FREE

The Appalachian VOICE

August / September 2019

HIKING THE PROFILE TRAIL

A Quest for Lost Heirloom Apples

TAKING ON TVA

Communities demand more from the Tennessee Valley Authority

PRESERVING HISTORIC BLACK CEMETERIES

The Appalachian VOICE

A publication of AppalachianVoices

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Printed on 100% recycled newsprint, cover 40% recycled paper, all soy-based inks

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A note from our executive director

Summers in Appalachia are the stuff of magic — shady woods adorned with rhododendron flowers, bubbling streams spilling into refreshing swimming holes, fields of wildflowers that grow more exuberant with every rainstorm. At night, the glitter of fireflies beckons us to linger on the front step and take a deep breath of the summer air.

Residents and visitors to the region alike understand these places as both sacred and fragile. We are connected to them through the sublimity of their beauty and — in the most starkly practical terms — how their well-being impacts ours and how everything impacts them. In some areas, decades-old pollution from abandoned mines contaminates waterways, while new pipeline projects — even as we fight to defeat them — clog other streams with runoff, erode mountainsides, and mar farmland our families depend on. Invasive species, buoyed by warming climates, are expanding their range. Even when invisible to the naked eye, air pollution poses risks to our health and to our planet's atmospheric balance.

Knowing all this adds urgency to our quest for justice and environmental protection. It also reminds us to appreciate the diversity, strength and profound wonder of nature, both in the wilderness and in our backyards.

In these last months of summer, I hope you'll make extra time to soak in the season — whether that means challenging your paddling skills on a new stretch of river, revisiting a favorite hike, or simply spending some extra time admiring the teeming life outside your window.

And if your time in nature inspires you, come join us. Stand with us as a member of Appalachian Voices by visiting appvoices.org/join, or sign up on our website to volunteer. This summer and fall, we are teaming up with partners in multiple states to host Energy Democracy Tour events, so turn to page 26 or visit energydemocracyyall.org to learn more and see if there is an event near you.

For our mountains,

Tom

Tom Cormons,
Executive Director

P.S. Whether you are a longtime reader or are picking up the paper for the first time, we want to hear from you! Your feedback on our survey at right (or appvoices.org/voice-survey) will be carefully considered and deeply appreciated.

GET INVOLVED environmental & cultural events

See more at appvoices.org/calendar

Energy Democracy Tours

Aug. 7, Knoxville, Tenn.; Aug. 10: LaFollette, Tenn.; Aug. 13: Chattanooga, Tenn.; Aug. 29: Bowling Green, Ky.; more dates TBA: Get involved in the movement to end monopoly electric utilities with environmental and public interest groups including Appalachian Voices. Free. Visit energydemocracyyall.org for more info and tour dates, or call (828) 262-1500

Appalachian Voices Norton Open House

Aug. 7 & Oct.2, 5-7 p.m.: Visit our Norton office for casual food and conversation with our staff! Free. Norton, Va. Call (276) 679-1691 or visit facebook.com/AppalachianVoices/events

Night Sky Festival

Aug. 9-11: Enjoy Shenandoah National Park after dark with stargazing, ranger talks and presentations about outer space. Free with park admission. Luray, Va. Call (540) 999-3500 tinyurl.com/NightSkyFest

10th Annual Watauga Lake Cleanup

Aug. 24, 9 a.m.-2 p.m: Volunteer to keep Watauga Lake beautiful. Trash bags, gloves, water and T-shirts provided. Register at Sink Mountain Boat Ramp or Fish Springs Marina, Hampton, Tenn. Call (423) 534-4785 or visit facebook.com/wataugalakecleanup

Wonder of Hummingbirds Festival

Aug. 24, 8 a.m.-2 p.m: Visit the Ijams Nature Center to learn about hummingbirds and see them up close as an expert catches and bands them from 8-11:30 a.m. Knoxville, Tenn. $20 for families, or $8 ages 12 and up, $4 ages 5-11, free 4 and under. Call (865) 577-4717 or visit ijams.org/hummingbird-festival

Well Water Testing Workshop

Aug. 26, 6 p.m: Visit the Virginia Cooperative Extension office in Wise County to pick up $20 well water testing kits and learn about testing your well. Confidential results will be announced at a late September meeting. Wise County, Va. Contact Phil Meeks at (276) 328-6194 or pmeeks@vt.edu to register.

