Hitting the Trail

▶ More hikers than ever are traveling the Appalachian Trail
▶ The science of trailbuilding

The Problems with Pipelines

Fracked-gas pipelines would deepen the region’s reliance on fossil fuels

Also Inside: Leave it to Beavers | Budget Blowback | Refuge and Restoration at Laurel Fork
**A note from our team**

As of this writing, federal regulators are poised to approve two massive interstate gas pipelines proposed in Appalachia. A final environmental review for the 300-mile Mountain Valley Pipeline could be published any day. And the federal public comment period for the 600-mile Atlantic Coast Pipeline is drawing to a close.

These projects and dozens of others like them jeopardize our region. The Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast pipelines alone would cost a combined $9 billion to construct. These costs would be borne predominantly by us, on our electric and heating bills.

But the unintended costs could be much worse. Our neighbors would see pipeline easements forced upon their properties through eminent domain. Ecosystems would be starkly fragmented, and construction could severely damage stream water quality, private drinking wells and habitats of protected species.

The costs are not just borne by locals. All Americans would pay for these pipelines as permanent tree removals destroy treasured views. And citizens of every nation would pay, as the combined life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of these two pipelines would be roughly equivalent to building 46 new coal-fired power plants.

So we are at a crossroads. Studies show that our region doesn’t need the additional infrastructure to supply our electricity and that the industry is overbuilding. Wind and energy efficiency are the cheapest energy resources, while the cost of solar installations has dropped over 60 percent the last 10 years.

We can protect both our natural heritage and our wallets by demanding clean energy, land, water and jobs that they bring. Our voices can be heard well beyond the voting booth in November. We look forward to hearing yours.

**For our communities,**

Pete & Lara

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**A note from our executive director**

As you may know, Appalachian Voices and partners are committed to opposing multi-billion dollar investments in destructive and unnecessary fracked gas pipelines that would tear through the forests, farms and communities of our region. Below, our Virginia team members Lara Mack and Peter Anderson provide their perspective on these important battles. Read more about the pipelines beginning on the centerspread.

For the future, Tom Cormons, Executive Director

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**GET INVOLVED**

**Annual Spring Nature Festival**
April 21-23: Enjoy a weekend of seminars and guided walks that highlight the wonders of natural history. Warriors’ Path State Park, Kingsport, Tenn. Call (423) 239-8531 or visit tinyurl.com/warriors-path-nature-festival

**Boone in Blossom**
April 21-23: This festival includes live music, workshops on healthful living, yoga and more! $40-60. Butler, Tenn. Visit gaiproductions.com/boone-in-blossom.html

**Earth Day**
April 22: Look for events near you to celebrate our planet, or join the March for Science in Washington, D.C. or one of many regional marches. Visit marchfor科学.com

**Outdoor Expo**
April 22: Spend the day exploring the abundance of outdoor recreational activities available in Southwest Virginia. Free. Radford, Va. Call 540-659-9313 or visit swavooutdoorexpo.com

**Mother Jones Birthday Party**
April 26: Join the West Virginia Mine Wars Museum in celebrating Mother Jones’ 180th birthday! Explore the prominent labor organizer’s legacy with trivia and games. Birthday cake included! Free. Matewan, W.Va. Call (304) 546-8473 or visit wminewars.com

**People’s Climate March**
April 29: March for climate, jobs and justice! And if you can’t get to the nation’s capital, find a march near you. Free. Washington, D.C., and across the country. Visit peoplesclimate.org

**Black Mountain Wildflower Weekend**
May 5-7: Join the Pine Mountain Settlement School to celebrate the rare wildflowers of Black Mountain. $125-225. Pine Mountain, Ky. Call (606) 558-3571 or visit pinemountainsettlementschool.com/events.php

**SWVA Solar Fair**
May 9: Join the Solar Working Group of Southwest Virginia for hands-on projects, presentations, music and more! Free. See more on page 26. Free. Wise, Va. Call (276) 679-1691 or visit swvasolar.org/solar-fair

**SWVA Economic Forum**
May 10: Come learn how your business, organization or community can help revitalize the economy of Southwest Virginia. $25-35. Wise, Va. Call (276) 679-1691 or visit tinyurl.com/swva-economic-forum

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**environmental & cultural events**

**Appalachian Trail Days**
May 19-21: Celebrate the Appalachian Trail and its hikers with a parade, festivities and food. And stop by the Appalachian Voices table! Damascus, Va. Free. Call (276) 475-3831 or visit traildays.us

**Friends of the WNC Fundraiser**
May 25: Event includes a film screening, silent auction, meet-and-greet with nature center animals and more. Asheville, N.C. $25. (828) 259-8092 or visit wildwnc.org/event/wild-on-film

**Mountain Music Festival**
June 1-3: Combine outdoor adventures in the New River Gorge — like whitewater rafting and mountain biking — with a weekend of live music. Minden, W.Va. $85 for advance single-day tickets, weekend passes vary. Call (877) 382-5893 or visit mountainmusicsfestwv.com

**Seedtime on the Cumberland**
June 2-3: This festival of traditional mountain music and arts features live performances, dances, film screenings, art and more. Whitesburg, Ky. Call (606) 633-0108 or visit seedtimefestival.org
Study Reveals Threats to Southeast Freshwater Biodiversity

By Adrienne Fouts

A new study released by the Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute and the University of Georgia River Basin Center documents the diversity of freshwater life in the Southeast and the importance of improving the region’s watersheds.

The lakes, rivers and streams of the southeastern United States are a “hotspot for freshwater biodiversity,” according to the December study. They contain almost two-thirds of the nation’s fish species, over 90 percent of the nation’s types of mussels and nearly half of the world’s crayfish species.

However, human development and insufficient conservation efforts have threatened the region’s watersheds. Freshwater aquatic animals outside the Southeast receive approximately 35 to 52 times more federal funding per species than those in the region, according to the study. In addition, there is comparatively little federally protected land in the Southeast — only about 3.5 percent of the study’s focus area.

Researchers identified the highest-priority watersheds in the region based on the number of species they contained, the animals’ conservation status and how widespread they were. Watersheds in northern Alabama and middle to lower Tennessee were determined to be the most vulnerable. The study also proposed increased overall funding for conservation.

Judge Rules in Favor of Nuclear Waste Shipments

By Carl Blankenship

In February, a federal judge ruled against a lawsuit filed by a coalition of environmental organizations attempting to prevent liquid nuclear waste from being shipped from Canada to South Carolina.

Carolina Public Press reported that the route for the shipments is unknown and will remain secret as part of federal policy on nuclear waste shipments.

In the opinion, Judge Tanya Chutkan struck down outside experts’ attempts to submit evidence and instead relied on the court’s experts, saying there appeared to be differing opinions from specialists.

DuPont to Pay $671 Million in Chemical Leak Settlement

By Adrienne Fouts

DuPont and its spin-off The Chemours Company agreed in February to pay $671 million to settle thousands of lawsuits regarding the leak of a toxic chemical used to make Teflon from their plant in Parkersburg, W.Va.

Around 3,550 personal injury claims were filed beginning in 2001 after the leak of perfluorooctanoic acid, also called PFOA or C-8, allegedly contaminated the Ohio River and local water supplies. A panel of scientists convened by DuPont determined that the chemical was linked to six diseases: kidney and testicular cancer, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, pregnancy-induced hypertension and high cholesterol.

Both DuPont and Chemours denied any wrongdoing, saying in a statement that DuPont had not used C-8 at the plant in over a decade. The class-action lawsuit included citizens in the Parkersburg area and surrounding water districts affected by the leak.

Trout Delivered to Gatlinburg After Wildfires

In early March, the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency stocked streams in the Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge area with roughly 3,000 trout from a Middle Tennessee hatchery.

