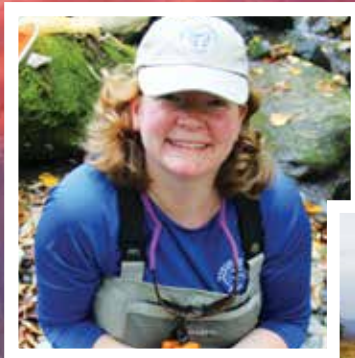


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The Appalachian VOICE

December 2013/January 2014

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27 Visionaries

Creating the Change They Want To See

ALSO INSIDE: A Nutty Acorn Year • Carbon Rule Controversy • Appalachian Trailbuilding



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A Note from Our Executive Director

In this issue of *The Appalachian Voice*, we highlight some of the bold, innovative visionaries, leaders and activists who are making a difference in our region and beyond. I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the work and personal example of one man who has been a tremendous source of wisdom and inspiration for me and countless others.

I know of no wiser or more insightful thinker alive today than Wendell Berry. I've closely followed the work of this Kentucky farmer, author and activist ever since I read a collection of his essays, "Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community," in college 17 years ago, so it was a real treat to see his rare television interview with Bill Moyers that aired on PBS this fall.

Berry is a man gravely concerned with the state of the world. Yet, despite his acute awareness of the problems we face — including the rampant mountaintop removal mining in his home state — what makes Berry stand out today is his clear, unwavering vision of the good and the beautiful, which is informed and inspired by his own well-lived life. His writing celebrates nature, close families and communities, and the potential for healthy interaction between people and the earth — and, as a farmer who's devoted his life to caring for the land and his loved ones, he writes with great authority.

Something really hit me when Berry noted in his conversation with Moyers that much of his writing has been "a giving of thanks for precious things." It's so easy these days to become fixated on what's wrong with the world, and, as Berry went on to say, "it's mighty hard right now to think of anything that's precious that isn't in danger." Berry's extensive body of work reminds us, however, to take the time to fully appreciate, love and learn from the good and beautiful things in the world.



As his example at age 79 shows, living this way will give us the energy, wisdom and positive vision to be brave, creative and effective over the long haul in our work to protect what we love. For his courageous example and extraordinarily insightful work, we owe Wendell Berry a tremendous debt of gratitude.

For the mountains,

Tom

Tom Cormons, Executive Director

Across Appalachia

Environmental News From Around the Region

Investigation Finds Fraud in Black Lung Cases

By Kimber Ray

A year-long investigation revealed evidence on Oct. 30 that the coal industry has supported fraudulent practices in order to block workers' compensation claims for black lung disease. This joint investigation, conducted by The Center for Public Integrity and ABC News, noted the coal industry's go-to law firm Jackson Kelly has repeatedly withheld key evidence in court, while Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions and Dr. Paul Wheeler — the head of the hospital's black lung department—appear to have accepted industry bribes to abstain from diagnosing miners with black lung disease.

The disease is an irreversible and

often fatal condition caused by prolonged exposure to coal dust. In 2008, the Centers for Disease Control wrote that the prevalence of black lung has doubled since 1995, contributing to over 10,000 deaths in the past decade. Yet, in the 1,500 cases reviewed by Dr. Wheeler since 2000, he failed to diagnose a single case of severe black lung disease. For many miners with the disease, their positive diagnosis — necessary to receive compensation for treatment — was established only through autopsy. Additionally, the report found that coal companies pay Johns Hopkins an average of \$750 to review X-rays for black lung — an amount nearly ten times the standard fee.

For decades, the Jackson Kelly law

firm has worked to block miners' efforts to receive compensation, routinely withholding medical evaluations that would confirm the presence of black lung. On the rare occasion when a judge ordered the disclosure of all relevant evidence, Jackson Kelly would instead grant black lung benefits in order to avoid revealing undisclosed documents.

In the wake of widespread outrage sparked by the report, Johns Hopkins on Nov. 1 suspended its black lung program. Members of Congress are calling for an official probe and Senators Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., and Robert Casey, D-Pa., are working with the Department of Labor to craft legislative reforms of the black lung benefits program.

Fracking Possible in George Washington National Forest

Under continued pressure from the oil and gas industry, the U.S. Forest Service announced in October that they may reconsider their 2011 recommendation against horizontal drilling — also known as fracking — in the George Washington National Forest of Virginia and West Virginia.

Government and local officials have united with concerned citizens to urge the Forest Service to prohibit fracking in the forest, which is the source of drinking water for more than nine million people. A final decision by the Forest Service is not expected until next year.

Thousand Cankers Disease Hits East Tennessee

By Meredith Warfield

Black walnut trees are dying in Morgan and Rhea counties of eastern Tennessee. The culprit, according to a Tennessee Department of Agriculture announcement made this November, is Thousand Cankers Disease.

The disease is a recent phenomenon

in the East, but has been wreaking havoc in the western United States for the past decade. Experts say the perpetrating fungus, *Geosmithia*, is transmitted to black walnuts by the walnut twig beetle. As the fungus spreads throughout the tree, the leaves turn yellow and the branches become stunted. The fungus has likely entered

eastern states through transportation of untreated black walnut wood.

In an attempt to prevent the disease from spreading, Morgan and Rhea counties have been placed under a quarantine that prohibits residents from transporting walnut products and hardwood firewood outside of county lines. Surrounding counties are considered

buffer zones to the afflicted area and have also been placed under firewood transport restrictions.

The Division of Forestry estimates that 1.38 million black walnut trees in urban areas could be affected if the disease is not contained. Although there are currently no effective treatments, scientists are studying the disease and officials encourage residents to report signs of the fungus outside of the infected area.

Appalachians Deserve Better...

A mountaintop removal mine on Pickering Knob, W.Va.

Appalachian Voices flight courtesy of SouthWings, photo by Kent Kessinger

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About the Cover



Western North Carolina-based photographer Scott Hotaling captured this image of a cold winter sunrise from the summit of Devils Courthouse along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Scott's goal is for his images of Appalachia and beyond to remind others of the planet's beauty and inspire the public to protect these natural landscapes.

See more of Scott's work at www.LightOfTheWild.com.

GET INVOLVED environmental & cultural events

Pipestem State Park Christmas Bird Count

Dec. 14, 7 am-12 pm: All ages are welcome to join the world's longest-running citizen science project by hiking park trails to identify and count as many birds as possible, with collected data used to assess bird population health. Free. Pipestem State Park, Pipestem, W. Va. Call: 304-466-1800 x 344

Dry Fly Fishing Workshop

Dec. 28, 10 am-12 pm: Learn to master the rewarding sport of fly fishing in this workshop that covers effective baiting, location scouting and proper use various casting techniques. \$25. Murray's Fly Shop, Edinburg, Va. Call: 540-984-4212 or visit: murraysflyshop.com

Nashville Full Moon Hike

Dec. 17, 7:30 pm: Team Green Adventures will lead an educational night hike through Edwin Warner Park. Hike is 4.5 miles on a semi-paved trail; families and dogs welcome. 50 Vaughn Rd. Nashville, Tenn. Free. Contact: michaelh.mho@gmail.com

Energy Savings for Appalachia Gathering

Jan. 9, 6 pm: Community gathering to learn about home energy efficiency and lowering your electricity costs. Light food and drinks, sponsored by Appalachian Voices. Free. Watauga Community Center, Sugar Grove, N.C. Call: 828-262-1500 or email kara@appvoices.org

"Home Sweet Home" Art Show

Jan. 9, 6 pm: Organized by the Wilson Museum, this group exhibition features internationally renowned Virginian artists who explore notions of home and place through photography, painting, sculpture and performance. Free. Hollins University, Roanoke, Va.

Agripreneur Workshop Series

Jan. 16, 23, 30 and Feb. 6, 6-8 pm: This four part agriculture-entrepreneurship series teaches contemporary business strategies for farm entrepreneurs. Each workshop focuses on an aspect of developing an agricultural business plan. Free, registration required. Agricultural Conference Center, Boone, N.C. Visit: ncsbc.net

Conservation Lobby Day

Jan. 24, 8:30 am-2 pm: Join the Virginia Conservation Network and voice conservation priorities to state legislators. Briefings will discuss Virginia uranium mining, river pollution and clean energy programs. \$25, includes lunch. Richmond Center Stage, Richmond, Va. Visit: vcnva.org/events

Winter Adventure Weekend

Jan. 24-26: Get active with a weekend of hiking, canoeing, cave tours, kayaking, rappelling, winter survival, zip-lining, archeological tours and more! All trips are guided, various skill levels. Costs vary. Carter Caves Resort State Park, Olive Hill, Ky. Contact: 606-286-4411 or visit: winteradventureweekend.com

Annual Reelfoot Lake Eagle Festival

Jan. 31-Feb. 2: A festival full of photo-ops with professional bird of prey shows, bald eagle nest tours, storytelling, craft vendors and more! Free. Reelfoot Lake State Park, Tiptonville, Tenn. Contact: 731-253-2007 or visit: reelfoot-tourism.com

Contaminated Groundwater at TVA Coal Plants

By Kimber Ray

Nearly five years after the Kingston Fossil Plant coal ash spill unleashed over a billion gallons of sludge in Roane County, Tenn., a new report shows that the Tennessee Valley Authority's mismanagement of coal ash waste has been ongoing for decades, resulting in groundwater contamination at all 11 TVA coal-fired power plants in Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama.

The report was released Oct. 7 by the Environmental Integrity Project, a nonprofit organization established by former enforcement attorneys for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Coal ash waste is a byproduct of burning coal, which is then stored in ponds near the power plant. Contami-

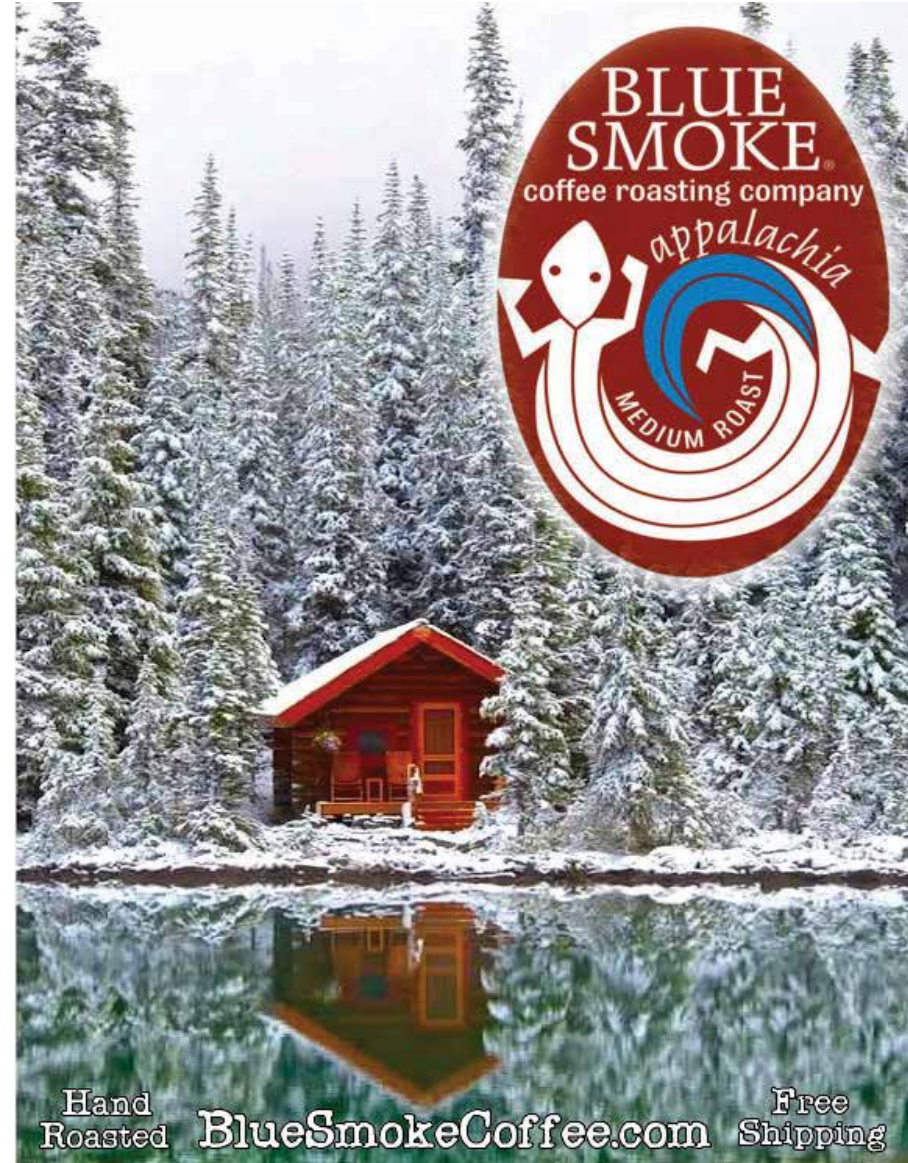
nants identified at the TVA sites by the report include arsenic, boron, cobalt, manganese and sulfate, all of which are linked to coal ash contamination. The potential for negative health effects includes neurological damage, heart disease and cancer.