16th Annual Culturefest

Sept. 5-8: Come out to the Appalachian South Folklife Center and enjoy world music, dance, art and food vendors and more. Tickets range from $7-$50. Pipestem, W.Va. Call (304) 425-6425 or visit culturefestwv.com

Pine Mountain Fair Day

Sept. 7, 9 a.m-1 p.m.: Visit Pine Mountain Settlement School for local food, crafts and live bluegrass and gospel music. Free admission. Bledsoe, Ky. Call (606) 558-3571 or visit pinemountainsettlementschool.com/events

The Future of Our Landscapes in a Changing Environment

Sept. 8, 3-6:30 p.m: Learn how climate change is affecting Virginia at the Paramount Theater with exhibitor tables, speakers and more. $10, free under 18. Charlottesville, Va. Call (434) 872-4580 or visit tinyurl.com/Landscapes908

"Red Summer"

Sept. 12-15: Watch a performance by The Carpetbag Theatre, Inc., at the Bijou Theatre about the horrific, racially charged events of the summer of 1919 in Knoxville, Tenn. $25. Call (865) 544-0447 or visit carpetbagtheatre.org/events

11th Annual Flock to the Rock

Sept. 14, 11 a.m.-3 p.m: Visit Chimney Rock State Park for guided bird walks, raptor flight shows and more. Free with admission. Chimney Rock, N.C. Call 828-625-9611 or visit tinyurl.com/flocktorock.

Helvetia Community Fair

Sept. 14-15: Visit the historic Swiss community of Helvetia, W.Va., to enjoy traditional food, a parade, field games, Swiss folk dancing and more. Free admission. Helvetia, W.Va. Call (304) 924-6235 or visit facebook.com/helvetiafair

Virginia Clean Energy Summit

Sept. 17, 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m: Explore Virginia's clean energy potential and network with renewable power and energy efficiency leaders at the Richmond Convention Center. $50-$250. Richmond, Va. Call (804) 214-7723 or visit vacleanenergysummit.org

Hands Across the Appalachian Trail

Sept. 28: Giles County & Humpback Rocks
Sept. 29: Bears Den: Come out to the Appalachian Trail to protect our land, air and water from fracked-gas pipelines, and enjoy food, music and speakers. Free. Pearisburg, Lyndhurst, and Bluemont, Va. Call (804) 366-9771 or visit tinyurl.com/HandsAcrossAT

High Knob Naturalist Rally

Sept. 28, 9 a.m.-5p.m: Celebrate the Clinch Coalition's 13th annual rally with kayaking, hiking and treasure hunts at High Knob Recreation Area. Free, includes lunch. Norton, Va. Call (276) 479-2176 or visit tinyurl.com/HighKnobRally

About the Cover

James Magruder made this image of a June sunset from the ladders leading to MacRae Peak on Grandfather Mountain in Avery County, N.C. To enjoy this sunset view, plan to hike out in the dark. Read about hiking Grandfather on page 22, and view more of Magruder's work at magruderphotography.com

We need YOUR Voice!

Help us make *The Appalachian Voice* better for readers like you! Complete this brief survey to tell us more about who you are and what you are most interested in reading about, and you will be entered to win your choice of a portable Goal Zero Nomad 7 Plus solar panel from Mast General Store, a set of grilling spices from The Spice and Tea Exchange of Blowing Rock, a Patagonia backpack, a vintage-style national park poster and other prizes!

Fill out the survey below and mail to:

Appalachian Voices
ATTN: Survey Response
589 W. King St. • Boone, NC 28607

Or visit **APPVOICES.ORG/VOICESURVEY**

**Answers to this survey are strictly confidential and will not be shared outside of Appalachian Voices.

I would best describe myself as:

- ☐ Appalachian, with deep family roots
- ☐ Transplant who has chosen to live in this region because________________
- ☐ Living outside Appalachia but with a family connection that makes it 'home'
- ☐ Environmentalist who is concerned about the protection of air, land and water
- ☐ A visitor who left a bit of my heart in those beautiful hills
- ☐ Don't much care what you call me, just leave my mountains alone

How do YOU read *The Appalachian Voice*?

- ☐ Read every issue cover to cover
- ☐ Pick up every issue and read some of the articles
- ☐ Pick up a copy once in a while
- ☐ Read it online
- ☐ Only read certain sections

Where do you pick up your copy? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Grocery store ☐ Public library
- ☐ Coffee shop
- ☐ Near where I live (10-mile radius)
- ☐ Somewhat near where I live (30-mile radius)
- ☐ On vacation or visiting family in the mountains
- ☐ Receive it in the mail
- ☐ Other: ________________

When I pick up *The Appalachian Voice* at my regular location it is... (choose one)

- ☐ Always there ☐ Sometimes there
- ☐ Rarely there
- ☐ Papers are consistently there but they are old copies I already have
- ☐ I don't check one location regularly
- ☐ Other: ________________

***The Appalachian Voice* is a publication of nonprofit organization Appalachian Voices. How aware are you of this connection?**

- ☐ Yes, completely
- ☐ Sort of, but not sure what Appalachian Voices does
- ☐ Had no idea
- ☐ I thought Appalachian Voices was a newspaper

Do you view other information from Appalachian Voices? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Facebook ☐ Twitter ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Appalachian Voices blog
- ☐ Emails from Appalachian Voices
- ☐ I didn't realize Appalachian Voices was in so many places, but now I'll check it out
- ☐ *The Appalachian Voice* is enough for me!