During the devastating fall 2016 wildfires in East Tennessee, about 30,000 fish were killed at Gatlinburg’s fish hatchery and trout raceways, where fingerling fish are raised until they can be placed in nearby streams. — Molly Moore

Environmental News From Around the Region

Gold on a stump, they called the forests. To scrape the last virgin timber off the hillsides, lumbermen raced the Georgia mountains in 1900 as love and greed set in the north. Authors available for in-person presentations to book clubs.

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Reservations suggested for parties of five or more. Canyons is a certified green business. Contact: 828-295-7661
Tennessee Advances Partial Privatization of Fall Creek Falls State Park

By Molly Moore

The state of Tennessee is moving forward with plans to privatize the facilities at Fall Creek Falls State Park. The plan calls for demolishing and rebuilding the inn, conference center and dining amenities. A private company would also eventually operate the park’s cabins and golf course.

The privatization process was put on hold in early March, and as of press time the state had not reopened the bidding process. During a State Building Commission meeting on March 23, the commission was given more control over demolition and construction of park buildings to address some of the concerns about the plan.

State Rep. John Ray Clemmons told the Chattanooga Times Free Press that the changes didn’t go far enough. “I would consider it nothing more than putting lipstick on a pig, because outsourcing and privatizing our state parks are absolutely unacceptable.”

Officials at the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation support privatization, pointing to falling occupancy rates and the need for improvements at the facility. The Tennessee State Employees Association, one of the opponents of the plan, has suggested using state funds to renovate the facilities instead of selling them. Park employees and local officials have also expressed concerns about how outsourcing and layoffs at the park would affect the area’s rural economy.

Fall Creek Falls State Park, situated on the Upper Cumberland Plateau, is Tennessee’s largest and most-visited state park. In addition to hiking and biking, park activities include boating, fishing, swimming and golf.

Help Wanted to Find Spotted Skunk

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources is asking community members to help document a rare species of skunk in eastern Kentucky.

The “spotted skunk” is a protected species with a distinctive fur pattern, not to be confused with the common striped skunk. The department is asking the public to share photos and locations of spotted skunk sightings on the agency’s Facebook page. According to the department’s social media post, they have few documented observations and need more. — Adrienne Fouts

Southwest Virginia Residents Hold Healthcare Forum

By Melody Reeves and Chuck Shuford

“From 2001 to 2008, medical expenses were the leading cause of bankruptcies in the U.S., and health insurance premiums for family policies increased by 78 percent while the cost of living rose 17 percent,” began Dr. Raymond Feierabend, professor emeritus at the James H. Quillen College of Medicine at East Tennessee State University.

Feierabend was speaking at an educational forum Feb. 22 on the potential impact of repealing the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare.

Over 130 residents from Southwest Virginia attended the public forum at Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, Va. The event was sponsored by We Care SW Virginia, a local group of citizens advocating for affordable, high quality health care for all.

Other presenters included Jim Dau, director of Virginia AARP; Beth Davies, director of the Addiction Education Center in Pennington Gap, Va.; and Stephen Sanders, director of Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center in Whitesburg, Ky. Together, the speakers made the case that universal health insurance coverage with access to affordable, comprehensive health care is a key component of any economy that adequately sustains its citizens.

The panelists explained the impact of both the ACA and potential repeal proposals on Medicare, black lung benefits and rural health care. Based on a 2016 bill to repeal and replace the ACA, nonprofit think tank the Urban Institute determined that an estimated 685,000 Virginians would have lost insurance coverage by 2019.

Following the presentations, audience members gave testimony and asked questions. A retired coal miner with black lung disease stated that while not perfect, the ACA offered the best hope so far for those seeking black lung benefits. Under the ACA, it is easier for coal miners who have spent at least 15 years working in the coal industry to get those benefits than it was before the law.

Ron Short, a resident of Duffield, Va., told how his nephew, who had no health insurance, had gone to the emergency room several times with severe stomach pain and received only pain medication. After receiving insurance through the ACA, his nephew went through a battery of tests that revealed he had cancer. “This is what people face every day,” said Short.

We Care spokesperson Peggy Mathews said that the purpose of the forum was to help people understand how the ACA affects them and inspire them to communicate any concerns about changes to the health care law to their federal senators and representatives.

Appalachian Energy Center
2017 WORKSHOP SERIES

May 6  Inspecting and Designing Photovoltaic Systems for Code-Compliance
May 12 Affordable Zero Energy Ready Homes
May 15-19 Introduction to Photovoltaic System Design & Construction
June 2 Small Wind Energy Hands-on Workshop

For details, registration, & more workshops:
energy.appstate.edu millerjm1@appstate.edu 828-262-8913

SWVA Solar Fair
May 9, 2017 from 5-7 pm

Presentations, music, food and demos to grow your skills and have fun. Plus hands-on projects, inflatables, cotton candy, and information about the new Solarize Southwest Virginia home solar program!

Hosted by SOLAR WORKGROUP of SWVA

Economic Forum at UVA-Wise on May 10. More information at tinyurl.com/swva-economy

David Prior Convocation Center at UVA-Wise in Wise, VA
www.swvasolar.org

Stick around for the SWVA Economic Forum at UVA-Wise on May 10. More information at tinyurl.com/swva-economy
Let your adventures begin!

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Remembering Carol Judy

By Willie Dodson and Bonnie Swinford

Carol Judy of Roses Creek, Tenn., passed away from cancer in the early morning hours of Feb. 24, 2017. She died at home, surrounded by the love of family and friends.

I’ve always been fond of explaining to folks who Carol Judy was by simply stating her email address, emphasizing every word in it: Forest Granny (at) Rise Up (.net). Carol Judy was an activist, an agitator, an educator and an organizer.

But by the time I navigated the heavy glass doors, the commotion alerted a security guard, who called on her to stop. “Just go to the bottom,” he barked. “Come on, act your age.” Naturally, this encouraged her to climb faster, and she shot him a naughty smile. We started laughing, tickled by the petty mischief of what she was doing. Progress was still slow. She started laughing, tickled by the petty mischief of what she was doing.

“Carol! We’re up here!” I called. She looked back, grinned, turned around, and started climbing up against the elevator’s descent! She was already about a third of the way downstairs; she had to hustle, but progress was still slow. She started laughing, tickled by the petty mischief of what she was doing.

The commotion alerted a security guard, who called on her to stop. “Just go to the bottom,” he barked. “Come on, act your age.” Naturally, this encouraged her to climb faster, and she shot him a naughty smile when she reached the top and rejoined our group.

That was one of the most wonderful things to know about Carol Judy. She’d never act the way a patient, see home. Carol practiced and taught a slow, deliberate, stewardship-based approach to foraging and cultivating wild and wild-simulated medicinals. She taught plant identification and forest understory stewardship and management workshops across the region.

Carol was a mother, a grandmother and a dear friend to many. She cared deeply for her people, and stayed focused on involving others — especially young people — in the work of building community resilience.

Throughout the ‘80s and ‘90s, Carol traveled internationally as part of the Rural Development Leadership Network, the National Congress of Neighborhood Women and numerous other projects lifting up rural women and other disenfranchised populations. During the same time, she organized locally in Claiborne County, Tenn., with the Woodland Community Land Trust and the Clearfork Community Institute.

Over the past decade, Carol worked closely with Mountain Justice and other anti-mountaintop removal coal mining organizations in the region. She was a treasured and revered elder to a generation of young organizers, herbalists and righteous mischief-makers.