Through Freedom of Information Act requests, the EIP was able to obtain the TVA well monitoring data used for the report. However, the EIP believes this data only begins to touch on the full scope of contamination. The report notes that although the TVA has an extensive network of monitoring wells, the utility fails to regularly test for the pollutants most strongly associated with coal ash. If evidence of contamination becomes apparent despite neg-

ligent testing, the TVA has frequently responded by halting data collection.

The TVA released a statement on Nov. 7 outlining efforts to prevent coal ash contamination, but did not directly dispute the report. There are currently no plans to remediate any of the sites.

According to the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation spokeswoman Kelly Brockman said on Nov. 7 that the department is still evaluating the report. Although the state has rarely held the TVA accountable for groundwater contamination, upcoming regulations from the EPA may increase protections. On Oct. 29 a federal court sided with public interest groups including Appalachian Voices, the publisher of *The Appalachian Voice*, and, after four years of delays, the EPA was given 60 days to set a final deadline for submission of its coal ash rules.



Polluted Asheville Well Fans Debate

By Kimber Ray

In an unprecedented decision, North Carolina officials on Oct. 23 ordered Duke Energy Progress to provide alternative drinking water to a residence near Asheville after testing revealed that the home's private well was contaminated with heavy metals. Although the North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources has previously held Duke accountable for groundwater contamination, this case marks the first time that the utility has been held liable for drinking water as well.

According to Ben Bradford from public radio station WFAE, Duke claims the Asheville well case demonstrates that the state isn't going easy on them in prosecuting coal ash contamination. In a separate case, citizens and environmental groups in August submitted more than 5,000 public comments expressing the opinion that the state environmental agency is too lenient with Duke in prosecuting coal ash pollution.

West Virginia National Heritage Areas Proposed

By Kimber Ray

Legislation to support National Heritage Areas in West Virginia and western Maryland was introduced to Congress on Nov. 4 by Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W. Va. The bill would renew funding for the Coal and Wheeling National Heritage Areas — both in West Virginia — and enact a NHA designation for the Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, which crosses into two Maryland counties.

Congress designates these areas in order to preserve unique resources and landscapes through a public-private partnership. Although National Heritage

Areas are not federal lands, the National Park Service provides an amount of technical, planning and financial support.

In a press release, Rockefeller emphasized the importance of the proposal. "Tourism is such an important part of West Virginia's economy, creating jobs and enriching people's lives," Rockefeller said. "These historic, cultural and natural treasures need to be preserved for ... future generations of West Virginians."

The bill is currently under review by the Senate Energy and Natural Resource committee.

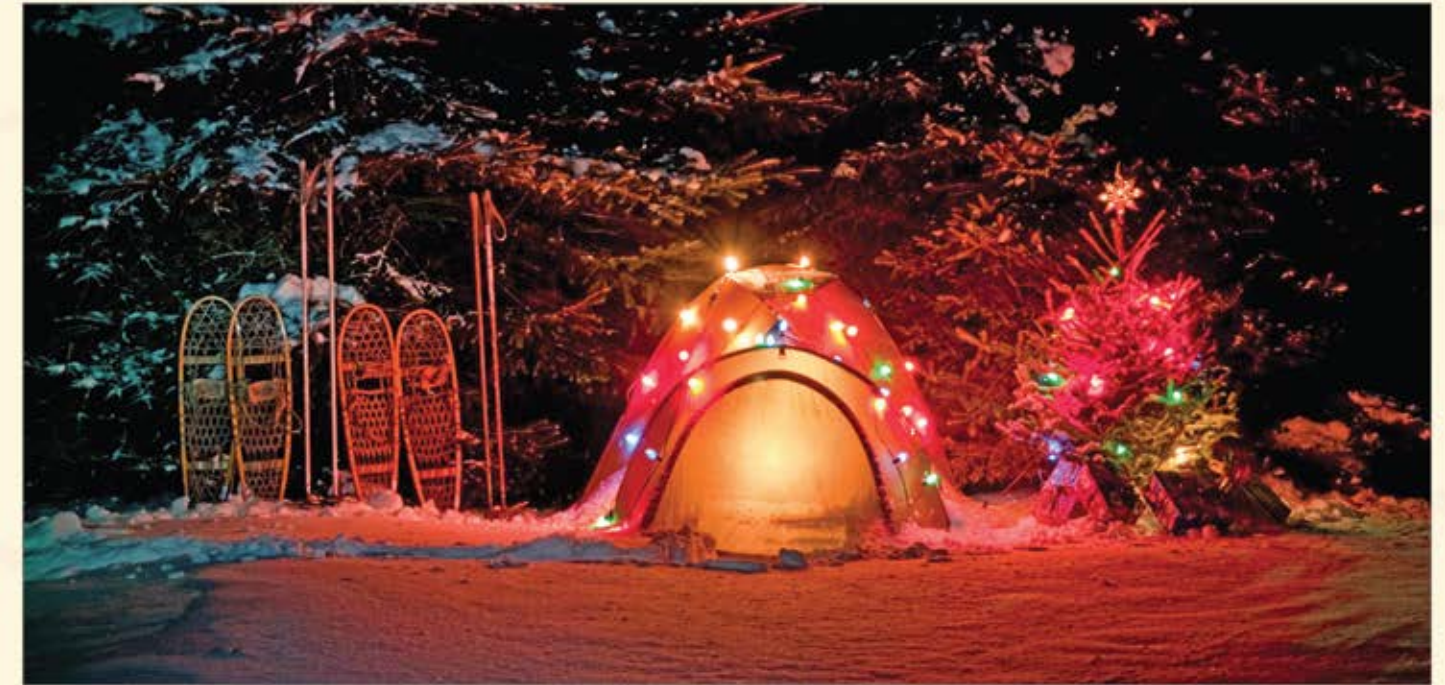
Geared up for the High Country Bike Plan

By Meredith Warfield

Long-term plans are underway to establish new cycling routes in the seven mountain counties of northwestern North Carolina. The High Country Council of Governments — a regional development agency — initially proposed the High Country Regional Bike Plan in July 2011. Public comments on

the plan were taken in October, with final approval pending a vote from each county.

The plan calls for bicycle lanes to be added whenever highway improvements such as widening or resurfacing are scheduled, and also seeks to improve education on bicycle safety and traffic laws.



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Hiking the Highlands

Good Ole Rocky Top: Trail Repair in the Smokies

By Davis Wax

Leaving I-40 South near Newport, Tenn., heading down Cosby Highway, I slowed down and leaned forward over the steering wheel, watching as the late September sky disappeared behind undulations of green and blue earth. The Great Smoky Mountains loomed ahead, as did my next adventure on the Appalachian Trail, a footpath — and a community — from which I could not seem to get away.

I was fast becoming a roaming trail-maintenance volunteer, finding myself all across the East Coast during the past month to work on the A.T. After one week in Virginia with the Konnarock Trail Crew and three weeks with the Mid-Atlantic Trail Crew in Pennsylvania and New York, I was now back south to join another crew. I had discovered a hidden ecosystem of trail repairers — member hiking clubs

and trail crews operating through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, a non-profit founded in the 1920s to oversee the footpath's completion.

Rocky Top Trail Crew was born from a need to repair a 35-mile portion of the A.T. in the Smokies that is open to equestrian use. The trail conservancy and the Back Country Horsemen of Tennessee and North Carolina work together to get tools and supplies up to the work site in the national park each season.

Before reaching Gatlinburg, I turned off the highway and made my way to basecamp. I was reminded of one of the great benefits of this kind of work — meeting people from all walks of life. Altogether, I shook the hands of Tennesseans, Floridians, North Carolinians and one young English lady currently living in Singapore. With familiarity and ease, we were bonded by our volunteerism and desire to learn about trail building.

To get to the A.T. in the park we hiked up Snake Den Ridge Trail. Pack horses passed us, panniers secure on either side and their volunteer riders upright and cheery in the cool rain of the morning. We stuck together as a crew, gaining almost 2,500 feet in elevation over six miles. Our pace was slow but steady, and ultimately invigorating since I knew rewarding work lay ahead.

Waking up in the morning dark at an elevation of 5,800 feet, we took our breakfast. Carefully we reengaged the electric bear fence surrounding the kitchen and then hiked to the work site.

Part of the team was tasked with building log steps where the trail grade was steep. Locust logs, more resistant to rot than other hardwoods, had been flown in by helicopter to nearby clearings, where the steps and stakes to hold them in place were cut to size.

Ease-of-hiking is actually not the first concern when restoring a trail. Controlling water erosion is the top priority, which reduces routine maintenance and, if done well, also makes the trail safer and easier for hikers to navigate. Thus, the three tiers of trail maintenance: erosion, safety and hikers' ease.

I was thrilled to see that at the end of the season there were returning alumni from Rocky Top and other crews. Perhaps most special of all was the participation of 88-year-old Keith Brown, a legend in the trail-building



Freelance writer Davis Wax, second from left, pauses with the Rocky Top Trail Crew on the Snake Den Ridge Trail. Photo by Kayah Gaydish

world from Ohio. To work alongside this man with more than twenty years of experience in trail maintenance work was an honor.

Late October was here, showing itself one morning when we woke up to 16 degrees. One night I heard a light pattering on my tent. We were greeted that day with about a half-inch of snow.

On the day before the "Great Pack-Out," we stopped working early enough to cache tools at the lower trail junction. The next morning we broke down camp and carried everything down to the junction in order to meet the caravan of volunteer horsemen. Using a hook scale, we created pairs of loads which would be balanced for the horses.

Seeing the horses come up the narrow mountain trail, calm and controlled, was majestic. We helped the volunteer horsemen fasten the panniers and descended down the mountain, leaving the trail much the same to the untrained eye. In a few short winter months, next spring's hikers would be hitting the trail, whether going for a day or two or all the way to Maine. I was humbled by our work with the rock and soil, knowing we had lent those future trekkers a small helping hand for their journey.

▶ SNAKE DEN RIDGE TRAIL, TENN.

To Hike: Snake Den Ridge Trail leaves Cosby Campground (about 20 miles east of Gatlinburg down TN Hwy. 321) and climbs almost 2,500 feet over five miles to its junction with the Appalachian Trail near Inadu Knob. Difficulty is moderate-to-strenuous; grade is steep and there is one stream crossing with a bridge. Length is more than 10 miles round-trip. Horses allowed.

▶ VOLUNTEER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

To Volunteer: The Appalachian Trail Conservancy operates six trail crews, no experience necessary. The two main southern crews are Konnarock in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia from May to August, and Rocky Top in the Great Smokies during September and October. Visit appalachiantrail.org to learn more.

Naturalist's Notebook

The Forest's Bread and Butter

By Chris Samoray

Bring down the mast. But hold on seafarers, leave the sails flying. In the forests of Appalachia, this lingo doesn't refer to sailing. Instead, it's used by outdoor folk to describe the fruits of plants and trees, with blackberries, strawberries, blueberries, hickory nuts, walnuts and beechnuts constituting just a few. Although these mast types are important forest resources, forgetful squirrels, scurrying mice and gobbling turkeys are among those responsible for spreading the forest's most potent protein bundle, the gift of oak trees: acorns.

While some acorns bud into the world lean and slender, others are more round and plump, yet they all sport a similar toupee-like casing. If you've been popped on the head by some nut that then goes skipping down the street, you're familiar with acorns, or maybe you recall skating along the sidewalk as acorns rolled under your shoes. But acorns do more than cause pedestrian anxiety.

Acorns are often referred to as "a keystone species of the forest" because of the critical role they play in ecosystem dynamics. Rodents feed heavily on acorns and, in turn, predators such as foxes and hawks prey on rodent populations plump from acorn feasting.

Acorns, however, serve a bigger purpose than being a hot menu item for rodents such as the white-footed mouse. It also has an appetite also for the larvae of gypsy moths, an introduced pest of

European and Asian descent, which, because of the larva's fondness for oak and aspen leaves, decreases tree growth, survival and mast production. But with more acorns come more mice. And more mice leads to fewer gypsy moths and fewer gypsy moths equates to more oaks. In essence, large acorn crops support large mice populations and shield mature oak trees from the troubles brought by destructive gypsy moth outbreaks. The moth is omnipresent in the northeastern United States and in parts of North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia, and could expand farther south and west, which would put more trees at risk of defoliation.