How much has *The Appalachian Voice* changed your concern for the environment in Appalachia?

0...(none) 1...(a little) 2...(a lot) 3...(a whole lot)

Rank what you see as the THREE biggest environmental issues facing Appalachia:

- ____ Mountaintop removal coal mining
- ____ Coal ash ____ Water pollution
- ____ Air pollution ____ Wildlife issues
- ____ Forestry and land management
- ____ Natural gas fracking and pipelines
- ____ Energy policies that favor fossil fuels
- ____ Other: ________________

How familiar are you with the work of Appalachian Voices?

NONE SOME VERY

- 0—1—2 Fighting new mountaintop removal coal mines and the ongoing impacts of mining
- 0—1—2 Advocating for cleanup of mined lands
- 0—1—2 Advancing solar power in historic mining areas and building a more diverse economy
- 0—1—2 Working to stop massive new fracked-gas pipelines and related infrastructure
- 0—1—2 Transforming our energy system to serve the public over corporate profit
- 0—1—2 Pushing for policies that make clean energy more accessible and affordable
- 0—1—2 Advocating for coal ash cleanup

Rank your sources of environmental information: (1 most frequent, 7 least frequent)

- ____ *The Appalachian Voice* (print or web)
- ____ Local newpapers, TV, radio
- ____ National newspapers, TV, radio
- ____ Other environmental organizations' newsletters
- ____ Blogs and websites
- ____ Podcasts ____ Social media

Reading *The Appalachian Voice* has encouraged me to: (select any that apply)

- ☐ Talk with friends and family about issues I read about in the paper
- ☐ Think in new ways about topics covered in the paper
- ☐ Adopt more sustainable habits, like composting or cutting energy waste
- ☐ Contact elected officials or government agencies about topics covered in *The Appalachian Voice*
- ☐ Attend a public meeting or rally
- ☐ Visit a new place or try a new activity
- ☐ Become a member or otherwise get involved with Appalachian Voices
- ☐ Other: ________________

Rate what you like to read in *The Appalachian Voice*:

	NOT SO MUCH	TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT	LOVE IT!
Human interest (local heroes, profiles)	0	1	2
Appalachian culture (arts, history)	0	1	2
Outdoor recreation (hiking, kayaking, biking, etc.)	0	1	2
Critters (birds, fish, weird-looking bugs)	0	1	2
Impacts of fossil fuels (coal mining, fracking, pipelines, etc.)	0	1	2
Solar and clean energy (including energy efficiency, etc.)	0	1	2
Land and conservation (agriculture, forestry, public lands)	0	1	2
Water quality and water pollution	0	1	2
News about Appalachian Voices	0	1	2

Other (don't be shy!): ________________

If you were editor-for-a-day, you would add more stories about: (select any that apply)

- ☐ Solar and clean energy
- ☐ Energy politics
- ☐ Appalachian Voices' work
- ☐ Wildlife and ecology
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Our region's changing economy
- ☐ Sustainability how-tos
- ☐ Appalachian culture
- ☐ Outdoor recreation
- ☐ Other: ________________
- ☐ Don't change a thing, I love *The Voice* as it is

Would you like to become more involved with Appalachian Voices?

- ☐ Volunteer to help distribute *The Appalachian Voice*
- ☐ Attend a rally
- ☐ Learn how to lobby and contact elected officials
- ☐ Sign a petition or send comments to a government agency
- ☐ Be part of a focus group or fill out other surveys
- ☐ Other: ________________

Are you interested in becoming a member of or donating to Appalachian Voices to support our work to protect Appalachia?

- ☐ Extremely interested ☐ Very interested
- ☐ Somewhat interested ☐ Not interested
- ☐ Not sure ☐ I am already a member (hooray!)

The following demographic questions are intended to help us learn more about our readers. Collecting self-reported data is a part of that process, and will help us curate content that resonates with our audiences. Answers are optional and won't affect your entry into our prize drawing (just enter your email address below for the drawing).

What is your home zip code? ________
(To help us understand where our readers are from)

How old are you?

- ☐ under 17 ☐ 18 - 25 ☐ 26 - 35
- ☐ 36 - 55 ☐ 56 - 70 ☐ 70+
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Non-binary/third gender
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe: ________________
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

How much school did you attend?

- ☐ ________________
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

How do you identify your ethnicity? (select any that apply)

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic/Latinx
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African ☐ White
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe: ________________
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

How often do you vote?