Hear Carol Judy share her thoughts in a video interview with Felix Bivens of Empyrean Research at tinyurl.com/empyrean-caroljudy

Anything Will Give Up Its Secrets if You Love It Enough

By Chris Smith and Asa Gardner Smith

We took her to the rock house waterfall and told her about an elusive patch of goldenseal. On the way back, she wandered off trail, turned around and said, “What about this yellowroot patch here?” Again, she had made the invisible visible. She told us we’d better start harvesting that patch regularly, or it would start to disappear like that other one.

We remember how much Carol loved the mountains and the waters, the plants, and everything that lives here. We are so thankful for the time we had to learn from her how to grow that love within ourselves. And we will never forget that day when we got to experience that magic of silent communion with our land, with the life on it, and with our dear friend.

A Tribute to Carol Judy by Adam Hughes

I’ll never forget driving to Lexington, Ky., with Carol for a public hearing on the Stream Protection Rule in September 2015. The hearing was held in a gymnasium, and Carol signed up to testify later than the rest of our group.

By the time she was finished, we had gathered outside to debrief. I saw her hunting for us through a window, but by the time I navigated the heavy glass doors, she had already stepped on the descending escalator.

“Carol! We’re up here!” I called. She looked back, grinned, turned around, and started climbing up against the elevator’s descent! She was already about a third of the way downstairs; she had to hustle, but progress was still slow. She started laughing, tickled by the petty mischief of what she was doing.

The commotion alerted a security guard, who called on her to stop. “Just go to the bottom,” he barked. “Come on, act your age.” Naturally, this encouraged her to climb faster, and she shot him a naughty smile when she reached the top and rejoined our group.

That was one of the most wonderful things to know about Carol Judy. She’d never act the way a man in uniform would demand.

A Tribute to Carol Judy by Miranda Brown

This woman, Carol Judy, showed me so much that is to be the foundation of my future, perhaps all of our futures. She embodied love, sincerity, presence, generosity, passion and intention. She never took me for what I projected on the surface, but called me out of myself, reassured me of my own nature.

Carol always called me a singer and an herbalist, even when I had naught to show for it. I carry her spirit and will listen for her guidance as I fulfill my own life. Carol always probed down to the core of who and what was important to me, and reminded me. Tonight, she reminds me again.

What a blessing to have spent some time with this force of nature. Rest in peace, nestled in the love that so many of us have for you, like the roots that lie nestled in the soil.
Leave it to Beavers

By Adrienne Fouts

From cutting down trees to flooding forests and fields, few animals are as influential on their surrounding environment as beavers. After being trapped for their fur to near-extinction in North America by the early 1900s, beaver populations were reintroduced across the continent and are now thriving, continuing their vital role in maintaining wetlands and supporting aquatic life — while occasionally being a nuisance to landowners.

Beavers are sometimes called “nature’s engineers,” and for good reason. By building lodges and dams as their homes, they physically alter the landscape to suit their own needs, similar to humans.

Lodges serve as houses for beaver families and are typically made of sticks, mud and rocks. To protect a lodge from predators, beavers build dams to flood an area, which creates a beaver pond upstream, surrounding the lodge with water. An underwater tunnel leads to the inside of the lodge, where dry chambers above the water level allow the beavers to safely live. As aquatic mammals, beavers are adept at maneuvering in water, so beaver ponds allow them to swim to nearby trees for food rather than having to travel more slowly across dry land.

Beaver ponds serve another vital purpose: attracting and supporting a variety of wildlife. Beavers have a large influence on other species in an ecosystem. The freshwater wetlands that beavers help create and maintain are among the most biologically rich in the world, especially in the southeastern United States, and can support many threatened or endangered species of fish, crayfish and other aquatic life.

Even dried ponds, called beaver meadows, provide a habitat for plants and wildlife long after the beavers have abandoned the area, according to Michael Fies of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The nutrient-rich soil that was once at the bottom of a beaver pond grows different kinds of vegetation than the surrounding forest. Fies says that in the national forests of western Virginia, the U.S. Forest Service is interested in protecting beaver meadows because they recognize the value of those habitats.

Not everyone is interested in keeping beavers around, however. Despite all the benefits that they bring to natural areas, beavers can also cause problems when their activities conflict with humans. To obtain food and materials for lodges and dams, beavers will often cut down valued trees on people’s property.

“Other times it’s flooding issues,” Fies says. “Beavers are very adept at changing their habitat, which is what makes them unique, but their dams can result in the flooding of farmers’ fields and state roads.”

Most states in Appalachia have a beaver trapping season between November and the end of March, varying slightly from state to state. In some cases, landowners are permitted to trap or hunt beavers year-round if they are causing issues on their property.

Beavers cause fewer harmful side effects in the mountains than they do in lower-elevation, large river systems in the Southeast, where they are more common, according to Fies. In the Piedmont of North Carolina, state wildlife officials have stepped up efforts to manage the beaver population after a study by Appalachian State University biology professor Michael Gangloff and one of his students found that beaver dams were threatening an endangered mussel species.

“The mussels need flowing water and high oxygen levels to survive,” Gangloff says. “And beaver dams actually change the physical and chemical properties of the water, so there is a lower oxygen concentration.”

In the streams of the Appalachian Mountains, though, beavers are less likely to be a problem in the ecosystem because of lower population levels and naturally higher oxygen levels in the water, according to Gangloff. Instead, they help increase fish biodiversity and provide wetland habitat for numerous other animals, including frogs, snapping turtles and waterfowl such as wood ducks and herons.

Despite the headaches that they can cause landowners and wildlife officials, beavers play a vital role in natural areas throughout Appalachia and North America. With their human-like methods of building and changing their environment, it is inevitable that beaver and human activity will often clash. Society has come a long way since nearly trapping beavers into extinction, however, and hopefully humans will continue to work toward living in harmony with these clever and industrious animals.

Beaver Basics

• The largest rodents in North America, full-grown beavers weigh around 80 pounds.
• Family size can range from two to 12 or more beavers living in the same den.
• Beavers’ large front teeth never stop growing; their constant gnawing on wood wears the teeth down and prevents them from growing too long.
• In the 1950s, the Idaho Fish and Game Commission wanted to relocate beavers from residential areas to the middle of a roadless wilderness area. So wildlife officials put 76 beavers into small wooden boxes, strapped them to parachutes and dropped them out of airplanes into the forest. All but one of the beavers survived the fall. Watch footage at tinyurl.com/beaversfly.


Beaver Basics

Lunch | Dinner | Catering
Handcrafted Goods

lunch: Mon-Sat 11-3:00
dinner: Tue-Sat 5:30-close

828.268.9600 | 4004 NC HWY 105 S. BANNER ELK, NC
visit: Reidscafeandcatering.com

April/May 2017 | The Appalachian Voice | Page 7
The year was 1948. Earl Shaffer, a young WWII veteran from Pennsylvania, put on his worn boots, packed his U.S. Army issue rucksack, and set off alone for a roughly 2,000 mile journey from Georgia to Maine, hoping to walk off the depression that had dogged him after the war.

It’s been 69 years since Shaffer made that first documented thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. The news that he completed the trek earned him the nickname of “The Crazy One” and raised public awareness of the trail. He later thru-hiked it two more times, first in 1965 and again in 1998, on the 50th anniversary of his first hike.

In the years since Shaffer’s hike, the number of people attempting thru-hikes has increased. After the release of the movies “Wild” and “A Walk in the Woods” in 2015, the number of registered thru-hikers rose dramatically from 1,968 in 2015 to 3,133 in 2016. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy, a nonprofit organization that protects and maintains the trail, estimates the total number of visitors to the trail at 3 million annually.

Benton MacKaye, a forester, author and conservationist who envisioned a footpath through the length of the Appalachian Mountain Range, first proposed the Appalachian Trail in 1921. Construction began soon after and was completed in 1937. The trail meanders through woodlands, meadows and windswept balds, over a course that covers roughly 2,189 miles through 14 states with nearly 500,000 feet of elevation gains and losses. It received the National Trails System Act’s first National Scenic Trail designation in 1968.