Deer and black bears depend on acorns too. In fact, if a pregnant black bear doesn't consume enough acorns in the fall, her embryo is less likely to fully develop, and even if her cubs are born, she won't be able to make enough milk to feed them. And don't forget the oaks themselves. "Of course, acorns are the seeds to future oaks," says USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station's Dr. Katie Greenberg. This year, however, her meanderings in the mountains of western North Carolina have less of a crunch than in years past.

"Around here, [acorn] production seems to be low," says Greenberg, who adds that, for oak species, "this year appears to be a pretty bad year for everything." According to biologist Gary Norman of Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, "[Virginia is also] experiencing a significant mast



A net beneath an oak tree in North Carolina lets researchers study the season's acorn yield and how it affects the forest. Photo by Julia Kirschman, USDA Forest Service

failure" and West Virginia "reported their mast index was the lowest they've recorded in the survey history."

Similar to the West Virginia surveys, Norman's research at Virginia study sites shows that this year's acorn production in both white and red oak species is the lowest it has been in the last six years. This fall, acorns covered only 5 percent of white oak tree tops, while red oaks boasted a slightly higher count at 8 percent. In 2012, the same surveys showed 58 percent tree top coverage in white oaks and 65 percent in red oaks, dwarfing this fall's numbers.

So what's the deal with these oaks? Were their heads in a cloud during reproductive season? Not exactly, though clouds might have held some influence. "This year [the acorn shortage] could be because we've had so much rain in the spring and in the summer," says Greenberg.

The problem with too much rain is that it makes pollen soppy, and wet pollen stubbornly resists being blown by the wind — a step necessary to pollinate other oaks. Drought conditions and late spring freezes can kill oak flowers and inhibit acorn production as well. But in the end, "there's a mystery element with oak trees," says Greenberg. Though the weather is likely a player in this year's low acorn crop, Greenberg notes that acorn production tends to be erratic. Norman's surveys bear witness to this notion. Virginia's white oak species produced low acorn mast in 2007-2009 and 2011, but had significantly better masts in 2010 and 2012.

So like some days of sailing, some mast seasons are good, some bad, and some just plain nutty.

With this year's acorn mast being low, you might be tempted to leave some food for your backyard visitors. It's surely a nice gesture, but this will encourage animals to associate humans with food, which could be dangerous to you or the animals. Let the wild be wild.

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The Changemakers: Creating a Better Appalachia

By Molly Moore

In this issue, we celebrate some of the engaged citizens, motivated visionaries and creative collaborations that enact the famous adage, attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, to “be the change you want to see in the world.”

The profiles in the following pages honor a sample of the hundreds of Appalachians who are doing their part to make our communities stronger, our mountains greener and our future brighter.

At Appalachian Voices, the non-profit organization that publishes *The Appalachian Voice*, it’s impossible to think of regional visionaries and leaders without considering one of our own — Senior Campaign Advisor Lenny Kohm.

His journey into environmental work began on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska and Canada in 1987. Kohm had arrived

as a photographer, but developed a deep connection with the native Gwich’in people, which spurred his transition from journalist to activist. For thirteen years, Kohm helped organize a successful campaign to protect the area, traveling the country with representatives of the tribe and speaking to audiences of all stripes about the Alaskan land and people threatened with oil development.

“Some would see a separation between the social justice issue and the ecological issue, and that, I think, is a fallacy,” Kohm says. “There is no separation. They are one and the same. The people are part of the system.”

At Appalachian Voices, Kohm incorporates that philosophy into building public awareness of mountaintop removal coal mining. He first witnessed the practice in 1998, when he came to the region at the behest of Appalachian Voices founder Harvard Ayers. Kohm spear-

headed the Appalachian Treasures Tour, which connected residents impacted by large-scale surface mining to communities around the country. He believes the surest way to end the practice is to outlaw it, and maintains that constituent outrage and pressure is a critical component of any winning campaign.

Now, at age 74, Kohm is embarking on a new project called Boots on the Ground, an initiative to help communities become better at grassroots organizing. Everyone is passionate about something, Kohm says; the role of professional organizers is to provide people who are fervent about social justice or environmental issues with “the tools they need to nurture that passion.”

Kohm sees the current fights for environmental and social justice as episodes in a perpetual vigil. “We’ll never achieve perfection, but we can get a lot closer than we are now,” he says.



Photo by Jamie Goodman

Years ago when working in Alaska, Kohm joined on a traditional caribou hunt that included a father and his young son Lance. On a recent trip to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the campaign to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, he watched as Lance returned from a similar hunt with his young son. To Kohm, that moment describes his motivation and his hopes for the future.

“Maybe the work I did moved the needle just a tiny little amount that helped provide the continuation of that tradition,” he says.

Virginia Tech Student Works to Keep Campus Green

By Nolen Nychay

For Virginia Tech student Nneka Sobers, environmental activism is more than an interest — it is a passion that empowers her to promote positive change wherever she goes. Sobers became involved with her university’s Student Environmental Coalition early in her college career, eventually becoming a liaison for the student body’s environmental interests when she joined the Student Government Association her sophomore year.

Sobers contributed to a successful campaign to save more than 11 acres of old-growth forest on Virginia Tech property from clearcutting, and co-authored a campus bill requiring all future construction projects to include a budget for new trees. She also organizes awareness events about pollution concerns from the campus coal plant as a part of an ongoing petition for Virginia Tech to divest its holdings in the fossil fuel industry.

When Sobers took an internship with VT Alternative Transportation, she used the opportunity to apply for a sustainable development grant that would fund bicycle “Fix-it Stations”



Photo courtesy of Nneka Sobers

around campus, giving students free access to basic bike-maintenance tools — three stations were constructed this year. She is currently working on a proposal for a university bike-sharing program, as well as a new policy that would refurbish and donate abandoned bicycles to the local YMCA.

Embodying the Virginia Tech motto *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), Sober says, “If there’s a problem, I will try to fix it. Environmentalism is a holistic approach to creating a better tomorrow, and the best I can do is to lead by example.”



Doug Estep, left, discusses the assassination of Sid Hatfield with a tour group. Photo by Klair Gaston

Touring Coal Country's Past

By Molly Moore

In 1978, student Doug Estep was poking around in the West Virginia University library when he came across a newspaper headline describing the 1920 Matewan shootout — a violent episode in the dispute between coal companies and pro-union miners. Although Estep grew up near Matewan in Mingo County, W.Va., it was the first time he had heard of the infamous event. His discovery that day sparked a lifelong passion for the state’s colorful history, which he now shares with others through his company, Coal Country Tours.

Estep formed the venture to test the idea that southern West Virginia’s

storied past could draw tourism dollars to the area and help diversify the struggling economy. By showing visitors how the notorious Hatfield-McCoy feud served as “the opening shot of the mine wars” — an epoch that culminated in the Battle of Blair Mountain, the country’s largest civil insurrection since the Civil War — he uses local lore to discuss current struggles.

“If we’re lucky, we will get to mine the coal twice,” Estep says, “because it’s been mined for energy and now with coal drying up, hopefully we can mine it again because the history behind the industry and the mine wars ... is just fascinating, incredible history.”

Continued on next page

Considerate Consulting: Andrew Grigsby's Vision of Sustainability

By Brian Sewell

Andrew Grigsby is a leading sustainability consultant with more than 25 years of experience in residential construction and green building. But ask him what motivates his work to foster a more ecologically and socially sane world, and he’ll likely go back to his upbringing in Culpeper, Va.

“It’s just how I was raised, to be thrifty and to be considerate,” Grigsby says. “If you’re 14 years old and you read some statistic that says Americans make up 5 percent of the world’s population but use 25 percent of the world’s resources, well that’s not very considerate.”

Before starting Commonwealth Sustainability Works, his Rappahannock, Va.-based sustainability consulting firm, Grigsby worked for years as a carpenter and remodeler, mastering many of the hands-on skills essential to his field. After attending graduate school in Texas, he managed the Sustainable Communities Initiative of the City of Austin, where he expanded his expertise on topics ranging from green building to regional sustainability planning.

While a larger strategy for sustainability is important, Grigsby says on a day-to-day basis what allows him to “stay sane” and operate a business is addressing individual issues in the

form of opportunities. According to the company’s website, Commonwealth Sustainability Works relies “upon the notion that each of us has a responsibility to adjust our consumption to a level that might conceivably be sustained by the resources of our planet.”

“Being wasteful is counter to most people’s ideals, and I think it’s unhealthy to live in violation of one’s ideals,” says Grigsby. “If you know something is bad and you keep doing it, that’s an incongruity that wears on your psyche and on your soul.”

But for Grigsby, acknowledging the obstacles to reducing energy consumption is a step in the right direction.



Photo courtesy of Andrew Grigsby

He shares his vision of sustainability across the region, educating groups in classrooms, community halls and conference centers.

“Sometimes I feel like I’ve got the cure for the common cold and I’m just trying to get people to listen,” says Grigsby. “When you’ve got that, you want to share it.”

An Epoch of Activism: Ken Hechler

By Rachel Ellen Simon

For the vast majority of his nearly 100 years, Ken Hechler has been one of the mountains’ strongest advocates. A Democrat from West Virginia, Ken Hechler served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 18 straight years, beginning in 1958. During this time, Hechler championed the abolition of strip mining and fought for more stringent safety laws in coal mines, leading to the passage of the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969. Hechler also served as West Virginia Secretary of State from 1985-2001.

Hechler’s commitment to environmental justice has never wavered. In 2009, at 94 years old, Hechler was arrested at a mountaintop removal coal mining protest, and in 2010, he ran for Congress solely to raise awareness of the practice. Through-



Ken Hechler, left, stands with late activist Larry Gibson. Photo by Rana Xavier, rana-x.com

out his years of public service, Hechler has remained a man of abiding principles, though according to him his tactics have changed. In a 2009 commentary in the *Charleston Gazette*, Hechler described his journey succinctly: “I used to be an agitator, then an activist. Now I am a hellraiser.”

Appalachia’s oldest activist turned 99 in September. Happy birthday, Ken — keep on raisin’ hell.

Touring Coal Country's Past

Continued from previous page

Estep has taken more than 400 clients on multi-day tours since 2010. Visitors stay at state parks and Estep seeks out local caterers, restaurants and guides, keeping tourism dollars in the community. Engagement between visitors and locals is key — guests watch reenactments by community groups, share dinners with mining families, and sometimes hear stories from locals who witnessed events such as the harrowing

Buffalo Creek Flood firsthand.

Estep believes the region’s history could capture the public imagination like the story of the Titanic did. Creating that future, he says, begins with saving Blair Mountain from the threat of mountaintop removal coal mining and establishing a museum to serve as a focal point for area tourism.

Meanwhile, Estep is connecting interested visitors with the people and stories of West Virginia one busload at a time.

Four Projects on Fourth Creek

By Hallie Carde

Bob and Jill Kinser claim to have the best water around, and they’re quick to offer a glass to anyone to prove it. In fact, the only thing more apparent than the Kinsers’ hospitality is their hardworking nature.

Looking for a place in the country to keep horses, the couple moved to 23 acres along Fourth Creek in Iredell County, N.C., in 1986. Two years later the state designated almost 24 miles of the creek as impaired due to the elevated presence of fecal coliform bacteria and visual turbidity — or murky water — both signs of pollution.

Concerned with ensuring clean water for their six horses, the Kinsers contacted county soil and conservation officials, who worked with them to secure Clean Water Act funding for water quality improvements to their property. The county covered 75 percent of the cost, while the Kinsers made up the difference.

From 2005 to 2008, the couple completed four water quality improvement projects on their land, installing two units that prevent debris contamination and regulate water temperature, and building fencing to keep their horses from getting into waterways where they could contribute to contamination. They also built a four-bin composter to repurpose daily animal waste for fertilizer.



Photo courtesy of Bob and Jill Kinser

Their efforts paid off over the years, and today segments of Fourth Creek are no longer considered impaired for turbidity or fecal coliform.

While federal funding provided professional blueprints and materials, their own labor — especially Bob’s — helped the Kinsers achieve their goals. “He did the work in every case, every project,” Jill Kinser says proudly of her husband. “He’s part engineer, part old farm boy.”

Staging Solutions in Harlan County

By Rachel Ellen Simon

The old adage holds that it takes a village to raise a child. But in Harlan County, Ky., the community has come together to raise more than that, including: theater sets, awareness and, ultimately, spirits.

A series of participatory community theater projects, "Higher Ground" involves upwards of 100 Harlan County locals as actors and musicians, working in conjunction with national theater artists. The original performances confront difficult issues facing coalfield citizens today, as well as celebrate the strengths of the region and its people.

Produced by Robert Gipe, director of The Appalachian Program at Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College, and a coalition of scholar-artists, "Higher Ground" launched in 2005.

The first show was a collaborative effort between the late Appalachian author and playwright Jo Carson, director Gerard Stopnicky and Harlan County community members. The drama focused on widespread prescription drug abuse in the Appalachian coalfields, drawing its script directly from interviews with area residents.