- ☐ Only in presidential elections
- ☐ Local issues only
- ☐ I vote in most national, state and local elections
- ☐ I don't generally vote ☐ Prefer not to answer

Please include your email or phone number to be entered into the drawing or to become more involved:

____

Across Appalachia

Volunteers Remove Staggering Amounts of Litter Across Region

Mismanaged trash harms habitats, transports chemical pollutants, threatens aquatic life and interferes with human uses of natural environments. In Appalachia, local residents and organizations are partnering to clean up the mess.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation's 2019 annual report estimates there are 100 million pieces of litter on the state's roads, which cost the state $15 million in taxpayer money in 2018. Approximately 18 percent of that trash is expected to end up in the state's waterways. The Tennessee Valley Authority removed 230 tons of trash from the Tennessee River in 2018, and the Tennessee Wildlife Federation is asking for pictures of litter to be sent to tnwf.org/litter to raise awareness about the issue.

Other states in the Appalachian region experience similar quantities of litter. The Adopt-A-Highway program in North Carolina reported removing nearly one million pounds of trash in 2018. In Kentucky, volunteers for the Transportation Cabinet and Adopt-A-Highway programs spend 200,000 hours removing roughly 96,000 bags of trash annually. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality reported that 45,082 volunteers in 2018 cleaned up 72,571 cubic yards of litter. And this April in West Virginia, more than 9,500 volunteers cleaned up nearly 300 tons of litter with the Adopt-A-Highway and Make It Shine programs.

Mike Gray of Pendleton County, W.Va., volunteers with the Adopt-A-Highway program. For nine years he has focused on the area around Smoke Hole Canyon and Reed's Creek, which he describes as heavily impacted. According to Gray, the trash has changed from disposed household appliances to mainly trash left behind by tourists, hunters and anglers. In 2017, Gray founded Friends of Smoke Hole, an alliance of climbers that organizes cleanups.

"I have three grandchildren to whom I hope to leave a legacy of cleaner crags, forests, and back roads, three mountain princesses who we are teaching to be true mountaineers," Gray says.

Beyond the Adopt-A-Highway events, local efforts like Friends of Smoke Hole are helping to combat litter. Check with riverkeepers and nonprofit groups in your area for cleanups and keep an eye on the Appalachian Voices calendar at appvoices.org/calendar for cleanup events. *— By Sam Kepple*

Conservation Group Acquires 235,000 Acres

The Nature Conservancy recently acquired 235,000 acres in the mountains of Southeast Kentucky, Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

The property is the national nonprofit organization's largest land conservation projects in the region. According to their press release, the conservancy aims to manage the property with sustainable forestry techniques while protecting wildlife habitats and securing nearby residents' access to clean water by preserving the health of about 700 miles of streams on the land. The forests will also sequester atmospheric carbon to mitigate climate change. The conservancy will allow current recreational use of the land for hiking, hunting and other pursuits to continue, including existing ATV trails.

The Nature Conservancy determined this land to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change than other areas. Scientists at the conservancy found that bedrock and soils in the area support stronger biodiversity and topographic diversity that make the land more likely to sustain native plants, animals and natural processes.

The land also contains more than 100 species that state wildlife action plans identify as being of "great conservation need." The property provides crucial headwater protection for the federally endangered Kentucky arrow darter.

Although the Nature Conservancy owns the surface land, third parties including coal companies maintain ownership of underground minerals. According to their statement, the conservancy cannot control mining activities by the mineral owners but is expected to receive compensation for any impacts mining operations have on the land. These funds will then go to restoration and conservation activities on the property. *— By Sam Kepple*

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Massive Greenhouse to Include Sustainable Tech

The construction of a 60-acre sustainable greenhouse is underway in Brown County near Morehead, Ky.

This will be the first greenhouse for AppHarvest, a high-tech agriculture company based in Kentucky. The project is scheduled to be completed in late 2020 with $82 million in funding from a venture capital firm, according to AppHarvest CEO Jonathan Webb. On June 5, Webb announced a partnership with Netherlands-based company Dalsem, which has developed nearly 1,500 high-tech greenhouses in 52 countries.

The greenhouse's controlled-environment technology will allow AppHarvest to grow produce year-round without pesticides or genetically modified organisms, according to the company. Circular irrigation systems and a 10-acre retention pond that functions entirely off of recycled rainwater will supply water to the greenhouse. This will reduce water usage by 90 percent compared to open-field agriculture in the drier climates where much foreign, imported food is grown.

Webb has experience building large solar projects in the Southeast, and states that he hopes to integrate renewable energy into the project but that AppHarvest is still in the planning stages with its utility partners.

The company anticipates that the project will create 285 permanent jobs and 100 construction jobs.

The greenhouse will be able to grow over 45 million pounds of food per year, according to Webb. Part of AppHarvest's goal is to decrease the country's reliance on imported food, hence an initial focus on tomatoes, which Webb describes as one of the largest foreign produce imports.

Tomatoes will be transported to markets within a day's drive from the greenhouse by AppHarvest's distribution partner. Webb also plans to eventually grow cucumbers, leafy greens and vine crops. Transporting produce from the greenhouse to surrounding areas would reduce diesel use by 80 percent compared to transportation of foreign imports, according to Webb.

