s always hope.

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Nuclear Confusion

The Complicated History of the Atom in Appalachia

By Paige Campbell

Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc., sits on 66 acres between the Nolichucky River and the south end of Erwin, Tenn. This part of Erwin is the very picture of a small, tidy and lively but showing its age. Back across the Nolichucky River, workers are building the next generation of nuclear reactors. The new reactors will be part of a multimillion-dollar expansion of nuclear power and urge skeptics to embrace nuclear as the most suitable “bridge fuel” toward a carbon-neutral future. But others stand in vigorous opposition.

In Appalachia, where the legacy of coal lingers over every conversation about energy, the possibility of nuclear expansion brings complex issues to communities, it also brings a prospect already familiar to the region: the unwelcome responsibility of playing host to some of the nation’s first nuclear programs. In 1942, a momentous chapter in Appalachian history began when an NRC investigation found enough violations to warrant a temporary shutdown. In 2011, allegations of personal injury, wrongful death and property damage. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission acknowledges problems at NFS, in a 2010 Discovery News interview. But chronic mechanical problems at Mile Island, domestic nuclear plants have been consistently safe.

During World War II, women monitor control panels at the Y-12 plant in Oak Ridge. Four decades later, in the 1980s, Sandy Mush, near Asheville, had a population of 10. It’s quickly growing by leaps and bounds. The lawsuit filed in 2011 alleges personal injury, wrongful death and property damage. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission acknowledges problems at NFS, in a 2010 Discovery News interview. But chronic mechanical problems at Mile Island, domestic nuclear plants have been consistently safe.

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arsenic and mercury. Many surface coal waste impoundments through Buffalo Creek Hollow, Logan County, W.Va. The flood caused 116 deaths and 4,000 were left homeless. 1,121 injured, 1,121, injured, and 4,000 were left homeless.

The clouds were hanging low over the valley,” he says. People were walking down the street and talking about it. It seemed like they were in a dream. People were walking around at night, talking to each other.

Jack Spadaro was a 23-year-old engineer teaching at West Virginia University’s School of Mines when Governor Arch Moore formed a commission to investigate the causes of the Buffalo Creek flood. He was asked by the dean of the School of Mines to join the governor’s commission, Jay Moore, to travel to Buffalo Creek and investigate the disaster. When Spadaro arrived later that night, they were still pulling bodies from the mud.

“I never saw anything like that in my life,” he says. “It gave me a mission. It gave me a purpose.” Spadaro’s purpose became the protection of miners and communities where their families live; his mission to enforce the laws already in place, and write new ones where they were needed.

Spadaro began his investigation by interviewing survivors, Buffalo Mining employees, engineers and contractors, recording them on a reel-to-reel in the Man, W.Va. high school gymnasium — a building that acted as a makeshift morgue and a gathering place for families of the missing. He dug through the records of the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources and Public Service Commission, the Bureau of Mines, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Before long, he began to uncover a pattern of shortcuts and regulations at work.

“All along, as these dams were being built, they weren’t really constructed using any engineering methods,” Spadaro says. “They were simply dumped, filled across the valley.”

The state’s Public Service Commission, responsible for dams blocking streams, required detailed plans for every structure over 15 feet high that obstructed a waterway. In the case of dams above Buffalo Creek, no plans were submitted. “We just ignored the law,” says Spadaro. “But the Public Service Commission and the prosecutor in Logan County decided that since the dam was already built, they couldn’t do anything about it.”

Steve Dasovich, the vice president of Buffalo Mining, later admitted that during the construction of Dam No. 13, no engineering calculations were made and no soil tests or hydrologists’ services were solicited. Hours before the dam broke, it was Dasovich who repeated told residents they were safe.

Still, some good came after the flood. By 1973, the state’s Public Services Commission, responsible for dams blocking streams, required detailed plans for every structure over 15 feet high that obstructed a waterway. In the case of dams above Buffalo Creek, no plans were submitted. “Just ignored the law,” says Spadaro. “But the Public Service Commission and the prosecutor in Logan County decided that since the dam was already built, they couldn’t do anything about it.”