Over-loved

Even with all those folks pitching in to help, maintaining a trail with that much traffic is a challenge and the growing pains are evident. According to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the negative impacts of overcrowding include exceeding the capacity of outhouses and shelters, trash issues, and damage to springs, streams and vegetation.

Jo Swanson and her trail partner Bart Houck, known by their trail names of “Someday” and “Hillbilly Bart,” made the first thru-hike of the much younger, partially completed Great Eastern Trail in 2013. Swanson had previously section-hiked the AT from north to south in 2009 and 2010. She says the AT is “over-loved” and that practicing Leave No Trace principles — such as not leaving trash behind, minimizing campfire impacts and staying on the trail — and good hiker behavior can lessen the impact of high traffic on the trail. Swanson is particularly concerned about hikers going off trail to avoid the long zig-zags up a mountain.

“People were cutting switchbacks and going straight up the mountain and creating these pathways for erosion,” says Swanson. “They think, well, it’s just me so it doesn’t matter if I just walk up the mountain. But with thousands of people out on a trail, it makes a huge difference.”

Good Times & Good Will

Not all of the impacts from increasing traffic on the trail are damaging. One mutually beneficial change is the impact the growing number of hikers and the communities along the trail have on each other.

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s Appalachian Trail Communities program promotes sustainable economic growth in towns and counties along the AT. The program also aims to benefit the growing hiking community while protecting the trail as a natural and cultural resource. There are currently over 40 Trail Communities along the AT.

Franklin, N.C., became the first Appalachian Trail Community in 2010. Bill Van Horn is a member and former chairperson of the Franklin Appalachian Trail Community Committee. He says the trail and the town’s designation as a Trail Community bolsters the local economy.

“From about the middle of March until about the third week in April, if you were to stand outside of Franklin where the AT crosses Highway 64, you’d have 50 thru-hikers a day walking across Highway 64,” Van Horn says. “Having 50 extra folks in town in bedrooms, eating at restaurants and hitting the supply stores is a good thing.”

The committee worked with the local Macon County Transit to develop a twice-daily shuttle during peak thru-hiking season that transports hikers 11 miles from the Highway 64 crossing to

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the town center.

Another popular Trail Community is Damascus, Va., nicknamed “Trail Town USA” and famous for its Trail Days festival. Now in its 31st year, Trail Days brings nearly 10,000 visitors to Damascus, population 800. In turn, the town spends $11,000 per day to put on the event and brings in 50 Port-a- Johns to accommodate the crowd. This year’s festival will be held May 19-21.

“It’s just an amazing event,” says Tim Williams, chairman of the Appalachian Trail Days Committee and vice mayor of the town. “It’s like a family reunion or a homecoming.”

Daniel “Spot” Codispoti has thru-hiked the AT five times. Although he forgoes the shelters for the solitude of camping in his tent alone, he says he’s noticed that the trail and shelters have been crowded in recent years, detracting from the wilderness experience.

He plans to thru-hike it again in 2017, and this time he’ll use a flip-flop strategy recommended by the trail conservancy to avoid crowds and reduce pressure on the trail. He’ll start his thru-hike in his home state of Pennsylvania and go north to Mount Katahdin, Maine, the northern terminus of the AT. Then he’ll take a bus back to Pennsylvania and go south to Springer Mountain, Ga., the southern terminus.

Besides flip-flop itineraries, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy is asking hikers who are starting from Springer Mountain to avoid leaving on the most popular departure dates: April 1, March 1, March 15, and the Spring Equinox. The organization also offers a voluntary registration program that allows hikers to plan their hike to avoid the crowds.

As the trail has become more popular over the decades, there have been some positive impacts that only come with time and growth. Besides the increased number of shelters and outhouses, trail maintenance has increased, including the visibility of the AT’s famous white blaze.

“In the ’60s and ’70s, and even the late ’90s, I would get lost sometimes because there were just no white marks in certain places,” says Codispoti. “Now, there are white marks everywhere. It’s easy to follow.”

“A lot of the bogs or small creeks never had bridges,” he adds. “You could almost guarantee getting wet feet almost every day. Today, that hardly ever happens.”

One thing that hasn’t increased much over the years is the crime rate on the trail. Jordan Bowman, public relations media specialist with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, says the number of reported incidents are relatively low in comparison to a city of the same population as the AT.

A greater safety concern is illness. According to the trail conservancy’s website, there is a higher likelihood of being exposed to norovirus in an overcrowded shelter area or contracting Lyme Disease from ticks on the trail than being a victim of crime.

Codispoti says what bothers him most isn’t crime.

“I guess I first noticed it in ’11,” he says. “The amount of smartphones on the trail and the people using the technology to hike the trail, it changes the trail in a bad way for me.”

“A lot of times in the past, if I came up to a shelter or anywhere where there was a young person sitting there, they would at least say ‘Hi,’” he continues. “You’d have a talk. Many times I’ve come up on somebody and they have their head buried in their phone or they have earplugs in their ears and they just give a little wave of their hand or they acknowledge your presence. They’re not rude, but you don’t engage in any conversation. That’s a disappointment.”

Swanson thinks technology is a big part of why thru-hiking has boomed.

“It’s a lot easier for hikers to share their experiences now, sending pictures home, posting on social media and blogs,” she says. “I think that outreach makes long-distance hiking seem achievable for a lot of people.”

Codispoti says one important thing has stayed the same: the community of people and the good will they share along the trail.

“I think that’s one of the big reasons why I go back,” he says.

Seek and Ye Shall Find

Kaiha “Wild Card Ninja” Bertolini found that good will, along with connection and purpose, when she thru-hiked the AT in 2016. She’d never heard of the trail until she met a thru-hiker in December of 2015. She quit her job in advertising, borrowed some gear and hit the path.

“I was at a crossroads in my life,” she says. “I turned 30 and I was like, ’I’m going to die one day and I don’t...
Pipeline Construction Would Scar Appalachian Trail Vistas

By Kevin Ridder

For generations, thru-hikers have come from far and wide to view the Appalachian Trail’s grand vistas. Many of those views, however, could be marred for future hikers.

The 300-mile Mountain Valley Pipeline and the 600-mile Atlantic Coast Pipeline, two proposed natural gas pipelines that are scheduled to begin construction later this year if approved, would bore underneath the Appalachian Trail and require temporarily clearing as much as a 200-foot-wide right-of-way in some areas.

The proposed routes for both 42-inch pipelines would also cut through national forests. For the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to approve these routes, the U.S. Forest Service would need to make fundamental changes to each forest’s Land and Resource Management Plan.

Andrew Downs, regional director of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, worries this would start a nationwide trend of tweaking forest protection plans for every new development.

“Changing or undermining that level of protection unnecessarily affects the entire national trail system,” Downs says. “That would allow for all sorts of future projects to come in and have a negative impact. It’s a slippery slope.”

“There is also a suite of a dozen or more prominent vistas along the trail where [the Mountain Valley Pipeline] would negatively affect the landscape,” Downs continues. “It would affect the experience of a hike along the Appalachian Trail for a long time.”

Affected vistas include Angel’s Rest, Dragon’s Tooth, Wilburn Valley Overlook, Kelly’s Knob and the Audie Murphy Monument.

Maury Johnson, a member of several Mountain Valley Pipeline opposition groups in Monroe County, W.Va., whose land would be crossed by the pipeline, is particularly worried about how the construction will affect Peters Mountain (read more on page 18).