The project was originally set to be built on reclaimed mine land in Pikeville, Ky. *— By Sam Kepple*

NC Groups Challenge Laws Favoring Industrial Hog Operations

On June 19, North Carolina environmental and community groups filed a constitutional challenge to state laws that limit nuisance lawsuits against industrial hog operations.

The four environmental organizations involved in the lawsuit contend that community members' individual property rights are violated by the stench, noxious gases and particulate pollution from the hog facilities.

The organizations also are concerned that the laws discriminate against minority groups. African-Americans, Latinos and Native Americans are twice as likely to live within three miles of the hog operations, according to their press release.

The suit will be heard in Wake County Superior Court. A hearing date is not yet set. *— By Sam Kepple*

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Job Corps Sites to Remain Open

Appalachia's Job Corps centers will remain open, for now.

In late May, the Trump administration announced that 16 Job Corps centers run by the U.S. Forest Service would be privatized and nine — including four in Appalachia — would be shuttered.

On June 19, after public and political backlash, the administration reversed its decision. A federal spokesperson told Federal News Network that the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Labor would conduct a review of Job Corps.

The threatened facilities, known as Civilian Conservation Centers, developed out of a partnership between the Forest Service and the Department of Labor. They specialize in teaching natural resource management skills to youth aged 16 to 24.

Historically, many Civilian Conservation Center students lack a high school degree and vocational qualifications. The centers offer coursework in health services, information technology and the construction trades, among other fields. Students may also earn a GED. The Flatwoods center in Coeburn, Va., recently began instructing students in solar energy equipment installation.

The Jobs Corps ranks Flatwoods sixth out of 125 total centers. Yet it was among the centers slated for closure along with those in Frenchburg, Ky., Pine Knot, Ky., and Oconaluftee, N.C. Each ranked in the top half of all Job Corps facilities for performance.

Previously, the Department of Labor needed to have a five-year dataset to measure the quality of a center when considering closure. It also had to consider the effect a closing would have on the geographic availability and socioeconomic diversity of Job Corps services. This is no longer the case under the new rules, which allow the agency to "propose a center for deactivation or repurposing" to further "broad reform and streamlining efforts." *— By Maxwell Johnson*

Mussels to Get Protection

In June, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agreed to assign critical habitat for four endangered freshwater mussel species by November 2024.

The nonprofit wildlife organization Center for Biological Diversity sued the federal agency in July 2018 for not designating critical habitat for the snuffbox, spectaclecase, sheepnose and rayed bean species. The mussels will receive federal protection in 18 states, including much of Appalachia.

Establishing critical habitat for the mussels would help protect them by requiring anyone conducting a federally funded or permitted project in their habitat to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the area is not damaged. *— By Christine Dudley*

Environmental Ethics in TN

State lawmakers and environmental advocates criticized the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation for mingling with industries they regulate at the agency's annual environmental conference in May, according to The Tennessean.

On June 6, TDEC responded to the criticism in a letter to the Tennessee comptroller. TDEC Commissioner David Salyers said the agency would stop "pub crawls," eliminate prizes for participants and bar TDEC employees from soliciting golf tournament sponsorships. Salyers' letter also said the agency will now provide "reduced rates for representatives of environmental nonprofit organizations, local governments and academic institutions." *— By Christine Dudley*

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Ohio River Protections Now Optional

On June 6, the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission voted to replace strict, mandatory, interstate protections of the river with voluntary guidelines that states and local governments can decide whether to abide by.

The commission's March 2019 statement claims that the deregulation will provide "needed flexibility for member states" to determine their own water quality standards. The Cincinnati-based regulatory commission has maintained water protection standards since 1948, operating as an interstate coalition because what one does to the river in one state can have downstream impacts in another.

The plan to repeal long-held interstate regulations protecting the Ohio River from both unintentional pollution and dumping from industrial sites along the river received sustained public disapproval. More than 4,000 people spoke out against the deregulation during a public comment period in April 2019.

Concerns about the impact of this decision on the environment are at the forefront, especially given the planned expansion of petrochemical operations along the river. Some citizens are concerned that, without the commission enforcing regulations, states will decrease their own protections. In a press release, nonprofit law firm Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services stated that the repeal "facilitates a race to the bottom as states seek to become more attractive to industrial development."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers the Ohio River to be one of the most polluted bodies of water in the United States. *— By Kelsey Stratman*

States' Right to Ban Uranium Mining Upheld

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Virginia's right to ban uranium mining.

Virginia Uranium, Inc., was the primary plaintiff in the case. Deposits owned by the company contain an estimated 119 million pounds of uranium, including Coles Hill in Pittsylvania County, Va., which is the country's largest undeveloped uranium deposit.