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Spadaro is certain that through preventative measures, we can prevent future disasters. Man High School, emerged from the fog. Backus ran up the hillside until it finished three hours and 15 minutes later at the Gaylord Springs, destroying nearly everything in its path. When the clouded sky shifted, out of a population of 5,000 people, 129 were killed, 1,121 injured, and more than 4,000 were left homeless.

In the morning of Feb. 26, 1972, nearly 132 million gallons of water and coal waste rushed from 14 surface coal impoundments through Buffalo Creek Hollow, Logan County, W.Va. The flood caused 116 deaths and left 4,000 homeless...
Revisiting Buffalo Creek

Continued from page 15

“Water is one of the best sellers at the supermarket here,” Mickey maintains.

Taking Up To The Toxic World We’re Created

Of the hundreds of impoundments in Appalachia, several deserve high-hazard or “Class C” classification given the lack of any formal dam failure whose aftermath would likely result in the loss of life — have been subjected to public condemnation.

In the western part of West Virginia’s Coal River Valley is one of the largest dams of any kind ever built. The Brushy Fork dam, at 954 feet tall, looms over the towns of Sylvester and Whitesville in Raleigh County. With 25 to 50 acres under water, the impoundment will eventually hold 9 billion gallons of water. For activists, outside observers and residents in downstream communities, Brushy Fork has become a symbol of an industry out of control.

Overall, it’s a heavy price paid by both of these people and their communities: downstream. The health hazard that water is releasing and the destruction to their mental well-being by having to live underneath that thing, we intend to get to the bottom of in any way possible.

Bob Goodwin, coordinator of the Citizens’ Enforcement Project for the Whitesville-based Coal River Mountain Voice, saw the meeting with MSHA as a step forward on a long road.

“The regulatory structure is just not capable of dealing with 100 or 500 or more years of producing slurry,” says Goodwin. “It would just be way, way impossible to use other technologies.”

Spalding encountered the same argument when he interviewed Martin County Coal CEO, Ray Bradbury after the Martin County flood. “They had a dry filter press but they stopped using it,” he says. “We asked Mr. Bradbury why did you stop using it and go to the slurry system.”

“We had to get out of the water and air system. That cost us about $2 million. We lost a lot of time and money.”

The Sewanee coal seam — a rich seam in Bledsoe County. Tennessee’s seam, which underlies nearly all of the southeastern United States, one of the most productive and well-known coal seams in the world.

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By Jenni Frankenberg Vud

One of the most toxic coal seams east of the Mississippi River has cast a dark shadow over the land and people living in its boundaries.

Landon Medley, a resident and former county commissioner of Van Buren County, Tenn., has witnessed the impacts of mining on the Sewanee coal seam firsthand. “I remember being invited to dinner at a home on Cagle Mountain,” says Medley. “One week the house had subsided due to mine blasting, and the green beans that were being cooked for dinner turned blue in the water due to the acid mine drainage.”

More than 300 abandoned mines are sprinkled throughout the East Tennessee landscape — a majority are in the Sewanee coal seam – where runoff containing acid and mine drainage, highly toxic to humans, animals and plants, has polluted waterways and communities.

The Sewanee coal seam is composed of a layer of shale that contains high levels of pyrite, an iron sulfide. When pyrite is exposed to water and air, it creates acid mine drainage. Because of its chemistry, there is no proven method to prevent, avoiding mine drainage that would still allow companies to strip-mine the Sewanee coal seam.

While the seam is currently being mined in Tennes- see, the threat of future surface mining efforts is real. Currently, the Canadian mining company Tiems is exploring property within the pristine Rock Creek watershed on Walden’s Ridge, the source of the Anse or “Land Unsuitable” designation as Land Unsuitable for Mining. The Rock Creek watershed is located in the northern end of Walden’s Ridge in the Fourthcommunity in Bledsoe County.

Prior to enactment of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, mines in Tennessee were not regulated, and there was no comprehensive picture of the environmental damage from mining within the Sewanee coal seam.

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The Sewanee coal seam: The Dirt on East Tennessee’s Toxic Coal

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When the Brady Fork impoundment received 20 violations. Some of the violations were for poor communication between agencies and the loss of life — have been subjected to public condemnation.
Reclaiming Appalachia
Can Legislation and Enforcement Restore Mountains?