“When they were building the Appalachian Trail in the ’20s, they literally took a 22-mile detour to the top of Peter’s Mountain so they could see the vista to the west,” Johnson says. “If this project gets approved, you’d be able to see the pipeline for about 30 miles snaking toward you, coming across this wonderful view.”

Visual and environmental impacts like these only get worse when combined with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, Downs says. If approved, the project would cross the Appalachian Trail near the border of Virginia’s Augusta and Nelson counties.

“Never have pipeline project teams worked with. At no time in their analysis have they utilized a correct centerline for the trail,” Downs says, referring to the path of the Appalachian Trail, which regularly shifts to more sustainable and scenic locations. “As a result they’ve got a pretty terrible route that includes significantly avoidable impacts to the Appalachian Trail. Not only is that ridiculous, it was also completely preventable. They could’ve just sat down with us in September like [the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] told them to and gotten that information.”

Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC, has not responded to a request for comment.

White Blaze

continued from previous page

“Some of them are working out issues or problems,” he explains. “Some of them are just looking for a great experience and some are there for a goal, like trying to set records. I know I’m looking for peace and quiet and the experience of the woods. I like the simplicity of it.”

“It’s just a simple path through the woods and yet it does a lot of different things for different people,” he says.

Whatever growing pains the trail may be experiencing as it enters its seventh decade, one theme remains constant. From Earl Shaffer who walked off the trauma of war as the first person to thru-hike the Appalachian Trail, to the thousands who will set out on their own treks this year, no one who makes the journey is ever the same again.

White Blaze continues on page 18.
Hiking the Highlands
Refuge, Restoration and
Radio Silence at Laurel Fork

By Chris Robey

In the northwest corner of Highland County, Va., there is a secluded, stream-furrowed valley unlike anywhere else in the state. Here, clear waters amble among remnant stands of red spruce. The high-pitched calls of northern saw-whet owls echo among the restless boughs, while snowshoe hares duck in and out of the understory and northern flying squirrels den in the old cavities left by wayward woodpeckers.

Located in the Warm Springs Ranger District of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest, the Laurel Fork Special Management Area was once a priority candidate for the protective status of a wilderness designation. Resistance from local landowners, however, stalled these efforts.

Despite this, Laurel Fork offers some of the best opportunities for solitude in the state — a quality enhanced by its proximity to the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, just a crow’s flight south and over the border in Green Bank, W.Va. Here, astronomers utilize the world’s largest fully steerable radio telescope to search for signs of extraterrestrial life.

The popular astronomer Carl Sagan wrote that the energy received by all the radio telescopes on Earth is dwarfed by the energy received by all the radio telescopes on Earth. But for a mile and a half through stands of red spruce transitioning into red pine. The path is easy underfoot — the old railroad bed is preserved in the trail’s gentle grade. You may notice a series of ditches spaced at intervals along the trail — or, if we did our job well, you may walk right over them without a second thought.

The field crew did the majority of our drainage work along this stretch. The ditches are meant to divert rainwater off the trail, slowing the process of erosion.

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Twenty-eight miles of trails wind among Laurel Fork’s myriad tributary runs. Many follow old narrow-gauge railroad beds where, almost a century ago, steam engines carted men with crosscuts and axes into the woods each morning and emerged laden with timber at day’s end. In their absence, a clarifying, restorative silence reigns.

This past fall, I served as the assistant leader with a trail crew for Southern Appalachian Wilderness Stewards, a regional conservation nonprofit. Over nine days, five other young seasonal staff and I, wielding the same hand tools the 20th-century logging crews once used, removed 65 fallen trees, cleared brush and painted blazes along eight miles of trail, dug over a dozen drainage features, and improved trail visibility at numerous stream crossings along a 12-mile loop of trails. Though the entire loop is a worthwhile hike, you need only walk the 3.5-mile Locust Spring Run Trail to gain a sense of the area’s history.

Locust Spring Run

On the long, windy drive out to the trailhead at Locust Springs Day Use Area, you may notice signs reading “NO PIPELINE” posted by the roadside. At one point, the proposed route of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline ran just a few miles south of Laurel Fork. Dominion Energy moved its proposed route even further south after the Forest Service issued a letter expressing concerns over the pipeline’s potential effects on sensitive local habitats. Despite this change, the pipeline will still cross nearly 16 miles of George Washington and Jefferson National Forest in the state, including sensitive habitats.

From the picnic area, the trail delves for a mile and a half through stands of red spruce transitioning into red pine. The path is easy underfoot — the old railroad bed is preserved in the trail’s gentle grade. You may notice a series of ditches spaced at intervals along the trail — or, if we did our job well, you may walk right over them without a second thought.

The field crew did the majority of our drainage work along this stretch. The ditches are meant to divert rainwater off the trail, slowing the process of erosion.

continued on page 13
The Science and Synergy of Trailbuilding

By Lorelei Goff

Peter Barr loves his job. Who wouldn’t love to get paid to hike?

Barr is the trails and recreational lands coordinator for the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, an organization that preserves land and protects natural areas from development. He designs, builds, maintains and promotes trails on the conservancy’s land in Henderson and Transylvania counties in North Carolina, as well as parts of the surrounding counties. According to Barr, trailbuilding has changed significantly over the last decade or two.

Trails used to be located mainly on old logging roads, game trails or walked-in paths that weren’t designed for heavy outdoor recreation use and often resulted in ecological damage. Steep trails were prone to soil erosion. And hikers, bikers and horses widened the trail and trampled vegetation when trying to avoid areas where standing water accumulated during wet conditions. Because it’s unlikely the damage can be completely arrested or restored, instead of repairing old trails they are often rerouted and built sustainably.

“Trails can cost up to several hundreds of thousands of dollars, and they’re now starting to be seen as facilities, like a playground or campground, because they’re highly engineered and there’s science behind them,” Barr explains.

The Science

Barr breaks trail science down to physical sustainability, social sustainability and ecological sustainability.

Physical sustainability considers how long the trail will last and the amount of maintenance it will require. Water management is a big concern, so Barr designs slight but constant changes in elevation into the trail. That prevents water from gathering momentum over long stretches and washing away soil.

While physical sustainability manages water and erosion, social sustainability uses psychology — knowing and embracing what the user will most likely want to do — to manage the behavior of trail users and protect the landscape.

“Sometimes the trails are multi-use, for hikers and bikers and equestrians,” says Barr. “So in the design, you want to give each user the experience they’re looking for while also maintaining the integrity of the sustainable trail principles. I design mountain bike trails often times for the experience, because mountain bikers like a trail that’s fun to ride and is very dynamic.”

“Hikers, pedestrians, are very much destination-oriented,” he adds. “They want to get to the top of the mountain, or they want to get to the waterfall, or they want to get to the rock outcropping to see the scenic view.”

Balancing the motivations of trail users requires a bit of give and take. These preservation efforts form the third trail goal, ecological sustainability.

“We’re building a trail at Young’s Mountain in Rutherford County, N.C., right now, and also another mountain called Weed Patch Mountain,” says Barr. “Those two trails traverse a very rocky landscape where we know there to be the presence of green salamanders, a rare species. The trails visit some of the rocky outcroppings to provide scenery for the user and a view, but avoids other rock outcroppings to protect green salamander habitat. It’s a means of concentrating the impact.”

The Synergy

According to Barr, there can be great synergy between trailbuilding and conservation, as well as good science.

Besides constructing trails on their

continued on next page
own property, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy constructs trails on property owned by partner organizations and agencies, and also on private land with public trail easements.

The decision to build is usually driven by the goal of linking two or more existing trails together, or connecting a protected property in one place to a protected property in another. Making it happen requires cooperation among all involved, including donors from public and private sectors. Trails are the catalyst for that synergy.