Virginia Uranium's attempt to override the state moratorium rested on the Atomic Energy Act, which gives the federal government jurisdiction over nuclear power generation. Supporters of uranium mining argued that the proposed mine could generate up to $4.8 billion for Virginia.

The National Academy of Science's multi-year, peer-reviewed study on the effects of uranium mining found "limited data … to confirm the long-term effectiveness of uranium tailings management facilities," even those which are "designed and constructed according to modern best practices." Attorney Mark Sabath of the Southern Environmental Law Center told the Virginia Mercury that the process of uranium mining, which involves radioactive waste, "presents real risk to the communities."

The decision to uphold Virginia's 1982 moratorium on uranium mining is a win for supporters of states' rights and the concerned citizens of Pittsylvania County. *— By Kelsey Stratman*

Federal Approval Rescinded for Kentucky Prison

On June 17, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons rescinded its approval for building a federal prison on a former coal mine in Letcher County, Ky.

In 2018, 21 federal prisoners, the public interest law firm Abolitionist Law Center and the grassroots organization Campaign to Fight Toxic Prisons sued the bureau to stop construction of the proposed prison, citing concerns about destruction to the environment and health risk to inmates and workers.

The proposal for the United States Penitentiary Letcher in Roxana, Ky., has been underway for nearly 15 years. Rep. Hal Rogers (R–KY) supports the plan and claimed it could bring 300 jobs to the county. In response to the agency's June decision, Rogers' office said that regulations do not prevent the bureau from reissuing its record of decision in the future, WYMT Mountain News reported.

Opponents of USP Letcher, including local grassroots group Letcher Governance Project, argued Rogers' economic growth claims are inflated. The LGP was founded in 2016 in response to Congress' allocation of $444 million for USP Letcher, an amount that has since grown to $510 million, according to The Mountain Eagle.

Kentucky also gave the county nearly $5 million in Abandoned Mine Land Pilot Program funding to subsidize the construction of water and sewer infrastructure for the prison. While the proposed prison site is on strip-mined land, the project does not include environmental remediation. (Read more about the abandoned mine funding in the Appalachian Voices blog archives at appvoices.org/blog). *— By Christine Dudley*

Pipeline Update

As the Mountain Valley Pipeline continues to cause problems and spark protests, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline faces new legal troubles

By Kevin Ridder

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline suffered two major setbacks in late July.

On July 26, the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals cancelled a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit that would have allowed developers of the 600-mile fracked-gas pipeline to harm threatened and endangered species. The court suspended the permit in December 2018, and the agency re-submitted it soon after.

"In fast-tracking its decisions, the agency appears to have lost sight of its mandate under the [Endangered Species Act]: 'to protect and conserve endangered and threatened species and their habitats,'" reads the court's opinion.

On July 24, U.S. District Judge Terrence Boyle extended a suspension on Atlantic Coast developers' ability to use eminent domain to seize private land without paying landowners upfront. Boyle wrote that his decision was based partially on "the uncertainty of the pipeline's route in light of ongoing litigation."

The suspension is set to be in effect through Sept. 23. Environmental groups including Appalachian Voices, the publisher of this newspaper, applauded both court decisions.

In late June, the U.S. Solicitor General and Atlantic Coast Pipeline developers submitted separate requests to the U.S. Supreme Court to intervene in an ongoing legal battle over whether the fracked-gas pipeline can cross the Appalachian Trail. The U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals stopped construction across the trail and in the George Washington and Monongahela national forests in December.

The federal appeals court mandated that the agency had violated two laws and did not have authority to give Atlantic Coast developers a right-of-way. President Trump's solicitor general disagrees.

The Supreme Court has not yet decided whether to hear the case. The court receives thousands of requests each nine-month term and only chooses to hear around 80 oral arguments.

The pipeline is backed mostly by Dominion Energy and Duke Energy. At least six Virginia state legislators who own Dominion stock stand to profit if the pipeline is completed and have advocated heavily for the project, according to nonprofit news outlet Truthout.

Actions taken by these lawmakers include pro-pipeline op-eds, letters endorsing the project sent to U.S. senators or federal regulators, and being listed on Atlantic Coast's website as official supporters. Truthout reports that Dominion donated thousands of dollars to each of the legislators' reelection campaigns.

In April 2016, Dominion gave $2,000 to State Sen. Bill DeSteph — his largest donation from the utility — a month after DeSteph sent a letter endorsing the pipeline to Virginia's U.S. senators, according to Truthout. And in April 2017, Dominion handed $7,500 to State Sen. Tommy Norment one week after he signed a letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission supporting the pipeline.

On July 11, 18 Virginia state delegates and senators sent a letter to FERC urging a stop-work order for the pipeline and a revocation of its certificate of public necessity while the commission reassesses whether it is needed. Noting that Atlantic Coast is a joint venture of Dominion, Duke and Southern Company, the lawmakers wrote that "the pipeline's now $7.8 billion price tag would be passed on to captive ratepayers under the developers' plan."