Then & Now

Thirty-five years after the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act became law, there is little evidence that reclamation in Appalachia is being enforced as the law intended, says Louise Dunlap, former head of the nonprofit Appalachian Environmental Policy Center. When the federal surface mining law was enacted in 1977, SMCEA was presented as the regulatory medicine needed to rein in the largely unregulated coal industry. The law created the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) for enforcement, and allowed states to create their own regulatory agencies to implement SMCEA at the state level. The path toward SMCEA started with a surface mining bill proposed in 1940 by Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen. By the early 1950s, when Dunlap got involved with the bill, strip mining was rapidly expanding. West Virginia Representative Sam Knecht introduced a bill in 1971 that would have reined in the surface mining in the 70s, a reclamating a glaring example of the perils of weak enforcement. Researchers who have been monitoring conditions, two key conditions, growth on post-mining land can be comparable to growth on native soil, we reclaim as the flawed but necessary intersection of engineering and ecology. And for the coal company that walk away from their legal responsibility to restore mined lands, is simply a falsified bond amount on a spreadsheet.

In 2009, while reclamation was under way, citizens noticed orange water seeps out of the mine permit boundary, casting a glowing warm down the ravine. Living in Wise County, where 93 percent of the land has been permitted for surface mining, Selvage is familiar with mountaintop removal. For years, she has watched mine operators blast away mountaintops to access seams of coal, dumping overburden into valleys and burying headwater streams.

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When energy industry giant Hal- lowell, a publicly traded oil and gas company in the Marcellus, sought mineral rights from a gas company in the Marcellus, came to a 44-acre community that experienced a “time machine.”

Times Magazine printed a harrowing article titled "Appalachia to the Rescue," suggesting where U.S. Petroleum News published an article titled "Appalachian Basin, formation that lies underneath the Appalachian, that is, the Marcellus Shale, a multi-state region’s reserves, some feel natural gas isn’t all that it’s cracked up to be.

For several years, proponents of natural gas have touted the shale reserves beneath Appalachia — and other parts of the country — as abundant. In fall 2007, after the first exploration began for drilling permits across the Marcella Shale, a state passed legislation to allow the practice to reach natural gas trapped in shallow Triassic basins, while other places like Rockingham County, Va., investigating frack-related effects on other Marcella Shale communities, and finally released the report — much to the chagrin of Carrier Oil and Gas. Across Appalachia, the natural gas boom continues, but some cannot help but wonder if it will and found it to be uplifting and delightful to know the area and am thrilled to stay in touch through your magnificent publication." No...
In December 2011, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued the Mercury and Air Toxic Standards, the first-ever national standards to protect families from mercury and toxic pollutants emitted by power plants.

Pollutants from coal-fired power plants, such as arsenic, acid gas, nickel, selenium and cyanide, are all potent neurotoxins. The standards will cut these emissions by 70 percent and protect 130 million people, according to the agency.

The standards are intended to prevent mercury emissions from power plants in the country, some of which emit the most toxic heavy metals. The EPA used the basis as when creating the Mercury and Air Toxic Standards.

The standards are accompanied by a Presidential Memorandum that directs the EPA to use tools provided by the Clean Air Interstate Rule and Mercury and Air Toxic Standards in a cost-effective manner that ensures mercury and other toxic pollutants will be reduced. The memorandum also instructs the EPA to seek ways to achieve the goal in a cost-effective manner that ensures mercury and other toxic pollutants are reduced.

Concerned Citizens Dispute Water Quality Study

The Whiteville, Va.-based St 加密 Protocol ies is claiming that a recent study by the Department of Environmental Protection between all underground mines. The settlement includes $80 million in fines plus $20 million in civil and criminal penalties for both companies. The settlement also includes $80 million in civil and criminal penalties for both companies.

The WVDEP in January, the WVDEP completed a year-long study that found that drinking water supplies in the area were contaminated by coal mining.

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We Can End Mountaintop Removal in Tennessee

By Dr. Minnie Vann Coultasse, Tenn.