This first production was such a success that Gipe and his team received funding to stage two more dramas, in 2009 and 2011. In 2013, grant money from ArtsPlace America supported the fourth production, "Foglights," so named to describe the area's metaphorically foggy future given the ongoing decline of the area's once-dominant coal market. The cast for each show has ranged from young children and their parents to college professors and retired coal miners.



Justin Taylor performs an original composition in Foglights, a community theater production in eastern Kentucky. Photo by Ben Rorick for the "After Coal" documentary project

Living in a region beset with years of socio-economic woes, Harlan County residents are using theater to discuss present concerns and envision a

brighter future: one in which the community can move beyond the issues that are holding it down, onto solid, higher ground.

Only God Should Move Mountains

By Nolen Nychay

For Reverend Ryan Bennett, creation care is about encouraging environmental responsibility through the Biblical principles of stewardship. At Bethlehem United Methodist Church in Franklin, Tenn., Bennett uses the philosophy "love the Creator, love His creations" to discuss the looming threat of mountaintop removal, spurring a rising interest — especially amongst younger age groups — in supporting green initiatives.

Bennett is involved with the Tennessee Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship, a faith-based group that charitably distributes educational creation care materials to rural communities, and advocates for political action against mountaintop removal. For the past several years, the group has supported the Scenic Vistas Protection Act, a proposed bill that would ban surface mining on ridgelines above 2,000 feet in Tennessee. Their ultimate goal is ending the practice completely, under the slogan "Only God should move mountains." Bennett also serves as a board member for Blessed Earth, a national nonprofit and major proponent of religious environmental stewardship



Photo courtesy of Ryan Bennett

that was recently awarded a \$1.5 million Duke Endowment grant to promote green practices in more than 2,000 Tennessee and North Carolina Methodist churches. The grant will fund a series of workshops on energy efficiency and recycling initiatives for seminaries, and, additionally, supplies churches like Bennett's with creation care sermons, books and films.

Inspired by his wife Heather's work toward a master's degree in Sustainable Development, Bennett embraces creation care as an opportunity to transcend political differences and remind Christians that "loving thy neighbor" includes leaving a healthy environment for tomorrow's neighbors.

Charlie Jackson: Bringing Farms to Market

By Peter Boucher

Charlie Jackson found a simple answer to the complex problems of regional agriculture. He founded the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project in 1995 to create new markets for mountain farmers who had lost their cash crop. Tobacco had sustained farms for nearly half a century, but in the late '90s, farms were rapidly losing income as a federal support program for the crop was discontinued. Jackson and his colleagues decided to build local demand for these farms by writing and distributing a local food guide to link consumers to area farmers.

The idea caught on faster than Jackson and his colleagues imagined. They rapidly grew from distributing 5,000 copies of their guide in the first printing to 100,000 annually. These sustainable, local markets empowered consumers as well as farmers, by giving interested shoppers an alternative to mainstream agriculture. As Jackson says, ASAP strives to "transform the food system" by connecting "residents to the farmers that grow their food."

Jackson has a knack for bringing people together. In 2002, he called together a meeting of representatives of regional farmers markets. While



Photo courtesy of Charlie Jackson

the farmers initially saw each other as competitors, he was able to organize them into the Mountain Tailgate Market Association, which allows local markets to collaborate with each other. He also feels blessed to have brought together the ASAP team. "I think of my role as one of providing the space for really smart, passionate people to be excellent at what they do," Jackson says.

Jackson leads with a balance of managerial skills and a contemplative ability to see the big picture. "I'm the one who has the responsibility to reflect, to contextualize what we do," he says, emphasizing that building an organization includes a lot of "starts and stops ... testing and experimenting with ideas." He has a lot of faith in the next generation to collaborate over the conservation issues that he holds close to heart.

Sara Day Evans: Accelerating Good Business

By Kimber Ray

Although the environment and the economy are often painted as rival forces, Sara Day Evans never saw much sense in this argument. What she saw instead was a challenge — and an opportunity — to seek sustainable solutions. As the founding director of Accelerating Appalachia, a nature-based business accelerator launched this past year, Evans attests to the invariable link between economic and environmental quality.

A business accelerator is like a boot camp for promising start-up companies, and with a focus on nature-based work, Accelerating Appalachia is the first of its kind. Over the course of an intensive three-month training program, Accelerating Appalachia provides professional

mentorship, financial guidance and networking opportunities to developing companies. Selected participants embody the increasingly popular concept of the triple bottom line: benefiting people, planet and profit. One such company — the Mitchell County, N.C.-based business Bark House — uses forest waste material to create biodegradable building products.

Evans' enduring passion for sustainability was shaped at an early age by her parents, who instilled in her a love of people and place, explaining "It's not about me, it's about we." Welcoming this philosophy of interconnection, Evans decided to work in the environmental field. After earning a master's degree in hydrogeology from the University of

Kentucky, Evans began working in environmental protection, displaying dedicated leadership for nearly 20 years on issues such as groundwater and waste management.

During this time, Evans was troubled by the continued economic distress she witnessed in Appalachia. "I was seeing economies that weren't serving the people or the place for the long-term, just for the short-term," she says. To create a robust economy, Evans asserts, you need "a business that works with your place, nature, people, and can make a profit too."

Recognizing that the strengths of Appalachia lay in the natural capital of the land — in sectors such as farm-



Photo courtesy of Sara Day Evans

ing, natural textiles, sustainable forest products, botanicals and clean energy — Evans decided to launch Accelerating Appalachia. She talked with many different investors, and though she got a lot of nos at first, Evans always kept her head up. As a result of her commitment, Accelerating Appalachia launched its first three-month program session this October, with 11 businesses selected from a pool of more than 100 applicants.

"There are so many people today who are looking for a career with meaning," Evans says. "By designing this project to be replicable, I hope to be able to share it with other regions."

Pioneer Appalachian Scholar Retires

By Rachel Ellen Simon

Patricia Beaver may not be a household name in all circles, but mention her name in a group of Appalachian scholars, and everyone will have a story to share. Beaver has been a leading scholar in the field of Appalachian Studies for over four decades. With a doctorate in anthropology from Duke University, Beaver has focused her studies on the influence of gender, class and ethnicity on social structure in

both Appalachia and China.

Beaver is an advisor on "After Coal," a documentary film project started in 1974 as one of the first initiatives to draw parallels between Appalachia and other mountain regions around the world. The ongoing project engages members of Welsh and Appalachian coalfield communities, encouraging dialogue and



Photo by Sandra Ballard

reflection on their respective pasts, visions for the future, and how each region can learn from the other.

Beaver also served as project director of the federally-funded

Appalachian Land Ownership Study, a groundbreaking survey published in 1983 that detailed the overwhelming amount of absentee land ownership

across Appalachia.

Until her retirement in December 2013, Beaver directed the Center for Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University for 20 years, leading the center in its multi-disciplinary and regionally focused programs.

In his recent writing project on coal mining, North Carolina Poet Laureate Joseph Bathanti dedicated one poem to Beaver, but he declared that "She deserves a thousand poems in her honor." Many in the Appalachian Studies field would surely agree.

Ralph Davis: Exploring Appalachia's Future

By Nolen Nychay

In his 21 years of journalistic work at publications such as the *Jackson County Sun*, *Paintsville Herald* and *Floyd County Times*, Ralph Davis developed a close relationship with the small communities of eastern Kentucky and the rural lifestyle the region prides itself on. When Davis began work on his master's thesis in new media journalism last year, he used the opportunity to explore the underlying economic issues of his region through a medium of reporting unfamiliar to him: documentary filmmaking.

Davis's public awareness project

started in 2012 by questioning what the future of Appalachia might look like. "I didn't want to narrow my focus with a specific agenda," Davis says. "I wanted to let the project develop organically through authentic voices in the community."

The documentary, titled "Appalachia 2050," features a combination of nonprofit workers, university professors, journalists and area residents who offer their thoughts on what is

holding the region back from economic prosperity. Highlighting sources of poverty — from dwindling opportunities in Kentucky's once-booming coal industry to the lack of technical schools for to-

morrow's workers — the documentary explores how community collaboration may offer hope for the future. "While there may be disagreement on how exactly to get there, these people are unified in their desire for a healthy, vibrant Appalachia," Davis says.

Davis completed his documentary

this past July, after eight months of research and interviews. He hopes to expand "Appalachia 2050" into a web series, delving further into issues of community development in Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

View "Appalachia 2050" at ralphbdavis.com

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Reclaiming Appalachia's Land and Future

By Rachel Ellen Simon

Nathan Hall was born in the mountains of eastern Kentucky, surrounded by lush hardwood forests, cool trout streams and barren moonscapes — the latter courtesy of mountaintop removal coal mining. “It was all around me, in every direction from the house where I grew up within a mile or two,” he says. A former underground miner and native son of the region, Hall is now passionate about developing solutions to repair damaged lands and create a more sustainable future for the Appalachian coalfields.

A ninth generation Appalachian from Floyd County, Ky., Hall grew up hearing “if you want to do anything in life, you got to get out of here.” So after high school, Hall lit out for the flatlands of central Kentucky. In Louisville, he became aware of a growing movement to protest mountaintop removal mining, which back in eastern Kentucky “was never really framed as this huge issue that needed to be dealt with,” Hall says. He noticed that most of the activists he met in Louisville “had come from really far away to do all these radical actions,” he says, adding, “That made me really want to move back home and start working on local development issues.”

Returning to the mountains, Hall took several jobs in the coal mines, working as a belt shoveler and building brattice walls to control ventilation underground. Family members’ concerns for his safety, however, compelled Hall to leave the mines after six months and head back to school.

At Berea College, Hall designed his own bachelor’s degree in sustainable agricultural and industrial management. While in school, he founded East Kentucky Biodiesel, LLC, the region’s first producer of biodiesel from waste vegetable oil. In 2009, Hall won a \$30,000 Kentucky New Energy Ventures grant to support the construction of a portable biodiesel system that could double as a traveling educational tool.

Shortly after graduating *magna cum laude* in 2009, Hall embarked on a year of international travel, funded by the prestigious Thomas J. Watson Foundation. He traveled to nine countries to explore how other mining-impacted areas have dealt with their issues, and how Appalachia might do the same.

“I initially set off assuming that I would find all these awesome examples of ways we could transition,” Hall says. “But the places



Nathan Hall works to restore mined land near Fishtrap Lake in Pike County, Ky. Photo by Meredith Brown.

where renewable energy and remediation projects were happening were more urban areas, or coastal areas, whereas in the actual mining towns not much had changed.”

Confident that rural Appalachia might do it better, Hall returned to the United States in January 2012. Soon after, he was hired as reforestation coordinator for Green Forests Work, a Lexington, Ky.-based nonprofit dedicated to reforesting surface mined land in Appalachia that has planted over one million native hardwood trees since its founding in 2010.

Next, Hall has plans to pursue a sustainability-focused MBA, with the ultimate goal of founding a Benefit Corporation — a business model that emphasizes social and environmental responsibility over profit — in order to realize his multi-faceted plan for reutilizing surface mined lands across Central Appalachia.

“My goal is to help start on-the-ground projects in the coalfields that work from an environmental and economic standpoint, and hopefully employ as many people as possible,” Hall says. His business model will connect renewable energy development, commercial crop production and remediation of damaged lands “in ways that are

synergistic and can accomplish more than one goal at once.” The East Kentucky Biodiesel project will be critical in this venture, as locally collected cooking oil and oilseed crops grown on the mined lands will then fuel the diesel equipment used to further work the land.

Emphasizing the need to move the region beyond what he calls the “coal miners versus tree-huggers mentality,” Hall aims to employ former surface miners in future remediation projects, enabling them to “re-tool their existing skill set” in a changing economic landscape.

“We need to talk about the positive things, and the good ways to move forward, while we still respect people’s pasts, and respect their hard work — even if it might have been on a strip mine,” Hall says.

Hall’s perception of his home region has changed greatly over the years. Growing up in a place where mountaintop removal was “just a part of the landscape,” he once thought of eastern Kentucky as little more than “something to get away from.” Yet, where he once saw value nowhere, Hall now sees value *everywhere* — in the land, in the people, and in the infinite possibilities of both.

Anna Behnke: A Seventh Grade Activist

By Sarah Kellogg

Seventh grader Anna Behnke loves to swim in Mountain Island Lake, but two years ago, she learned about the water pollution caused by Duke Energy’s Riverbend coal-fired power plant and began to worry about the impact the pollution could have on children’s health. So, for a sixth grade science project, Behnke tested the arsenic levels at Mountain Island Lake and found levels 20 times higher than Environmental Protection Agency standards. “I wanted to show the people in my grade and school how the plant impacts the water,” says Behnke. “Not a lot of people think about it even though we pass the power plant on the way to school. They don’t realize that it can hurt our health.”