In March, the West Virginia House passed a resolution 80 to 17 endorsing the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and condemning the citizens' groups filing lawsuits against it. According to records recently obtained by ProPublica, the resolution was authored by a Dominion Energy lobbyist.

"It was essentially the legislative branch saying we don't want pipeline companies to follow the law, and that's a very irresponsible stance for the legislature to take," Del. Evan Hansen, who voted against the resolution, told ProPublica.

On July 20, 40 demonstrators at a Mountain Valley Pipeline construction site in Cove Hollow, Va., stalled construction for about an hour. Photo courtesy of FightingFox Photography

Mountain Valley Pipeline

As the 303-mile Mountain Valley Pipeline stretches into its second year of construction, its environmental problems continue to stack up.

State regulators in Virginia and West Virginia have logged more than a dozen notices of violation against the company. But volunteers with Mountain Valley Watch, a grassroots group that tracks the pipeline's construction violations, had recorded 646 problems as of July 25, 2019. These range from sediment-laden rainwater washing into streams to one case where two 80-foot pipe segments were carried hundreds of feet by stormwater onto a private landowner's cornfield in Franklin County, Va.

Mountain Valley representatives have continued to blame incidents such as these on "unprecedented rainfall." However, an analysis of the company's filings with FERC indicate otherwise.

Jason Hileman, an environmental hydrologist with the Stockholm Resilience Centre, a nonprofit independent research institute, pored through a database of "variance requests" put together by Protect Our Water, Heritage, Rights, an umbrella organization for local groups opposed to Mountain Valley. Pipeline companies are required to file a variance request whenever they attempt anything not in the original work plan. Mountain Valley had filed 125 variance requests with FERC as of late July.

In a July 15 column in Virginia Mercury, Hileman wrote that a third of the requests were related to fixing erosion problems. He noted that from Oct. 18, 2018 to April 5, 2019, Mountain Valley requested 23 erosion-related variances in a single 10-mile section.

"These variances are just the tip of the iceberg; they represent only those erosion events that required MVP to deviate from its work plan in order to address," wrote Hileman in the publication. "It is important to remember that uncontrollable erosion is not just harmful to the environment that we depend on for our health and livelihoods, erosion jeopardizes the integrity of the pipeline itself."

Stalling Construction

While construction is underway along most of Mountain Valley's route, legal challenges continue to prevent work at water crossings and through national forests, including a section of the Appalachian Trail. Work on Dominion Energy's Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which is slated to run through West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina, remains stalled due to numerous similar lawsuits.

In December 2018, a federal appeals court ruled that the U.S. Forest Service had improperly given permission to Atlantic Coast developers to cut across the Appalachian Trail. Since Mountain Valley also has plans to cut across the national scenic trail, its crossing could also be endangered by the ruling.

In June, lead Mountain Valley Pipeline developer EQM Midstream revealed a plan that may allow them to cut across the AT. The proposal, disclosed in a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, would increase the fracked-gas pipeline's cost from $4.6 billion to $5

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Pipeline Update

Continued from previous page

billion and push the projected completion date from late 2019 to mid-2020.

If approved, EQM would trade a section of land owned by Mountain Valley next to the Jefferson National Forest to the U.S. Department of Interior in exchange for federal approval to cross the national scenic trail at the original location, according to the Roanoke Times.

With ongoing delays for both pipeline projects, sections of pipe have sat outside for more than a year — leading to worries about degradation of a chemical coating meant to protect against corrosion.

On July 10, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission asked Mountain Valley developers for information related to the coating, which contains suspected human carcinogens. The company had 20 days to respond, and had not done so by press time on July 26.

Concerns center on ultraviolet radiation breaking down the chemical and causing harmful toxins to either evaporate into the air or leak into groundwater if the pipe is buried. A thinner anti-corrosion coating could also be less effective and increase the risk of a gas leak or explosion.

Bill Limpert, a retired environmental regulator and resident of Bath County, Va., requested information about the coating from the manufacturer, 3M. A letter from the company stated that some of the compounds "will be toxic to aquatic species." However, the company does not expect any of the compounds to become progressively concentrated up the food chain.

According to communication between Limpert and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Mountain Valley representatives claim they are rotating pipe sections over time to reduce damage from sunlight. Atlantic Coast developers, however, stated that they have not taken measures to prevent damage from UV light.

A Series of Protests

Tensions between Mountain Valley Pipeline security forces and protesters escalated in July at several locations, including near the site of a tree-sit in Elliston, Va., that has blocked construction for more than 320 days.

On July 15, a group of protesters blocked access to a worksite roughly six miles from the tree-sit. While all of the demonstrators eventually dispersed after police arrived, Giles County, Va., resident Jammie Hale was arrested and charged with assault after he exchanged words with and pointed his cane at one of Mountain Valley's security contractors, according to the Roanoke Times. Hale, who often protests the pipeline, told the publication that his farm's water system stopped working after the pipeline company began construction.