In Tennessee, we love our mountains. These peaks and valleys inform our southern heritage, enhance our connection to family and represent the best of what we call state and country. Our mountains are home. Nevertheless, we too are facing the barrel of continued mountaintop removal mining. Unfortunately, in that respect, we are not that different than many other states in Appalachia.

But one thing in Tennessee is different: the playing field between the coal industry and the citizens of our state. Because of the relative unimportance of the state’s coal industry we have a tremendous opportunity to play the coal industry at their own game, to reclaim and remove, and to make Tennessee a leader among Coal Appalachian states. The negative impact coal is having on our water, our land, our economy, and on public health is tremendous, but their coal industry’s contribution to our well-being is lacking. Their influence on the political process remains tenuous in Tennessee. Our state only produces 0.2 percent of America’s coal, 98 percent of our coal comes from just three counties, and Tennessee’s mountain-driven tourism industry employs more than 470 times more people than the state coal industry while bringing in $4 billion every year.

The coal industry’s impact on our state’s budget is a net loss of more than $3.6 million every year. All over Tennessee, taxpayers are sick of our money being wasted on subsidies that prop up a coal industry that can’t compete without an influx of our hard-earned cash. And who runs the industry these tax dollars going to prop up? The coal industry that can’t compete without an influx of our hard-earned cash. Who runs the industry these tax dollars going to prop up? The coal industry that can’t compete without an influx of our hard-earned cash.

In January, a coal preparation plant owned by the same individual illegally dumped toxic coal slurry into the New River while failing to notify either the Office of Surface Mining or the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. A citizen report came days after the accident, after more than 28 miles of the New River had been salted. In the same month, this operator shut down National Coal and laid off 155 workers, representing roughly 40 percent of Tennessee’s coal workforce.

For many other reasons, Tennessee must pass the Scenic Vista Act and begin to reverse some of these abuses of our state, our communities, and our citizens.

The Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act is one way that Tennessee is fighting back. This bill would eliminate high-volume underground surface mining techniques such as mountaintop removal in the state. Ninety-five percent of these high-volume underground surface mines are owned by out-of-state operators, and nearly half of them are owned by a single individual.

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The Cost of Compliance

In Kentucky, nearly fifty permits that qualify for federal reclamation authority under SMCRA are still deficient.

In 2010, the federal Office of Surface Mining began a nationwide review of bond amounts. When a bond amount is too low, it can be cheaper for a company to forfeit the bond than reclaim. When that happens, states don’t have enough money to complete the reclamation plan. The reclamation cost is either passed on to state taxpayers or the company with no bond.

In Kentucky, nearly fifty permits were revised between January and May 2010. The Kentucky Division of Abandoned Minzi Lands estimated that the difference amounts to a shortfall of nearly $13 million.

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Red, White and Water Campaign Turns Up the Heat on Toxic Coal Ash

On Feb. 15, Appalachian Voices’ Red White and Water team, North Carolina’s first campaign to stop strip mining and support communities affected by toxic coal ash pollution, launched under the auspices of the Appalachian Voices. The campaign was created after monitoring near coal ash ponds at North Carolina’s 14 coal-fired power plants and identifying areas such as arsenic, boron, selenium and thallium are leaching into groundwater. The action targets the state department of Environmental and Natural Resources, which reported they were investigating the contamination but did not provide a timeline on enforcement.

The campaign is focusing on six power plants operating in three counties: Richmond County, Johnston County, and Catawba County. The campaign plans to target the three counties where the state department of Environmental and Natural Resources, which reported they were investigating the contamination but did not provide a timeline on enforcement. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, who has postponed finalizing long-avoided rules that would provide federal guidelines to clean up coal ash disposal nationwide.

The new Coal Ash Campaign is coordinating upcoming events for the spring, including a series of Clean Water Events on March 22 in Charlotte, Asheville and New Bern. The chapter’s mission is to ensure that toxic coal ash pollution.

In Surry County, A Step in the Right Direction

Appalachian Voices’ campaign to stop a massive Old Dominion Electric Cooperative coal-fired power plant proposed for Surry County, the country’s largest, has been heating up.

In a positive development last fall, the Board of Supervisors for neighboring Isle of Wight County passed a resolution of opposition to the coal plant. But on Monday night, February 26, trove of the three supervisors who voted for the resolution lost their seats and a new Isle of Wight Supervisor, Lee Ellis, was sworn in.