Although Duke is demolishing the Riverbend plant in 2014, Behnke worries about how the company



Photo courtesy of NBC

will clean up the unlined coal ash ponds which store over 3 million gallons of toxic coal ash and discharge directly into Mountain Island Lake, the drinking water source for most of Mecklenburg and Gaston counties. “I want to write a letter to President Obama about this, just to inform him of everything that’s been happening where I live,” she says. Behnke also plans to teach her science class about mountaintop removal coal mining and the pollution caused by burning coal.

Behnke has heard Duke project that in 20 years, only 3 percent of North Carolina’s energy will be produced by renewables. “I want to fix that,” says Behnke. “Riverbend was the first plant to shut down in North Carolina and I’m really happy about that. I hope that other activists will start to realize that if we did it, then they can too.”

Innovating with Electric Cooperatives

By Sarah Kellogg

An inspiring, forward-thinking businessman, Mike Couick works to distribute affordable electricity to rural homes. “I don’t believe it’s a sustainable business plan to try to sell electricity that a member can’t afford,” Couick says. “The bottom line is their satisfaction and well-being.”

Couick is the CEO of the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina, an association of member-owned, nonprofit electric providers that created Help My House, an energy efficiency loan program in 2011 with the help of the Doris Duke Foundation. According to Couick, “In some winter months, many co-op members were spending 60 to 80 percent of their disposable income on gas and electricity, not leaving much for food, clothing, or medicine.” The pilot program provided 125 low-income homes with loans for energy efficiency retrofits, and members used the savings on their electric bills to pay back the loans. Help My House, Couick says, “had amazing results,” reducing average home electricity use by 34 percent and providing participants with an average annual savings of more than \$1,100.

Additionally, 96 percent of Help My House participants were as satisfied or more satisfied with their electric cooperative after the program. “I feel like I see dividends every day with these homes that we’ve [helped],” says Couick. “The excitement is phenomenal. That’s why I work for a not-for-profit utility company.”

The energy efficiency achieved through the Help My House program also cut carbon emissions and reduced the need to build a new power plant. Though the pilot is over, many South Carolina cooperatives are



Mike Couick, right, pauses with a WWII veteran during an event, sponsored by the electric cooperatives, where state veterans were flown to visit memorials in Washington, D.C. Photo by Luis Gomez.

now starting their own energy efficiency loan programs and ECSC continues to share the success of Help My House with policymakers throughout the Southeast.

Looking forward, Couick’s organization is beginning a new solar program that allows interested members to purchase solar power at a slightly increased rate. “Currently, it’s tough for solar to make its mark on a true cost-effective basis, but it will get there soon,” he says. “We’re using this as a pilot opportunity on how to market solar.”

Couick believes that in the years to come, electric cooperatives will need to think creatively about how to reduce the environmental impact of energy generation while continuing to provide affordable energy to their members. “We believe there’s a decision to be found but you have to be willing to put all your conventional expectations to the side and search for truth.”

Knoxville: “The Sustainable City”

By Nolen Nychay

Knoxville, Tenn. ranks second in the nation for growth in green jobs and is one of only a handful of American cities to have fully bounced back from the economic recession, according to a recent Brookings Institute report. Since 2006, the city has reduced carbon emissions by 17 percent, and under Mayor Madeline Rogero’s progressive leadership, is pursuing over 30 green initiatives to further reduce emissions 20 percent by 2020. When it comes to meeting today’s needs with tomorrow in mind, Knoxville is leading by example.



Efficiency

Since 2012, Knoxville has participated in the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge. The three-year, \$50 million grant program strives to improve energy efficiency in 100 cities through weatherization upgrades for aging buildings, investing in greener urban design and energy education. Mayor Rogero anticipates improvements to the city’s energy infrastructure will cut long-term utility costs.

Recently, Knoxville implemented efficient lighting in government buildings and replaced nearly every traffic signal and streetlight with LED lights, which use 90 percent less energy than traditional incandescents. The retrofits paid for themselves within two years, saving taxpayers upwards of \$250,000 annually.

Renewable Energy

In 2013, the Tennessee Valley Authority and its Green Power Switch partners named Knoxville the Sustainable Community of the Year. Green Power Switch offers communities the option to support renewable energy by paying a little more on monthly utility bills, and through the program, Knoxville residents contribute to the production of over 56,250 kilowatt hours of clean energy each month. The city also offers rebates up to \$15,000 for Energy Star-certified homes, which use up to 30 percent less energy than the average household.

A Department of Energy Solar Cities grant helped the city implement municipal solar projects, increasing solar capacity from 15 kilowatts to over 2,000 kilowatts in less than four years. The grant also encourages growth in the private energy sector by

informing regional contractors about solar technologies and certifications while simplifying zoning and permitting regulations for new solar projects.

Green Nonprofits

Socially Equal Energy Efficient Development is a budding nonprofit in Knoxville that prepares at-risk young adults for “green-collar careers.” Applicants undergo an intensive 90-day program of green job education, community service and life-skills training before being placed in internships or higher education institutions for further guidance. SEED also seeks to improve access to healthier foods and energy-efficient technologies in low-income neighborhoods.

Another nonprofit, the Knoxville Recycling Coalition, has worked for more environmentally sound waste management for over 20 years, offering public workshops and demonstrations about sustainable recycling methods. The coalition created — and still runs — Knoxville’s first multi-material recycling facility. In 2011, the city followed suit by offering a single-stream, curbside recycling program for all residents.

Transportation

Partnerships with Oak Ridge National Laboratory, ECOTality and Tesla have enabled Knoxville to erect electric car charging stations in more than 30 locations — some entirely solar-powered. Residents without electric vehicles can still travel sustainably via Knoxville’s revamped public transportation system, which utilizes propane-powered buses and shuttles retrofitted with particulate filters to reduce carbon emissions. Low-emission travel is incentivized by Smart Trips, an award-winning program where Knoxville commuters can earn gift cards of up to \$100 by logging how often they walk, bike, telecommute or use public transit.



Advancing a Creative Economy for the Clinch River Valley

By Kimber Ray

In the remote coalfields of southwest Virginia, a collaborative grassroots project is taking on the challenge of balancing job creation and environmental conservation. The Clinch River Valley Initiative, conceived at an economic development forum in 2010, is an award-winning coalition of concerned citizens, local government, and environmental and business groups, ardently committed to building creative

economies around the Clinch River.

What makes the initiative unique is the broad scope of the project, which draws together various interests in a logical embrace. Uniting behind a common love for the Clinch River Valley region and a shared vision of healthy communities, the initiative developed five interwoven goals: to create an official state park; develop access points, trails and campgrounds around the river; enhance the water quality; provide envi-

ronmental education opportunities; and foster downtown revitalization and entrepreneurship. Each goal is represented by stakeholders who address that branch of the project through a team action group.

According to Carol Doss, co-chair for the water quality action group, they have already made valuable progress with recruiting volunteers, cleaning up illegal dump sites along the river and hosting household hazardous waste collection drives. Their efforts will

be given greater permanence by the environmental awareness imparted by the education group, which is in the process of developing a program to present at local schools.

New businesses — such as restaurants and a river outfitter — have already started to emerge in the area as a result of the initiative, and quarterly community meetings to discuss the project regularly attract nearly 100 people. The Clinch River Valley Initiative stands as an achievement of group success, showing the creative power of collaboration.

Dewayne Barton: Building Opportunity in West Asheville

By Kimber Ray

Dewayne Barton isn't only referring to nature when he talks about changing the way people relate to their environment. "Just like we polluted a stream or a river, we also polluted communities, and [restoring communities] has to be a part of the solution or it's not right," he says.

As an artist and the co-founder and co-director of the community development organization Green Opportunities, Barton is devoted to bridging the gap between culture and sustainability

in Asheville, N.C. With his business partner and fellow environmental activist Dan Leroy, Barton provides residents from Asheville's low-income neighborhoods with green-collar job training and placement. Program areas include green construction, clean energy, sustainable agriculture and culinary services, as well as academic and life skills support.

"I really feel the environment's got a way of bringing different people together, almost like music," Barton comments. "You bring people together to solve a common issue, but then also

to restore relationships, and build trust, and reconnect people to each other and the planet."

Barton was driven to work toward environmental justice by accounts of blighted natural resources — including pollution in some areas that was so grave people couldn't even drink their tap water. He explains how that awareness woke him up to the need for a movement because "a lot of people, specifically people from the African American community, don't pay a lot of attention to this stuff." To spread his message, Barton began using found materials to create art with social justice themes.

However, Barton recognized that for the low-income residents of West Asheville, there was a shortage of organized efforts to improve the community — a shortage that would need to be addressed before change could occur. He joined efforts to engage residents around local projects and, with his wife Safi Mahaba, created the Burton Street Community Peace Garden, a space for cultivating food and art.

As he witnessed the surge of the environmental movement over the past



decade, Barton set his sights on longer-term prospects for his community. After realizing there was currently no green job training program in the city, Barton teamed with Dan Leroy to form Green Opportunities. In the five years since the founding of GO, the program has trained more than 500 community members.

Although there have been challenges with invigorating a community that's endured longstanding disconnection and disadvantage, it's this aspect of GO that also makes Barton the most proud. "My work's important because it benefits everybody," he says. "It's designed to benefit the poor and the rich, and the animals and the trees, and the mountains and the sky."

Teacher, Wife, Activist, Mother:

Wilma Lee Steele Turns Focus to Healing

By Molly Moore

For Wilma Lee Steele, the devastation wrought by mountaintop removal coal mining can't be measured solely by polluted streams or transformed ridgelines. For someone as spiritually connected to the mountains of her West Virginia home as Steele is, blasting away mountaintops for the sake of coal is deeply offensive, and she has actively opposed the practice for decades.

Still, she doesn't see the people behind the coal companies or state environmental agency as enemies, despite their offenses. "I believe in treating people like people and listening to what they have to say," Steele says. She declares that the path to mending divided communities — and to healing the land and water itself — is based in

right treatment of one another.

Steele has had a lot of practice putting these principles into action. When she taught kindergarten through 12th grade, with a focus on special needs students and art education, she tried to steer clear of coal subjects. But when students prompted her she always responded respectfully and truthfully.

That habit of speaking the truth is one of the best qualities of days gone by, Steele says. As a young woman, she was close with the older generations — together, they cut out quilt squares, picked cherries and baked pies. Though many of these bygone friends were coal miners, Steele is confident they would have opposed mountaintop removal. When youthful environmentalists began arriving in Mingo County in the '90s, Steele saw similarities

Wilma Steele and her husband Terry at a Mountain Justice Summer activist gathering. Photo by Andrea Steele Mounts



between them and the older folks, and felt a kinship that extended beyond a mutual care for the Earth.

"They saw something that needed to change and they were willing to work to bring that change," Steele says. "I never considered myself an activist, yet I realize now I always was, before the environmental movement," she adds, "because no matter what age I was I would speak up for what was right or true."

Through the years, Steele and her husband Terry have hosted more than 400 visitors at their home, showing them the contrast of destruction and beauty in the region and entertaining long conversations by the firepit. She feels that her greatest strength lies in connecting visitors to the place and people she loves. In addition, she joins a host of organizations in efforts such

as attending permit hearings and documenting the abuses of coal companies and government agencies.

In Steele's mind, companies bent on extracting West Virginia's natural wealth have controlled the state's narrative for too long. The key to the future, she says, is for residents to "quit letting someone else define us" and to listen to one another.

"You don't have to call anyone a liar," she says. "The only thing you have to do is speak the truth with love and understanding."

Minding Mental Health

By Rachel Ellen Simon

Post-traumatic stress disorder is most commonly associated with soldiers who have seen combat, but psychologist Paige Cordial has found similar symptoms in the coalfields of Appalachia. Cordial recently received her doctorate in counseling psychology at Virginia's Radford University, where she wrote her dissertation on the relationship between physical proximity to mountaintop removal coal mining and the mental health and well-being of Appalachian communities. Among area residents, Cordial documented symptoms of PTSD, anxiety and emotional distress related to the physical destruction wrought by large-scale surface mining.

Originally from Fayette County, W.Va., Cordial first learned about mountaintop removal mining as a student at Berea College in Kentucky. Noting the way in which the natural richness of the region can help people cope with its social problems, Cordial began to wonder: "What does it mean for people who already live in a region plagued by economic problems to have the beauty and richness of the natural environment taken away from them too? What must that do to people emotionally?" She delved deeper into

these questions at Radford.

Cordial's dissertation contributes to the already-considerable scholarship documenting the health effects of mountaintop removal mining, which include elevated rates of cancer, birth defects and heart, lung and kidney diseases. Yet, Cordial is the first to focus specifically on mining's psychological impacts.