When it became evident that a trail route Barr was scouting would have to go around a cliff on private property, the conservancy sought a donation of the land from the owner for an easement granting a perpetual public right-of-way for the use of that trail. The landowner saw the value of a publicly accessible trail on the already conserved land and agreed.

“Conservation will support trails ... and [a trail] also makes conservation more attractive to funders,” says Barr. “If we’re protecting a piece of land and we let the funders know that it’s likely to have a public access and trails component, that particular land protection project becomes more attractive and more desirable to fund. On the flip side, land with trails on them has a greater sense of urgency to protect the land surrounding that public access.”

Synergy is vital in the construction process as well, which can involve professional contractors, volunteers and the Youth Conservation Corps — a program that employs 15 to 18-year-olds through the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service. Crews use machines, including mini-excavators as small as two-and-a-half-feet wide, and hand tools.

“Sometimes that’s entirely by machine,” Barr says. “Sometimes that’s entirely by hand. Sometimes it’s a combination, where we’ll have the mini-excavator do the digging, heavy lifting and moving of rock, but then we’ll have a hand crew come behind to finish the trail by compacting the tread, cutting the vegetation, cutting the roots, outsloping the trail, and getting it to the point that a user could walk on it.”

However serene and carefree the trail experience may feel, creating those simple paths through the woods is more complex than meets the eye.

Trailbuilding
continued from previous page

Laurel Fork
continued from page 11

Though structurally simple, most trail features are incredibly labor intensive. Hours of struggle and strife go into building something expressly intended to be invisible to the average hiker’s eye. Our work should preserve the illusion that you’re walking a path worn by years of boot-shod feet tracing the most pragmatic path over the land.

Eventually you will come to the intersection of Locust Spring Run and Buck Run Spur. From here, the trail veers right and braids itself with the creek. As you press further, note the sudden transition to northern hardwood forest, characterized by the occurrence of sugar maple, black cherry, yellow birch, northern red oak, red maple and sweet birch.

The young hardwoods loom tall and thin above you, taking on a cathedral aspect, their long branches supporting the canopy like flying buttresses. It is shadier, more subdued. Rustled engine parts, twisted railroad ties, bent wheels and axes jut from the ferns and moss, artifacts of bygone logging days. Reckless logging radically altered the forests here. These northern hardwoods dominate where red spruce once stood, suggesting periods of unchecked wildfires and erosion following the turn-of-the-century timber frenzy.

Rhododendron grows thick near Locust Spring Run’s terminus. If you plan to stay the night, there are a number of campsites right along Laurel Fork. The namesake of the largest, most popular campsite, Slabcamp, is immediately clear. Past pilgrims have stacked slabs of smooth shale from the creek beds into armchairs and hearths. Though it’s as close to a luxury suite as you’ll find in a potential wilderness area, don’t follow their example by stacking more — the local aquatic life will thank you for not disrupting their home.

While Laurel Fork’s trails were our workplace, Slabcamp was our home. The stream’s gentle voice coaxed us awake each morning and lulled us to sleep each night. During our breaks, we’d ease back onto our packs and gaze up through the shifting boughs. In our free time, we’d wander the streambeds and scramble up the cobbled slopes, suddenly kids again. Some nights, we lounged around a roaring fire and read Game of Thrones and poems by Wendell Berry aloud to one another. Other nights, we swapped ghost stories or, content after a long day’s work, sat silent and reflective, gazing up at the star-studded night sky.

Just a ways south, over the next few ridges, astronomers confronted the roaring silence of deep space, hoping for a sign that we’re not alone in the void.

At Laurel Fork, the silence presses close like a soft blanket. Those looking outward may cast their hopes with the scientists at the radio astronomy observatory. Here, one comes to look inward.
The Problems with Pipelines

The proposed Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines loom large in the minds of many residents of Appalachia. Beginning in Harrison County, W.Va., the Atlantic Coast Pipeline would span nearly 600 miles, through West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina. The Mountain Valley Pipeline begins one county to the north, in Wetzel County, W.Va., and extends across West Virginia into Virginia, where it connects with the Transcontinental Pipeline, also known as Transco, in Pennsylvania, Va.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is reviewing applications for both projects and has released its draft environmental impact studies. The public comment period for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline was extended to April 6. The public comment period for the Mountain Valley Pipeline ended in December 2016 and the agency’s final environmental impact statement could be released any day. Thirty days after the final environmental impact statement is released, FERC can approve or deny the pipeline developer’s application. If approved, the developer must get water and air permits, but is granted eminent domain authority. An approval can be challenged in court, but it might not halt construction from moving forward.

These pipelines are two among many new projects or expansions of existing pipelines that are racing to the Appalachian Basin to carry fracked natural gas from the Marcellus and Utica shale formations to market. The Atlantic Sunrise Project is slated to reverse the flow of the Transco Pipeline, which runs from Texas to New York City, so that the pipeline would carry fracked natural gas from the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania to Transco’s existing natural gas pipeline network in six states.

The proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline project would span nearly 600 miles, through West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina. The pipeline would run through historic lands owned by the Chickahominy Tribe. The proposed route of the Mountain Valley Pipeline would cross through 100 acres of contiguous interior forest in Virginia. Many of the plants and animals that depend on the forest would be impacted by the pipeline’s construction and presence. Species that require large tracts of unbroken forest would likely be unable to find suitable habitats elsewhere, states the FERC document.

The draft statement also concluded that the proposed pipeline would likely have an adverse effect on three endangered species: the Indiana and Northern long-eared bats and the Roanoke logperch fish. The draft statement also concluded that the proposed pipeline would likely have an adverse effect on three endangered species: the Indiana and Northern long-eared bats and the Roanoke logperch fish. According to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the Mountain Valley Pipeline “would permanently impact about 886 acres of contiguous forest in Virginia.” The proposed route of the Mountain Valley Pipeline would cross through 100 acres of contiguous interior forest in West Virginia and 353 acres of contiguous forest in Virginia. The pipeline would also pass through the pasture. “It wasn’t until I came here that I felt like I’m not passing through anymore,” he says. “I’m home. So I’m going to fight to keep it.”

Beginning on March 4, dozens of community members began a two-week walk following the 205-mile route of the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline across Eastern North Carolina. The pipeline ends in one of the state’s poorest counties, Robeson.

Robeson County is also home to many of the Lumbee Indians, a Native American population that was once recognized by the state since 1855, but which is still seeking federal recognition. The pipeline would run through historic lands owned by tribal members of several nations. It would run in Pembroke, N.C., the cultural, economic, and political center for the Lumbee.

According to the American Indians in the 2010 Census, 26 percent of the population of Robeson County is living in poverty. Like so many counties along the proposed route, Robeson can ill afford the risks that come with the pipelines. As a part of ACW’s participants, part of ACW’s campaign to stop the pipelines (Stop The Pipeline)
Who Profits from the Pipelines?

By Elizabeth E. Payne

Utility giants such as Dominion Energy and Duke Energy explain their interest in building new pipelines by pointing to their need for more natural gas to meet growing energy demands.

But one doesn’t have to scratch too far beneath the surface to find another explanation. The companies building the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines in Virginia have customers for the gas, but not for the infrastructure projects. When given permits, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission guarantees the companies building the pipelines a profit by authorizing them to adjust their rates on imported gas. At the same time, the partnerships financing the pipelines — such as Dominion Midstream Partners, which has indirect ownership of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) Midstream Partners, a lead partner in the Mountain Valley Pipeline — are not required to profit federally.

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region toward limiting their greenhouse gas targets.

Toward that end, the Obama administration issued standards that would have cut methane emissions nearly in half. Overall, the previous administration, under President Barack Obama, worked with other nations to set a path toward limiting the severity of climate change.