Our Virginia team went into overtime, working alongside local citizens to get the word out. Dozens of letters and phone calls from county residents asking the board to uphold the resolution were made in the working leading up to the most recent meeting.

Thanks to this overwhelming opposition to the coal plant in Isle of Wight County, the board of supervisors that were up held during a meeting on Feb. 16. We will be working to organize other communities in Hampton Roads region of Virginia to oppose the proposed plant in the coming months.

In Tennessee, our staff is currently working with the state legislature to end the use of Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining Protection Act, a bill that would have badly had high-levels of human and environmental techniques such as mountaintop removal in the mountains of eastern Tennessee. In collaboration with partners across the state, we are building relationships with key members of the House and Senate committees and building grassroots movements in strategic districts, while also advancing legislation that would increase disclosure and responsible party identification for coal ash disposal.

Tennessee Director J.W. Randolph recently presented to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors, where he pointed out that relatively small amount of TVA’s coal comes from Central Appalachian surface mining. Central Appalachian surface mining is the most cost-effective way to control ash, in the country. There are 26 active ponds in 11 states, and 90% of them are located in surrounding counties.

In 2011, more than 150 people from 23 states traveled to Washington, D.C. to join the Appalachian Voices’ campaign to end mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia, is feeling spring fever and planting leaves to head to the other side of the county.

During March, our Director of Campaigns Lenny Kohm will make a Southwestern tour of New Mexico, Arizona, and California, and In April, our Washington, D.C. Director Keith Poole will travel to Oregon and Washington state to share our presentation and talk with people about the national campaign to end mountain top removal coal mining. With the long-awaited rules that would provide for the first time to protect the nation’s water supplies.

Since 2002, the Appalachian Voices tour has traveled to over 30 states and talked to over 10,000 people about mountaintop removal mining in Central Appalachia.

In late January, Appalachian Voices’ campaign against the coal plant in Isle of Wight County, the board of supervisors that were up held during a meeting on Feb. 16. We will be working to organize other communities in Hampton Roads region of Virginia to oppose the proposed plant in the coming months.

We need to keep up with our efforts and we ask you to support us. Support us by donating money to our cause and by spreading the word about the issue.

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Buffalo Creek Rememberence

Feb. 25, Noon: In honor of the victims of the disaster, the Buffalo Creek Memorial Library in Man, W.Va., will host “Buffalo Creek, Remembering After 40 years,” featuring guest speakers and an audio and slideshow presentation. For more info call the library at (304) 583-7887.

Clean Energy Lobby Day

Feb. 28, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.: Join KFTC members and the Kentucky Sustainable Energy Alliance for a day of conversations with legislators about the benefits of clean energy for Kentuckians and the Clean Energy Opportunity Act of 2012. Frankfurt, Ky. RSVP by e-mailing Lisa Abbott at lisa@kftc.org.

Energy Innovation Forum

March 1, 6 p.m.: Appalachian State University will host Energy Innovation in the High Country, a forum to discuss current energy issues and ways to move forward with renewable technology. Hear from faculty. Broyhill Inn & Conference Center, Boone, N.C. E-mail: focusnorthcarolinaasu@appstate.edu.

Remembering 40 Years of Black Water: Buffalo Creek to Today

March 2, 5 p.m. - 6 p.m.: The Sludge Safety Project will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Buffalo Creek flood at the W.Va. State Capitol in Charleston. Musicians, speakers, prayers and film included. A candlelight march will follow the program. SSP will host a dinner to discuss the future of sludge-related organizing in West Virginia. Visit sludgesafety.org

Mountain Justice Spring Breaks

March 2-11, 21-28: Attend Mountain Justice’s Spring Breaks and support grassroots, community led resistance to environmental injustice. During this week-long in event there will be mountaintop removal site visits and an opportunity to meet with local residents. Workshops, organizing skills, trainings, site tours, mountain music and dancing. March 2-11, Appalachia, Va. March 21-28, Northern West Virginia. Visit mjbs.org

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

March 11, 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.: Georgia Forest-Watch has teamed up with Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper and Georgia River Network to present their 5th annual environmental film festival. $15 general admission, $12 for students/seniors, $11 for groups of 8 or more. Landmark Midtown Art Cinema, Atlanta, Ga. Visit gafw.org.