"If you look at interviews and listen to what people [in mining-affected areas] are really saying, they're talking about a lot of emotional effects — but no one is really highlighting that," she says. Cordial's research demonstrates how drastic environmental changes can trigger psychological stressors that, in turn, exacerbate the region's pre-existing socioeconomic problems, such as high rates of poverty and drug use.

Deeply committed to staying in the region, Cordial now works as a clinical psychologist in southwest Virginia. There, she uses her expertise to help individuals with their personal battles, and continues her research to help fight a much larger one.



Johnny Cummings:

Small Town with Big Ideals

By Kimber Ray

For a small eastern Kentucky town, Vicco has been making big headlines. The driving force of this publicity is the town's energetic and openly gay mayor, Johnny Cummings. Locals praise their mayor for leading ambitious community projects in economic revitalization and infrastructure repair. Nationally, however, Cummings astonished much of the country by advancing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights in a region often stereotyped as a stronghold of social conservatism.

When the Vicco town council passed an LGBT Fairness Ordinance in January 2013, this community of 329 residents became the smallest municipality in the United States to prohibit discrimination in public facilities, employment and housing based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. "We're a small community," Cummings says, "and when you see each other every day, it helps you get to know and accept one another."

In fact, Cummings reports, the town's reaction to the ordinance has been relatively minimal. To them, what matters most is having a mayor



Mayor Johnny Cummings speaks with television reporters. Photo courtesy Johnny Cummings

who cares about improving the community. Long beleaguered by the effects of a declining coal industry, Vicco was on the brink of bankruptcy for nearly 20 years.

Since being elected to office in 2012, Cummings has spearheaded efforts to breathe new life into Vicco, applying for grants and addressing some of the town's longstanding problems. For the first time in years, the town has a police officer, the sewer system is repaired and there are even plans to build a new playground. With certainty, Cummings asserts, "This community's [going to] survive, with everyone included."

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An Invitation to Witness

Diane Pitcock Connects Landowners to Fracking Researchers

By Molly Moore

When Diane Pitcock and her family retired to rural Doddridge County, W.Va., in 2005, she planned on canning garden vegetables, watching the stars and listening to the owls. Today, however, four Marcellus Shale gas rigs surround her land, and the ridge behind her home hosts an access road instead of a forest. On nights when the noise from a nearby rig keeps her awake, the light from the well pad is bright enough that she can step onto her bedroom porch and read a book.

Before settling in Doddridge County, the Pitcocks researched conventional gas drilling and decided they were comfortable with the practice — their new land came with a standard vertical gas well. Yet, after they moved, information began surfacing about the new hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling methods used to unlock natural gas from the Marcellus Shale, and the Pitcocks grew concerned.

When they learned that their immediate neighbor had leased much of his land for horizontal gas drilling, Diane Pitcock responded by forming West Virginia Host Farms, a grassroots network of concerned landowners who provide journalists and scientists with access to their land in order to further research and media coverage of Marcellus Shale fracking.

"[We] invite researchers, journal-



John and Diane Pitcock (back right) and their youngest son Josh (back left) visit with five participants in a Mountain Justice Spring Break activist program. Photo courtesy of Diane Pitcock

ists, environmental groups, students, anybody interested in the impacts of shale gas drilling on the environment, and on the health and safety of people, and land rights issues," she says.

Pitcock hopes their efforts will provide decision-makers and the public with information about Marcellus Shale drilling that will lead to stronger regulations and better oversight of an industry that she says is out of control. "It's in my opinion too destructive, too unknown, and I am seeing it firsthand because I'm at ground zero."

A self-described pro-business conservative, Pitcock believes environmental protection should not be a political issue. "You can be pro-hunting or anti, or pro- or anti-gun, but you've still got to drink water and you still need clean water and clean air to breathe," she says.

Anna George: Aquatic Activist

By Peter Boucher

When Anna George was a child, she would pester her mother to take her to zoos and aquariums. As she grew up, she conducted research in a variety of aquatic environments — from the Dauphin Sea Lab on the Alabama coast to the Cayman Islands — and her incredible enthusiasm for animals developed into a passion for Appalachian freshwater fish.

As an undergraduate student, George found her natural habitat in the lakes, streams and rivers of the Mountain Lake Biology Station in Pembroke, Va. Impressed by the diversity of freshwater environments — home to more than 25 percent of all vertebrates on earth — George was roused to protect a variety of life that she felt was "in peril and extremely unknown."

George studies the aquatic life in Appalachia in order to raise awareness about the ways that humans can better protect these species' habitats. She leads the Conservation Institute at Chattanooga's Tennessee Aquarium, teaches biology at Sewanee: The University of the South, writes books about freshwater fish, runs summer youth programs and conducts field research. Through the aquarium, George has adopted a project to reintroduce lake sturgeon, a freshwater fish, to the rivers of her home state of Tennessee, from which they disappeared more than 50 years ago. She often uses their release



Photo courtesy of Anna George

to give school groups hands-on biology lessons.

George emphasizes that her role is as much about passing on information as it is about conducting research. "The challenge that I enjoy is communicating with people," she says. "I get so excited and want to share everything I know!"

Through experiential teaching methods and her love for all things aquatic, Anna George inspires others to tap into their inner fish. "We all share this passion for nature," she says, adding, "we have to learn how to balance our passion for nature with sustainability."

taintop removal and I couldn't believe that people denied these headwater streams existed or that they were important. That changed my career path ... from then on I've always done applied stuff, community-based participatory research. I work for the citizens."

In West Virginia and across Appalachia, Stout has become well known for his research. In 2004, he met with residents in Mingo County, W.Va.,



Photo courtesy Wheeling Jesuit University

who claimed their water was contaminated by the coal industry's practice of injecting slurry from coal processing plants underground. The report Stout went on to write found that, for many families, drinking or even bathing in their tap water could present a "chronic health hazard." Nearly 700 impacted Mingo County residents sued Massey Energy over the contamination — Massey eventually

Continued on next page

Ada Smith: Giving Voice to Appalachia

By Kimber Ray

Amidst the economic and social upheaval sweeping through Appalachia, art and media may seem like unexpected tools for approaching the challenges the region faces today. However, through her work with Appalshop — a media and cultural center in Whitesburg, Ky. — Ada Smith has witnessed how creating and sharing stories can empower communities.

As the daughter of two of Appalshop's founding filmmakers, Smith has a deep-rooted connection to the organization. After receiving a degree in Appalachian Studies from Hampshire College in 2010, she spent three years working as the program coordinator and co-director for Appalachian Media Institute, Appalshop's youth media

training program. Although her role facilitating the program meant that Smith rarely saw herself as a creator, Smith has embraced the AMI vision of "creating a new Appalachian culture."

Encouraging people to question the circumstances they've become accustomed to is a principal function that Smith feels AMI serves. One video demonstrating the program's ability to influence dialogue for change is "Because of Oxycontin," which presents the personal stories of Oxycontin addicts to depict the drug's devastation. According to Smith, the youth-produced video helped spark the ongoing policy debate regarding the marketing and overprescription of Oxycontin in the region.

Smith was working to engage the community on critical issues in Ap-

palachia even before her employment with AMI. In response to the exodus of youth leaving the region for opportunities elsewhere, Smith and three others formed The STAY Project in 2008. Short for Stay Together Appalachian Youth, the project connects rising Appalachian leaders for a four-day summer institute of social and environmental justice workshops. By encouraging youth to demand change in their communities, Smith explains, STAY empowers youth to remain in Appalachia as active participants.

In August 2013, Smith was appointed Appalshop's institutional development director to champion the value of the organization's work and to develop events and partnerships enhancing fundraising. She also continues



Photo courtesy of Ada Smith

to be an active participant in The STAY Project. "Media and art makes people look at things differently, it makes them value themselves and their culture differently," Smith says, "and without that encouragement for people to reevaluate their situation, it's not apparent how we're going to create a new economy."

On the Right Side of the Law

Wes Addington Defends Miners' Rights

By Molly Moore

From the gallery of the Kentucky State Capitol, lawyer Wes Addington and a group of women from eastern Kentucky — mostly widows of coal miners — watched the Kentucky House pass a bill expanding legal and safety protections for state miners. The women had advocated tirelessly in support of the law, and witnessing their relief and joy that day in 2007 was one of the most powerful moments of Addington's nine years working for miners' rights.

A son of a coal miner and a native of Letcher County, Ky., Addington is a

natural fit to represent coal miners and their families. As a legal defender with the nonprofit Appalachian Citizens' Law Center, he works with ailing miners or surviving family members to ensure they receive black lung benefits, and helps miners exercise their right to speak out about unsafe working conditions without losing their jobs.

"Unfortunately it's taken very publicized mine disasters to make the kind of changes necessary to make mines safer," Addington explains, but notes that with every disaster or accident, "there are lessons that can be learned."

Wes Addington, left, enjoys a moment with his father and son en route to New Mexico for the National Black Lung Conference. Photo courtesy Wes Addington



Appalachian Citizens' Law Center tries to identify improvements that could prevent future tragedies, and points out weak regulations to agencies and legislators. The 2007 law that requires Kentucky to inspect coal mines more frequently than any other state was a response to a 2006 Darby mine disaster that killed five miners in Harlan County.

Addington knows there is much more work to be done toward miner health and safety, but believes that regulations are moving in the right direction.

He cites the 2010 Affordable Care Act, which simplifies the legal process for federal black lung claims, making it easier for affected miners and families to receive benefits. Changes like that, Addington says, make it a lot more rewarding to come to work every day.

A Science of Responsibility:

Dr. Ben Stout's Dedication to Community-Based Research

By Brian Sewell

Dr. Ben Stout, a stream ecologist and professor of biology at Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia, is as at home in nearby communities as he is in the classroom. For more than 20 years, he has conducted his research outside of the lab and in local communities, testing water, listening to residents' concerns, and publishing and testifying on his findings.

Stout says his responsibility to

residents of Appalachia began in 1990, when he testified in the "first big mountaintop removal case" held in a federal court in Charleston, W.Va. There, he spoke about the impact of valley fills on stream health, and catalyzed an ongoing national debate about the tenets of the Clean Water Act that apply to mountaintop removal coal mining.

"That was earth-shaking to me," Stout says. "Up to that point I really did not know anything about moun-

A Science of Responsibility:

Continued from previous page

settled out of court with the residents for \$35 million.

Keeping with his commitment to conduct community-based research, Stout and several students are currently working in western Pennsylvania, interpreting complex pre-drilling water reports. In exchange, residents can anonymously add information about

their water quality to a database of pre-drilling water quality for the region. Stout says that data could allow researchers to paint a better picture of what well and stream water quality were like before drilling and more accurately assess contamination problems when they do occur.

"That is my role," Stout says, "to make sure people have good information and to fight off disinformation, and we get plenty of that."

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Bill Howley: Making Electricity Local

By Harrison Dreves

In 1974, a trip to West Virginia changed the course of Bill Howley's life. The recent Yale graduate was immediately entranced by the taste of blackberries, the view of receding ridgelines and the smell of Appalachia in June. Three years later, he purchased 46 acres in a West Virginia valley and made that land his home. Today, Howley and his wife Loren tend a productive garden, several acres of farmland, a pair of farm draft horses and a blacksmith's forge.

For Howley, all these activities maintain his connection to the land — a connection that has also led him to become a strong opponent of any threat to the land of West Virginia. A supporter of clean energy, advocate of distributed power generation and organizer against large-scale power lines, Howley is an unsung hero of Appalachia.

In 2008, a consortium of power utilities announced plans to construct a long distance, high-voltage power line

through West Virginia. Not only would the construction of the line — known as PATH — clear more than 6,000 acres of rural Appalachian land, it would also enable West Virginia coal plants to export more energy to East Coast cities, burning more coal in the process.

Having previously fought against herbicide spraying by electric utilities, Howley worried that the public discussion of PATH was overlooking the project's effects on the land and its people. He started The Power Line, a blog dedicated to informing the public about local impacts. As he explained in a founding post on the blog, "if you want to come across me with your big power lines, you have to start talking about the land." Soon, officials at the state agencies that regulated the utilities were reading his words and private citizens were repeating his arguments at hearings on PATH across the state.

In 2012, after four years of resistance, the utilities dropped the PATH proposal.

Today, with his initial goal achieved, Howley continues to use The Power Line to educate citizens across the country about new transmission line projects and clean energy issues. Howley also serves as chairman of a citizens' group known as the Coalition for Reliable Power, advocating for distributed power generation and clean energy across West Virginia.

Howley and his wife have taken these two issues to heart, recently installing fifteen solar panels on their home. Capable of producing up to seventeen kilowatt-hours per day, the panels now supply almost all of their electricity. For Howley, this is his vision of the future: large-scale transmission lines will dwindle as ordinary citizens create and distribute their own, more



(left) Photo by Loren Howley (right) Photo by Bill Howley

sustainable power.