Energy needs can be met with existing pipelines coming out of the Appalachian Basin. But companies rush to extract natural gas because of the financial incentives for the natural gas being shipped. For both the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley Pipelines, the vast majority of the gas will be sold to subsidiaries of the parent companies building the pipelines.

The companies building the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines have customers for the gas and thereby are incentivized to build new infrastructure and create over-capacity. "The way the regulatory system is set up at the moment," says Lorne Stockman, "companies are incentivized to build new infrastructure and create over-capacity." "It was like a space flight." "The area was lit up as if it were daylight for miles around." "Flames shoot hundreds of feet up into the air, corrating intense and incinerating anything — and anyone — in its path. One 2012 explosion near a WV town destroyed 17 homes." "The area was lit up as if it were daylight for miles around." "The area was lit up as if it were daylight for miles around." "It was like a space flight." "The area was lit up as if it were daylight for miles around." "Flames shoot hundreds of feet up into the air, corrating intense and incinerating anything — and anyone — in its path. One 2012 explosion near a WV town destroyed 17 homes." "The area was lit up as if it were daylight for miles around." "Flames shoot hundreds of feet up into the air, corrating intense and incinerating anything — and anyone — in its path. One 2012 explosion near a WV town destroyed 17 homes.

There’s a pipeline for every need in the Appalachian region today. But despite federal regulations and oversight, pipeline explosions are an earth-shattering event. According to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, there were more incidents from pipelines built in the 2010s than in any of the seven previous decades. They examined the average annual number of incidents per 10,000 miles of gas transmission lines and found that while the corporations building the 2010 incidents compared to those built before 1940. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission dismisses citizen concerns about the potential for explosions in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline with gas. "Because the pipeline would be constructed and operated in accordance with regulations and federal oversight, we conclude that constructing and operating the pipeline facilities would not significantly impact public safety." But despite federal regulations and oversight, pipeline explosions are anything but rare. According to the Pipeline Hazardous Material Safety Administration, there were 111 significant incidents involving pipelines in 2016, resulting in 16 fatalities and 80 injuries and released 253,000 in property damage nationwide. That was not an

Pipelines Spark Safety Concerns

By Dan Rieffler

“at least one rare earth element mining site or blast radius for an accident as any location within 1,115 feet of a failure point. The evacuation zone extends 3,563 feet in any direction, for a total diameter of 1.4 miles. •

Jobs in the Atlantic Coast Pipeline

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The pipelines are spreading but West Virginia remains a place where the Mountain Valley Pipeline company wants to cross with a 42-inch natural gas pipeline — a possibility that has many outraged.

"We're facing a lot more than just pipelines West Virginia Riverways is co-founder of Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance," Pierson-Keating's town. She's written on these narrow ridgelines, Freeman is also concerned about the mountains the pipeline will traverse the mountain's steep slopes, and the permanent 50-foot strip of land cleared of most of vegetation. This will lead to the Monticello ridge in Bath County to a larger pipeline. Photo courtesy of Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance

The Stand is a non-violent anti-pipeline activist group that promotes clean energy. He believes was caused by the chemicals used in a fracked well near his house. Despite this, he felt pushed back from his public for his opposition to the pipelines. But he's not staying silent, and his words carry the weight of something new.

"When the pipeline companies first came here a few years ago, they promised us they were going to build a 'new model, new rules'," he says. "And they didn't do a thing. All they did was just tear up everything we got. We didn't want to make any changes to the pipeline.

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline is also slated to run right by the high school as well. A whole series of other companies for speaking out about their concerns and now fight against the pipelines lose publically.

Because of such pressure, one farmer from Doddridge County, W.Va., rushed to the end to ask for the biggest project in the Appalachian Basin. And the ACP and the MVP here in West Virginia lies at the heart of the Appalachian Basin. And that's not even a canary in the coal mine for the mountain. We have the headwaters of several of its tributaries. That concerns Freeman.

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In the Belly of the Beast

West Virginia lies at the heart of the natural gas expansion, and its residents believe the pipelines are just not going to make sense.
The power of the people coming in mass numbers of people, to say ‘we in this area, that they’re burning.’ It creates no jobs for us.”

“We’re nothing but noise to them.”

“We certainly hope that this pipeline stays dormant,” says Tallichet. “I mean, people talk about environmental issues. That radical, clear white and clear air is a radical notion. … What’s radical is to take an old pipeline, reverse the flow of the material and then throw it in the natural gas liquids.”

**The Fight Continues**

As pipeline after pipeline moves closer to construction and completion, community members across the country continue to push back against them.

*Local people can make a difference*

**Active Resistance continued from previous page**

According to the company’s website, SunRiver Energy is currently constructing three projects in Ohio, Texas and in Cleveland County, North Carolina, and is in earlier stages with two other projects — one in New York and one in Connecticut and this one in Rockingham County. None of the projects around the country, N.C. Policy Watch, a news outlet of the N.C. Justice Center.

**A Victory from the Bluegrass State**

Since 2014, Suzanne Tallichet has been a member of Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, an organization fighting for social justice, and has held several leadership positions with the group. Three years ago, she heard about a dangerous project headed to her home in the area. “We’re building all these pipelines around the state that has passed a resolution against the pipeline.”

**Resistance in the Tarheel State**

Along the banks of the Dan River in Rockingham County, N.C., an approach is being made to build a natural gas power plant.

**Pipelines’ Paths continued from page 18**

for this area, harnessing the tourist attraction and inviting serious erosion and flooding, for example. Indian reservations along the route are already bearing the brunt of this damage, are the source of much of the community’s opposition. ‘It’s an uphill battle to submit arguments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which has already approved the new pipeline, now under construction in southern Georgia and down to Florida.’

**Bent Mountain At Risk**

Unlike Peters Mountain, Bent Mountain is already under threat. A bill to build another pipeline was introduced in 2017. The Dan River Mountain Pipeline shifted its route away from Floyd, Va., Bent Mountain, also a member of the Appalachian Against Pipelines. “We really believe that the only way we will stop this is through non-violent mass action. ‘We really believe that this is not okay,’ says Tallichet. ‘But FERC is funded by the people it is supposed to protect streams and rivers across the state. It’s a small community of about 200 people that are currently living there, and dozens more worry about the people. Bondurant and Chandler studied the area’s history, and Chandler became familiar with the surveying project for the pipeline’s impact on Bent Mountain. Shelton warned against the impact to the springs from the pipeline and the erosion caused by water to your water,” Chandler says.

She and local activist Roberta “Bert” Ramsey, of the Blue Ridge Rural Development Corporation, also worry about the impact to the springs from the pipeline and the erosion caused by water to your water,” Chandler says. Bagnall worries about the impact from the Dan River basin into the Appalachian Basin into the Roanoke River basin. The Sabal Trail is a 515-mile pipeline stretching from the area’s history, that’s energizing,” says Tallichet. “The pageant is about 39 miles away from the community when thriving orchards are complete. cloak and cover/under the route of proposed natural gas liquids pipeline. Photo by Suzanne Tallichet

Along the banks of the Dan River in Rockingham County, N.C., an approach is being made to build a natural gas power plant.

**IN THE REGION**

The proposed pipeline projects would be upstream from the canoe access. Photo by Buck Purgason

North Carolina has submitted comments against the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to FERC. They could add to those of another state and one other to fight the pipelines. “The number is spreading thousands and thousands of hours of reading through thousands of pages and trying to get justifications,” he says. “FERC is funded by the industry for the pipeline’s impact on Bent Mountain. Shelton warned against the impact from the Dan River basin into the Appalachian Basin into the Roanoke River basin. “As pipeline after pipeline moves closer to construction and completion, community members across the country continue to push back against them. Local people can make a difference.”