“A View From the Mountaintop”

March 11: Renowned author Barbara Kingsolver and Grammy-award-winning singer Kathy Mattea will combine their talents for an evening of spoken word and song at the Bijou Theatre that celebrates their shared Appalachian heritage and casts a spotlight on mountaintop removal mining. Knoxville, Tenn. $25. Purchase tickets through knoxvilletickets.com, knoxbijou.com, or by calling (865) 684-1200.

Hike Along the Kephart Prong Trail

March 17, 9:30 a.m.: Danny Bernstein, author of Hiking North Carolina’s Blue Ridge Heritage, will lead this 4 mile hike. A $35 donation for the Smokies Trails Forever program is requested ($10/ members) and includes a complimentary membership. Members who bring a friend hike for free. Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tenn. Contact Hannah Epperson, fotoshe@bellsouth.net, or visit friendsofthesmokies.org.

Old Time String Band Day

March 17, 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.: Join WMMT FM 88.7 and Appalshop for a day of classes, concerts, dancing, and fun with Kentucky’s rich heritage of traditional music. Square dance at 7 p.m. with Michael Ismerio. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and is $25/person, $3/lunch. Whitesburg, Ky. Visit appalshop.org.

Mother Nature’s Child

March 24, 7 p.m.: SustainFloyd’s Winter Film Series presents Mother Nature’s Child. In an age when our children spend much of their time inside, this film looks at the importance of a relationship with the natural world. A panel discussion will follow the screening. $5. Floyd Country Store, Floyd, Va. Visit sustainfloyd.org.

The Last Mountain Documentary in Spartanburg

March 27, 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.: Screening presented by Upstate Forever, this documentary focuses on residents of Coal River Valley of W.Va., a small but passionate group of ordinary citizens who are trying to stop Big Coal from continuing the devastating practice of mountaintop removal. Free. Spartanburg, S.C. Visit upstateforever.org.

Carolina Blue: The Art and Life of David Adickes

March 30, 8 p.m.: Join Audubon Acres for a fun day including a flying show by Save Our American Raptors with dramatic birds of prey. Performing and visual arts by Jerre Haskew of Cumberland Trio, Uncle Lightning, Ray Zimmerman, Marcus Ellisworth, Troy Underwood, Hara Paper and Jeff Pfitzer. Food, contests, face painting and nature walks. $5/ person, or $10/ car. Spartanburg, Tenn. Contact Bill Fisher at (423) 892-1499 or bfisher@chas.org.

Coal Mine Health and Safety with Ken Hechler

April 2: The Honorary Ken Hechler will speak about his work as a former West Virginia Senator in the U.S. Congress and his work in passing the most far-reaching coal mine health and safety legislation in American history. Free. For information and time of events contact Karen at karen@wventerprises.com.

Blue Ridge Wine & Food Festival

April 11-15: Enjoy wine tastings, seminars, cooking classes, wine makers’ dinner and much more. This year’s special guest is Teresa Giudice, bestselling cookbook author and reality TV star. Blowing Rock, N.C. Price varies by event. Visit blueridgewinefestival.com.

In an extraordinary story of “taking the long way round,” a bird from the other side of the world paid a visit to the Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge in eastern Tennessee, shortly before the New Year. Jeffrey Davis drove 12 hours from Chester County, Penn., to take this photo of the Hooded Crane, a 3-foot tall grey and white bird (far right) that typically lives in Siberia and northern China and winters in Japan. More than 2,500 visitors from at least 35 states and five countries — including, ironically, Russia — visited Hiwassee to see the bird, who likely followed Sandhill cranes during their yearly migration from Russia to North America. A report by the Indianapolis Star placed the bird in southern Indiana during February.

GET INVOLVED — environmental & cultural events in the region

Email voice@appvoices.org to be included in our Get Involved listing. Deadline for the next issue will be Friday, March 30, at 5 p.m. for events taking place between April 20 and June 20, 2012.

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