"My long-term goal is to increase the level of activity and control by West Virginia citizens over their electrical system," he explains. "It begins with doing away with the magical thinking that power companies have fought hard to create: that when you flip on your light switch and the light comes on, that this is like magic . . . We can develop the technologies and our understanding of those technologies so that we can produce our own electricity."

Charting a Path to Clean Water

By Molly Moore

After studying geologic features and data, Matt Hepler maps out a handful of locations in the coal-bearing mountains of southwest Virginia. With a cooler full of empty water bottles, a scientific probe and a pair of waders — just in case — he heads out to monitor water quality in areas impacted by coal mining.

Hepler is the water and enforcement organizer with the Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards, a Wise County, Va.-based community and environmental advocacy organization. Often accompanied by interns or area residents, he tests backyard creeks and headwaters of local waterways, looking for dangerous levels of heavy metals and other pollutants. When initial readings are troublesome, he sends a water sample to a lab to find out if the levels of toxicants pose a threat to aquatic or human health. If the waterway is contaminated, he educates area residents about potential dangers.

In the coming years, he hopes to see the base of citizens regularly testing waterways across the region grow. Hepler's top goal, however, is to ensure that this data shapes sound federal and state

environmental policies. If rules such as the Office of Surface Mining's stream buffer zone are strengthened to protect water quality, he says, it will greatly reduce the destruction caused by surface mining.

Having grown up in the mountains of Bath County, Va., Hepler prizes the rural lifestyle and is also a member of the RReNEW Collective, a group that facilitates the placement of volunteers with justice-oriented organizations in coal-dependent Virginia counties.

When it comes to advice for the next crop of activists, Hepler speaks from his experiences with court cases and government agencies: "Learn to be very patient because change takes a really long time." But Hepler is not idly waiting to see problems in his community improve — with each water sample or citizens' rights workshop, he's bringing that change a little closer to reality.

To learn about regional water monitoring, visit ACE-project.org



Photo by Reanna Edwards

Appalachia's Political Landscape

Carbon Controversy: EPA Gathers Feedback on Emissions Rules

By Brian Sewell

This fall, public listening sessions held by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency served as an opportunity to influence future rules to limit carbon dioxide emissions from power plants, the centerpiece of President Obama's Climate Action Plan.

Comments submitted by citizens and stakeholders, and the large turnouts and media attention at the 11 listening sessions in cities including Atlanta, Chicago and Philadelphia, reflect the high level of public support and condemnation of the EPA.

On Nov. 7, the day of the final listening session, a coalition of environmental groups held a press conference and marched with supporters to EPA headquarters in Washington, D.C., where the session was held.

Since the scheduled cities were announced, Appalachian legislators and members of the media criticized the EPA for not scheduling listening ses-

sions closer to Appalachia — a region crucial to the debate surrounding the administration's plans to cut carbon.

On the *Charleston Gazette* blog "Coal Tattoo," Ken Ward Jr. reminded readers that when previous EPA administrator Lisa Jackson announced curbs on mountaintop removal permitting, she promised that federal agencies would coordinate with state and local entities to help "diversify and strengthen the Appalachian regional economy and promote the health and welfare of Appalachian communities."

A listening session with EPA "would give coalfield residents a chance to ask EPA what they've done in this regard," Ward wrote, and could offer the agency a chance to learn that "not everyone in the state is totally against doing something about climate change or trying to work toward more clean energy."

"The Obama administration cannot create a responsible 21st-century energy and climate policy that overlooks the ongoing exploitation of mountain com-

munities by coal and gas companies," says Thom Kay, legislative associate with Appalachian Voices, the publisher of *The Appalachian Voice*.

"Allowing coal plants, the single largest source of carbon pollution in our country, to dump billions of tons of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere every year is an unmitigated disaster," Kay says. "The question is not whether the EPA should be placing limits on carbon pollution from power plants — they are legally obligated to. The question is, why aren't they already?"

In 2007, a Supreme Court majority decided that greenhouse gases fit well within the Clean Air Act's definition of an air pollutant, giving the EPA the authority and the obligation to regulate emissions. In June 2012, a federal appeals court upheld that decision and dismissed industry arguments that the scientific evidence for climate change was unsupported.

The EPA will seek additional public input during a comment period once it

announces guidelines for existing plants in June 2014. Those rules must be finalized by June 2015.

Manchin Moves to Thwart Climate Action

While the EPA hears from the public on rules for existing coal-fired power plants, some members of Congress are focused on the agency's more immediate plan to regulate carbon from new plants. A draft bill circulated by Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Rep. Ed Whitfield, R-Ky., would allow power plants to continue dumping unlimited amounts of carbon pollution into the air.

Manchin claims that his proposal will still combat climate change, but would remove the EPA's ability to set limits on carbon pollution and leave that up to Congress. Rules for existing coal plants would be designed around what Manchin called "commercially feasible" technologies.

A letter signed by 42 groups in-
Continued on page 21

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113TH CONGRESS: Below are recent congressional bills and amendments on environmental issues and how regional central and southern Appalachian representatives voted. To see other recent votes, or for congressional representatives outside of the five state area, visit scorecard.lcv.org/recent-votes. ✓ = pro-environment vote ✗ = anti-environment vote

HOUSE

H.R. 1900, the Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act, amends the Natural Gas Act to require a more stringent, one-size-fits-all timeline for federal agencies to approve or deny the siting, construction, expansion or operation of natural gas pipelines. **252 AYES, 165 NOES, 14 NV. PASSED**

H.R. 1965, the Federal Lands Jobs and Energy Security Act, amends the Mineral Leasing Act to streamline the drilling permitting process for energy projects on federal lands. **228 AYES, 192 NOES, 10 NV. PASSED**

H.R. 2728, the Protecting States' Rights to Promote American Energy Security Act, amends the Mineral Leasing Act to prohibit the Department of the Interior from enforcing federal guidelines regarding hydraulic fracturing if there are state guidelines in place, even if those are unenforceable. **235 AYES, 187 NOES, 9 NV. PASSED**

	Kentucky			Tennessee			North Carolina			Virginia			West Virginia			
	T. Massie (R) KY-04	H. Rogers (R) KY-05	A. Barr (R) KY-06	P. Roe (R) TN-01	J. Duncan (R) TN-02	F. Fleischman (R) TN-03	S. Deslaurais (R) TN-04	V. Fox (R) NC-05	P. McHenry (R) NC-10	M. Meadows (R) NC-11	R. Hurt (R) VA-05	B. Goodlatte (R) VA-06	M. Griffith (R) VA-09	D. McKinley (R) WV-01	S. M. Capito (R) WV-02	N. Rahall (D) WV-03
H.R. 1900	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
H.R. 1965	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
H.R. 2728	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

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Tennessee Valley Authority Announces Major Coal Cutbacks

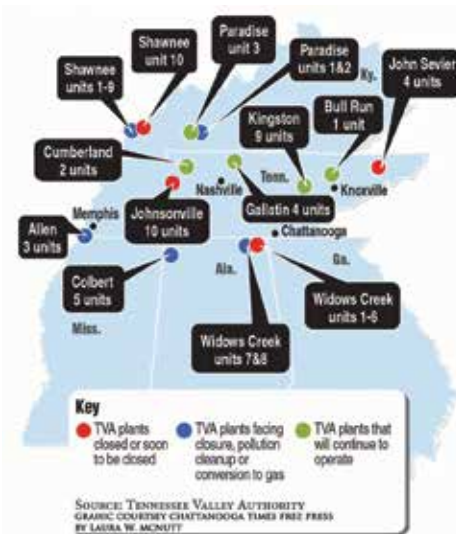
By Brian Sewell

After more than 50 years of supplying most of its power plants with coal, the Tennessee Valley Authority announced it will idle 3,308 megawatts of capacity at eight coal units in Kentucky and Alabama — approximately half of its coal-based generation.

Citing market factors, declining demand and stricter environmental rules, board members of TVA — the nation's largest public power provider — said the cutbacks will move the utility closer to its long-term goal of relying on coal for just 20 percent of its overall generation. Under TVA's plan, nuclear power will overtake coal-based generation and account for 40 percent of the utility's capacity.

While the announcement came as no surprise to observers familiar with TVA's plans for the future, the timing of the decision did. The 20-year plan TVA released in 2011 included the idling of up to 4,700 megawatts of coal capacity by 2017. But in late October, the utility updated its plan in "response to major changes in electrical utility industry trends," providing signs it planned to expedite a shift away from coal.

"These were difficult recommendations to make as they directly impact our employees and communities," TVA President and CEO Bill Johnson told reporters. "But the plan is what's best in terms of its positive impact on TVA's rates, debt and the environment; and it will bring the greatest benefit to the



people of the Valley."

Units planned for retirement include two of the three at the 50-year-old Paradise Fossil Plant in western Kentucky. Despite making significant investments to upgrade the plant's pollution controls in 2012, the TVA board said it is not in its ratepayers' best interest to keep the units running.

Those units will be replaced by a \$1 billion natural gas plant, which TVA said will cost less than installing controls at the aging coal plants to meet new and proposed air quality standards, and will also add construction-related jobs.

According to Joe Ritch, a TVA board member from Huntsville, Ala., saving a few jobs now by investing billions to keep the plants open would reduce TVA's competitiveness for years to come. "As painful as it is, it's the right thing to do," said Ritch.

Breaking the Resource Curse: Trust Funds Could Spur Economic Development

As Central Appalachian coal production declines, many realize the need to maximize tax revenues from coal and natural gas extraction. For the past three years, a movement to establish a permanent natural resource trust fund has grown in West Virginia. Ted Boettner, the executive director of the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy and a leader in efforts to educate lawmakers and the public about the benefits of creating the fund, says the Future Fund is an opportunity to "build assets in an asset-poor state" and "pay it forward" for future generations. Read the full version of this Q&A at appvoices.org/thevoice.



Photo courtesy of wvpolicy.org

What is the Future Fund?

Boettner: Today, West Virginia stands at a crossroads. We're facing a natural gas boom similar to that of coal in the last century. But if the experience of the last 100 years has taught us anything, it's that shared prosperity and natural resource extraction don't necessarily go hand-in-hand. Without plans for the future, we're likely to continue experiencing a lack of economic diversity, cycles of booms and busts, and poor economic

outcomes. What the Future Fund does is set aside a portion of severance tax revenue that builds over time that will eventually be invested back into the state in economic diversification projects, education, research and development, and a whole host of important public structures that help create a middle class.

How would the funds be used? What sort of projects would receive funding?

Boettner: Ideally you would want to target communities who are going to be hardest hit by the decline of coal production in West Virginia. Investing in early childhood education would be great. Investing in entrepreneurs in terms of small business loans and grants would be, too. But a lot of times, especially in West Virginia, it's just basic infrastructure needs including broadband access, water and sewer, and others not being met that could eventually be funded.

What can West Virginia learn from others states with natural resource funds?

Boettner: You need to get a diverse group of community members, advocates and other stakeholders involved in the process and make sure that they

see it is going to bear fruit, and not just 20 to 30 years down the road but fairly soon that they'll begin to see the benefits of the fund.

The idea for a future fund in West Virginia has caught on. What are your predictions?

Boettner: I think that after about three years of work, we've been able to get the Future Fund on the legislative agenda ... In the legislative session beginning in January there will be a bill introduced that I think has a really good chance of moving through. Unfortunately, I don't think it will include an increase in [coal] severance taxes, but will just be retaining a portion of natural gas revenues.

The fund is really only going to work if it has a lot of money in it. At the most basic level it's about paying it forward and starting to build assets for a very asset-poor state, and when the gas is gone we have something to show for it ... A lot of big titans made their money in states like West Virginia off of our natural resources. But they didn't invest that money back into our state. This gives us the opportunity that we'll always benefit from [our natural resources] and it's one step we can take to deal with the resource curse issue.

EPA Approves Weakened Kentucky Selenium Standards

By Brian Sewell

On Nov. 15, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved a controversial Kentucky Division of Water proposal to weaken water quality standards for selenium, a pollutant prevalent in coal mining waste that threatens aquatic life and stream health. Environmental groups say the new standards will not adequately protect aquatic life, and will make it harder to test for and enforce the limits near mountaintop removal coal mining sites throughout eastern Kentucky.

Although the EPA did not approve of all the changes proposed by the Kentucky DOW, the agency accepted raising limits and changing the testing method for the state's chronic standard. The level of selenium in the water table

that previously triggered enforcement will now require fish tissue sampling. But even the new fish tissue standard allows for more of the toxin than a standard proposed by the EPA in 2004 that was rejected after a group of the nation's leading selenium scientists argued it was too weak.

In recent years, selenium has become a liability for coal companies, especially those that operate mountaintop removal mines in Central Appalachia. Due to the threat of lawsuits and the substantial clean-up costs, the coal industry has pressured regulators to weaken selenium standards. The EPA's decision is likely to encourage other states to weaken their own limits on selenium — especially West Virginia and Virginia, where efforts are currently underway.