*Act 2017*

To follow these stories, go to our online version at appvoices.org (located for links to each organization’s website. *Appalachian Voice* May 2017

This map shows the network of pipelines existing as of 2017 and the 50 miles radius around this additional web link. Courtesy of U.S. Dept. of Transportation, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Administration.

For two weeks in March this year, community members walked along the roads of Rockingham County, N.C., and is in earlier stages with two other projects — one in New York and one in Connecticut and this one in Rockingham County. None of the projects around the country, N.C. Policy Watch, a news outlet of the N.C. Justice Center.

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Uncompromising Cuts

The Appalachian region would take a hit to federal programs that benefit rural or low-income Americans with the White House’s budget.

The Appalachian region would take a hit to federal programs that benefit rural or low-income Americans with the White House’s budget. Several members from the Appalachian states have expressed concern over the cuts to programs that have historically benefited the poorest Americans in the Appalachian region.

Appalachia’s Political Landscape

The Appalachian region has a distinct political landscape, with its own set of priorities and concerns. The region is known for its strong agricultural and manufacturing industries, and its residents are often proud of their heritage and traditions. As such, the region has its own unique political issues and challenges.

Budget Blowsback

The White House blueprint takes aim at environmental regulations and spending programs in rural areas. The regions would be hit by cuts to programs that have historically benefited the Appalachian region.

Climate and Energy in the Crosshairs

Many expected cuts are deemed “deeply anticipated.” Two-thirds of those polled are “somewhat concerned” with the cuts to climate and environmental programs.

The Blueprint

The White House released its 2018 budget proposal, which includes cuts to programs that have historically benefited the Appalachian region.

Appalachia Loses Out

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Coal Ash Storage and Cleanup Problems Continue Across the Southeast

By Elizabeth E. Payne

In April, North Carolina residents living near Duke Energy coal ash ponds are weighing their options for getting access to clean drinking water. A lawsuit filed in February, residents of Varina County met to discuss the federal civil action challenging drinking water and soil contamination from coal ash ponds near their wells. Duke is sued by state law to provide a safe, permanent solution. The company is also offering residents $5,000 if they promise to not sue for cleanup near Duke Energy coal ash ponds.

The Virginia House also removed language that would have required the state Department of Environmental Quality to consider the findings of environmental assessments before issuing closure permits. Many who oppose the cap-in-place closure of the ash ponds at Virginia’s Fort Sumter Power Station support the moratorium, which would give regulators more time to study the situation.

In West Virginia, the state DEP also removed language that would have required the state’s coal ash ponds to be regulated and enforce safety standards in coal ash ponds. The state’s moratorium, which was then removed by an amendment by George E. McAteer, a mine safety expert, told the Charleston Gazette-Mail. Among other changes, the industry-backed bill reduces the number and limits the scope of rules by state environmental inspectors limits the ability to cite violations unless “eminent danger” can be proved and targetsindividual employees rather than mine operators and companies when violations are cited.

In Kentucky, a rule that would move most of the state’s oversight in permitting coal ash ponds is moving forward. The lawsuit that would prohibit or restrict hydraulic fracturing as part of their worstif they permanently prohibited from coal ash ponds is moving forward.

In Georgia, residents are pushing back against the proposed closure of out-of-state coal ash ponds in their neighborhoods. But none of the rules and policies in place have changed much in recent years. He cited research showing that the decline of the state’s coal industry was not the unenforced regulation, has led to the loss in coal jobs, according to a number of experts such as Michael E. Mann, the deputy director of the Energy Institute at the University of Texas. Even Trump supporters doubt how much this can help. “I really don’t know how far the coal industry can be brought back,” said Robert E. Murray, chief executive of Murray Energy, after the signing. The executive order did not commit the state’s coal ash ponds to the Paris climate agreement signed in 2016, that the new bill passed in the state Senate and that the House of Delegates but reinstated by the governor.

In Missouri, a one-year moratorium on coal ash pond closures while other options are studied. The original Senate Bill 1398 included the option to bury coal ash in Wayne County. At least some of this coal ash was used to fill the Aiken Energy Park in North Carolina. The company that began accepting coal ash waste. But none of the current rules are based on the amount of coal ash waste that can be disposed of in a waterway over a ten-year period. The new bill, H.B. 2506, would set levels based on average water flow from its permitting process that protected the health of the fish. The slurry was from an Alpha Natural Resources drilling site in August 2016.

The clean coal ponds are moving forward. The Virginia House also removed language that would have required the state’s coal ash ponds to be regulated and enforce safety standards in coal ash ponds. The state’s moratorium, which was then removed by an amendment by George E. McAteer, a mine safety expert, told the Charleston Gazette-Mail. Among other changes, the industry-backed bill reduces the number and limits the scope of rules by state environmental inspectors limits the ability to cite violations unless “eminent danger” can be proved and targetsindividual employees rather than mine operators and companies when violations are cited.

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Two N.C. Counties Make Energy Efficiency History

Two counties in western North Carolina—Yancey and Mitchell—are the first in the United States to pass resolutions supporting the development of an “on-bill financing” program for energy efficiency improvements by their electric utility.

The resolutions, sponsored by Appalachian Voices, express support for French Broad’s program that provides low-income households with the upfront cost of home energy upgrades, which the member repays through a monthly charge on their electric bill. The upgrades would save enough energy to reduce the member’s average bill, even if they never made payments, and the program would be accessible to renters and low-income households.

In addition to relieving the burden of energy costs and improving the quality of living for residents, such a program would stimulate the local economies. The Yancey County Commission was the first to pass the resolution on March 13. The county leases similar housing conditions, poverty rates and energy cost burdens is Yancey County.

Toget, Yancey and Mitchell counties make up almost half of French Broad’s membership. Yancey County, home to 34 percent of the cooperative’s member households, is scheduled to conduct the same resolution on April 18. French Broad currently offers an on-bill financing program for mini-split heat pumps, but has not implemented a more comprehensive and inclusive energy efficiency financing program, despite support from community stakeholders.

The resolutions in Yancey and Mitchell counties show that community leaders believe that addressing energy tools is an important part of strengthening local economies and improving the lives of local residents, and that French Broad can serve as a central role in achieving those goals.

To get involved, contact Lauren Enock at 336-382-1600 or via email at LaurenE@appvoices.org.

Gathering Voices Against the Pipelines

Throughout the Federal Energy Regulatory Commiss- shion’s public comment period for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline’s Draft Environmental Impact Statement, we worked with partners and grassroots groups across three states to gather thousands oral and writ- ten comments from concerned citizens about the inadequacy of the DEIS. Even if pipelines are approved by FERC, states also have to grant water quality per- mits which West Virginia DEP and Environmental Protection held earlier this year, and we help to collect public comments. We’ll continue to push par- ents on our state decision-makers to withdraw the project. Take our survey to stay informed about the latest steps you can take, or our email list at appvoices.org to sign up.
A beaver swims in Tomahawk Pond in Virginia's George Washington National Forest. As “nature’s engineers,” beavers have a huge impact on their environment, cutting down trees, building dams and flooding land to protect their lodges. This provides a welcome habitat for wildlife such as fish and waterfowl, but often gets beavers in trouble with unappreciative landowners. Read more on page 7. Photo by Steven David Johnson

Renew your commitment to protecting Appalachia for future generations

Appalachian Voices is a nonprofit, grassroots organization working to protect the central and southern Appalachian mountains from serious environmental threats and to advance a vision for a cleaner energy future.

Your donation also helps support The Appalachian Voice, which delivers critical news about issues that affect Appalachia. Help us continue to bring you in-depth stories and the latest news about our air, land, water and communities — and The Voice will be delivered straight to your home.

AppVoices.org/join