Asheville City Council Approves Clean Energy Resolution

In October, the city council of Asheville, N.C., unanimously approved a resolution to phase out the city's use of coal-fired electricity and increase power generated from cleaner sources and saved through energy efficiency. Led by local citizen groups including the Western North Carolina Alliance and

the Asheville Beyond Coal campaign, the statement targets Duke Energy and the utility's Asheville Steam Station.

The coal plant is western North Carolina's largest emitter of carbon dioxide, and has become a poster child for the poor regulation of coal ash. In the past year, the Asheville plant has

Report Documents Concerns Over Water Use and Fracking Waste in W.Va.

By Brian Sewell

As West Virginia undergoes a natural gas boom, more information is surfacing regarding the amount of water used in the drilling process and the monitoring of waste disposal. According to a report sent to state lawmakers by Morgantown-based consulting firm Downstream Strategies, West Virginia's Marcellus Shale wells leave huge quantities of fracking fluid underground, and the industry's water use and waste production is very poorly monitored.

The Downstream Strategies report found that of the approximately 5 million gallons of fluid injected per fractured well in West Virginia, only 8 percent returns to the surface. The remaining 92 percent stays underground, completely removed from the water cycle. Also, according to the report,

since more than 80 percent of the water used is taken directly from nearby rivers and streams, improper timing of water withdrawals can lead to severe impacts on small streams and aquatic life.

State regulations have been slow to keep up with the fracking boom in West Virginia. After drilling occurs, the fate of 62 percent of the waste produced is currently unknown.

The Downstream Strategies authors claim that improvements in reporting, data collection and enforcement are needed to protect the environment from the growing volume of fracking waste. Still, research indicates that the reporting laws already in place are largely unenforced.

Carbon Controversy

Continued from page 19

cluding Appalachian Voices states that Manchin's proposal raises a series of impossible barriers for the EPA, and shows that Manchin and Whitfield either "do not believe in climate change, or they do not care about its impacts."

Under the proposal for new plants released by the EPA in September, coal-fired units would need to meet a limit of 1,100 pounds of carbon dioxide per megawatt-hour, far less than the average for U.S. coal plants, which is 1,768 pounds per megawatt-hour.

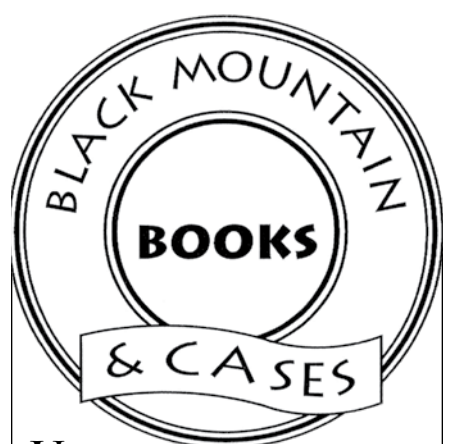
According to the EPA, however, the proposed standards are in line with investments in clean energy technologies that are already being made in the power industry. The EPA says that the rule will "reduce regulatory uncertainty

by defining requirements for emission limits for greenhouse gases" and that the agency "intends this rule to send a clear signal about the current and future status of [carbon capture and storage] technology."

David Hawkins, the director of climate programs with the Natural Resources Defense Council, testified in opposition to Manchin's proposal, which environmental groups call the "Polluter Protection Act." Beyond being a major weakening of the Clean Air Act, Hawkins said the proposal would destroy utilities' incentives to invest in emissions-reducing technologies.

The Energy and Commerce Committee's top Democrat, Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., agreed with Hawkins during a subcommittee hearing on the proposal. Waxman cited common

technologies such as power plant scrubbers that cut sulfur dioxide emissions, which industry supporters once said were impossible, and pointed out that "Almost every time the EPA proposes a significant new requirement, industry tells us it can't be done."

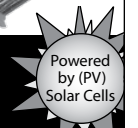


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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Lowell Dodge *Champion for the People and Forests*

By Nolen Nychay

When it comes to environmentalism, Lowell Dodge is a decorated veteran of more than half a dozen eco-centric organizations. While he calls Washington, D.C., home, for over 35 years Dodge and his wife Diane have spent weekends retreating to their rustic mountain home in Virginia's Shenandoah region.

The Good Woods — that's what the Dodges call the 65 acres of old-growth forest sanctuary surrounding their passive solar-designed house. Dodge has found a spiritual connection with the land there, and a practical one as well; the abundance of cherry, oak and walnut trees provide the materials for Dodge's passion for hand-crafting wooden furniture. Working out of a barn workshop in his Good Woods, Dodge has made a number of unique pieces for his home — one of his most recent and ambitious endeavors includes hand-carving all of the seating

for his daughter's wedding.

Dodge grew up in Connecticut, where he gained an early appreciation for the wilderness through scouting. Not long after earning a bachelor's degree at Yale and a law degree from Harvard, Dodge was the editor-in-chief of The Environmental Law Reporter, a fledgling publication that has since become a premier resource for environmental law and policy.

Dodge later became active in the Lucy Braun Association, where he learned about forestry research and studied tree mortality. Dodge headed the association for a short time before helping found the Trees for the Planet nonprofit, where he spent three years investigating mortality rates of old-growth forests at more than 40 Appalachian research locations. Through that research, Dodge published a report determining that acid rain was contributing to the weakening of Eastern forests.

Dodge first became involved with Appalachian Voices when he learned



Photo courtesy Lowell Dodge

about the growing threat of mountaintop removal mining in the region. "Researching the health of forests was important to me," Dodge says, "but when I realized the scale of destruction caused by mountaintop removal practices, I knew it was time to shift gears." Dodge served as a board member for a time and was an early advocate in the campaign to end the practice.

Working with fellow Appalachian Voices then-board member Harvard Ayers, Dodge co-founded Coal River Mountain Watch, a small nonprofit in southern West Virginia focused on informing at-risk communities about local mountaintop removal issues.

In affiliation with Habitat for Humanity, Dodge also presided as the executive director for GreenHOME, Inc., a project designing environmentally friendly, affordable housing for low income families using recycled materials.

In addition to his environmental

work, Dodge started an award-winning nonprofit, First Time Computers, to help get more than 10,000 recycled computers into the hands of low-income families in the D.C. area.

Dodge doesn't mind the consequences of his strong environmental convictions, including one occasion when he was taken into police custody alongside former West Virginia representative, Ken Hechler during a march against mountaintop removal.

Today, the Dodges remain active supporters of Appalachian Voices, and even help to distribute issues of *The Appalachian Voice* in Washington, D.C. Although the Dodges plan to one day move to Colorado to be closer to their children, Lowell says he will always maintain a connection with the forests of Appalachia. Lowell Dodge is currently involved in researching old-growth tree species in the Pacific Northwest with a publication in the works.

From the *Front Porch* blog

Appalachian Voices is pulling up another chair to the Front Porch Blog. Through our new guest blog feature, we'll regularly invite influential voices to reflect on issues you care about — mountaintop removal, clean water and promoting a strong, healthy economy and environment for communities in

Appalachia and the Southeast. To kick things off, we invited Anthony Flaccavento, a regional leader in sustainable agriculture, local foods and their overlap with economic development, to share how Appalachia's economic transition is already underway. Read his two-part post and keep up with breaking news at appvoices.org/frontporchblog

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Lost and Found: AV Teams Up With Photographer to Educate the Public

For the past 18 years, photographer Carl Galie has devoted his artistic talents to conservation work, and his latest exhibit is no exception. "Lost on the Road to Oblivion: The Vanishing Beauty of Coal Country," tackles the difficult and poignant subject of mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia. Images in the exhibit reveal the devastation wrought by the practice juxtaposed with images of the beautiful places we stand to lose if the practice continues. The exhibit is on display at Appalachian State University's Turchin Center for the Visual Arts in Boone, N.C., through Feb. 7, 2014.



"8 Billion Gallons" by Carl Galie

Galie's series of hauntingly beautiful images is accompanied

by striking poems crafted by North Carolina's Poet Laureate, Dr. Joseph Bathanti, who was moved to participate in the exhibit — and become involved in the movement to end mountaintop removal — when he witnessed Galie's images just a few months ago.

This winter, Appalachian Voices

will team up with Galie and Bathanti to host a series of events encouraging folks to attend the exhibit and learn more about mountaintop removal coal mining. Among the events planned is an evening with a resident from the region impacted by mountaintop removal, giving attendees a chance to talk with someone who deals with the issue on a personal level and ask questions about how

their life is affected. Dates of the events are to-be-determined, so stay tuned to appalachianvoices.org and facebook.com/AppalachianVoices for details!

For more information about the exhibit, visit tcva.org.

Hellos and Goodbyes

Appalachian Voices is excited to extend a warm hello to two new faces. Amy Adams joins as our North Carolina Campaign Coordinator, focusing on coal-related water quality issues in the Tarheel state. She worked for ten years in the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources and has an educational background in biology and environmental science. Ann League, our new Tennessee Campaign Coordinator, became involved in mountaintop removal coal mining issues when a 2,200-acre mine was permitted near her home in Campbell County, Tenn. She spent several years as a community organizer with SOCM (Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment), and more



Welcoming Amy Adams (left) and Ann League to the Appalachian Voices team.

recently worked with the Tennessee Clean Water Network on hydraulic fracturing issues. Welcome!

It is also with sadness that we bid farewell to a longtime, dynamic member of our team. J.W. Randolph has been with Appalachian Voices for more than eight years, initially as volunteer and intern, then as our first Legislative Associate on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., for nearly six years, and finally as the driving



J.W. Randolph (left) with wife Elizabeth and daughters Isla (left) and Emma. A sincere advocate, enthusiastic teammate and loyal friend, we wish him well.

force behind our startup Tennessee program for the past two. He leaves us to pursue the joys of parenthood and a possible career in the public health field. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors. Peace.



Appalachian Voices is committed to protecting the land, air and water of the central and southern Appalachian region. Our mission is to empower people to defend our region's rich natural and cultural heritage by providing them with tools and strategies for successful grassroots campaigns.

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A recent decision by the EPA will allow the state of Kentucky to weaken a critical water quality standard for selenium — and could have grave consequences for the safety of communities across the entire Appalachian region. Tell the EPA we need them to do their job and keep our water clean and safe.

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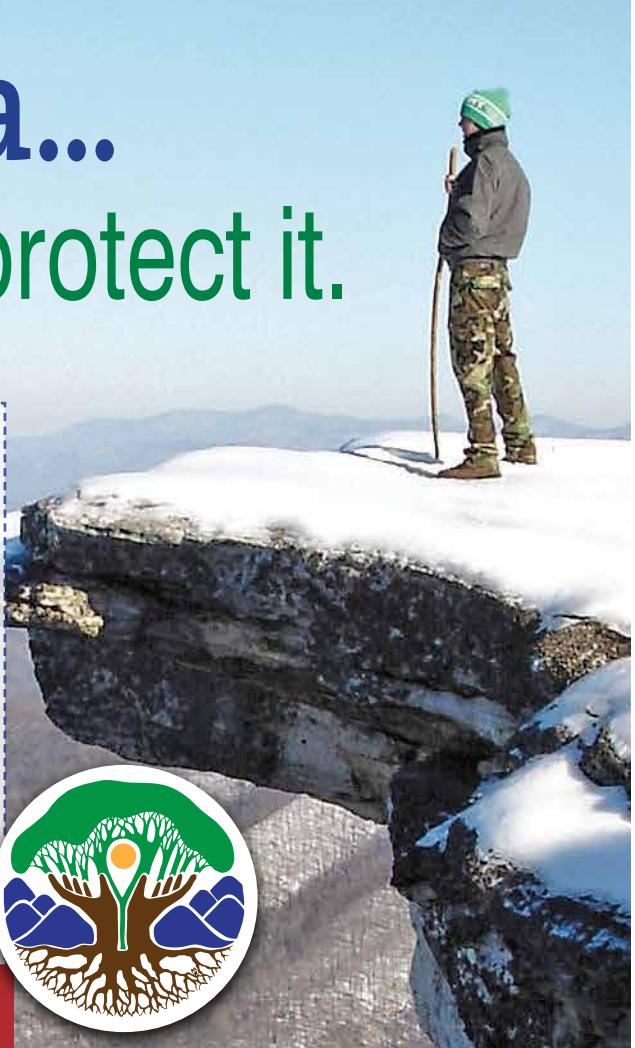


Anticipating that songbirds such as this cardinal would flock to his birdfeeders ahead of a forecasted winter storm, Appalachian Voices member D Rex Miller captured this image from the warmth of his living room in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. View more of his work at drexmillerphotography.com. From all of us at Appalachian Voices, we wish you healthy and happy holidays and great start to 2014!

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