On July 19, protesters blocked work near the Elliston tree-sit and police were called. After several hours, work resumed on a hillside above where several demonstrators were located, according to Appalachians Against Pipelines, a group that represents protesters and raises funds to help with legal fees. Then, an excavator dislodged a large stump and root ball that barreled downhill toward several demonstrators, who dodged out of the way.

"We heard a tumbling sound coming from the hill, and before it could register it was right there, and all we could do — me and my dog, everybody — we just ran," said a demonstrator called Crystal in a video on Appalachians Against Pipelines' Facebook page.

A few minutes later, a Mountain Valley employee overturned an excavator. The operator did not suffer major injuries.

"They flipped an excavator and almost killed five people today, and continued working," Crystal said in the video. A few days earlier on July 16, a Mountain Valley worker rolled over an excavator in Summers County, W.Va. The operator was not severely injured.

On July 20, 40 demonstrators with signs and banners stopped work at a Mountain Valley construction site a few miles away from the tree-sit for about one hour. Then, according to Appalachians Against Pipelines, police arrived at the tree-sit — where no construction work was being conducted — and arrested three people for trespassing, two of whom were not within the easement. The police also destroyed one of the demonstrators' shelters and confiscated hammocks, tarps and other personal items.

"The cops pulled in, got out of their cars, straightened their belts, and then four to five cops tackled our friend in the road where she was taking pictures, entirely off the easement and out of the limit of disturbance," one witness told Appalachians Against Pipelines.

In addition to these events, two separate demonstrators blocked pipeline construction by locking themselves in the easement near the tree-sit for several hours on July 13 and 18. Both were arrested and charged with misdemeanors. Another protester locked themselves to an excavator on June 28 in Montgomery County, Va., stopping construction for six hours before being arrested and charged with two misdemeanors.

MVP construction at family-owned Four Corners Farm in Rocky Mount, Va., causes significant erosion problems. Photo by Morgan Ashcom

On June 26, a nonviolent protester who locked themselves to an excavator in Summers County, W.Va., for several hours was arrested and charged with felony threats of terrorist acts along with two misdemeanors. They are the third person in three months to be charged with a felony for blocking Mountain Valley Pipeline construction.

On July 15, Sarah Murphy finished her 875-mile journey on horseback roughly paralleling the route of the 600-mile Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The Nelson County, Va., resident started the journey on Sept. 26 in Staunton, Va., and traveled for nearly 10 months before reaching the endpoint in Robeson County, N.C.

"I really just wanted to learn more about what was happening other than what Dominion was putting out there," says Murphy, noting that pipeline developers used eminent domain to seize several of her friends' land.

While on the road, Murphy says that people approached her and told stories about problems with the pipeline. She heard several cases of pipeline crews cutting livestock fences without alerting landowners, which led to animals getting out, and of an incident where cows died after eating toxic leaves from trees that workers had felled and failed to remove quickly. Murphy only saw active construction for a fraction of the ride. She states that she has become frustrated with Dominion for blaming activists for stalling construction.

"We are just asking for them to be held accountable and feeling like they didn't go through the proper channels for this thing to happen," says Murphy. "Here they're blaming us for people not having jobs, but we're not the ones that put this thing into play without making sure that everything was properly vetted." ◆

Public Comment Period Approaches for Mountain Valley Pipeline Southgate

As a key step in its federal permitting process approaches, Mountain Valley Pipeline Southgate suffered a setback at the state level. In a June 3 letter, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality denied a key water quality permit for the proposed 73-mile MVP Southgate extension. The project would stretch from Pittsylvania County, Va., into North Carolina's Rockingham and Alamance counties.

The state permit, required under the federal Clean Water Act, would allow the pipeline company to temporarily or permanently impact multiple streams, wetlands and more than eight acres of protected riparian buffers in the Haw River watershed.

The agency wrote that it had twice informed the pipeline company that its November 2018 permit application was incomplete. The agency also noted that crucial information it needed to assess water impacts would not be available until after the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issues a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, anticipated in July. The statement had not been released at press time on July 26.

The DEQ informed Mountain Valley that it could reapply for the permit once the draft impact statement is issued.

Once the draft environmental impact statement is released, the public will have 90 days to comment before FERC issues a final environmental impact statement. Visit appvoices.org for updates. — *By Kevin Ridder*

Preserving Historic African-American Cemeteries

By Kevin Ridder

For decades, the graves of more than 160 African-Americans behind a residence hall at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., went largely unnoticed in a nearly empty field. Several former slaves and military service members number in their ranks.

Then, in 2014, the Junaluska Heritage Association, a local group that works to preserve the area's African-American heritage, asked the town to preserve the historic cemetery.

At the time, the graves were part of the segregated Jordan Councill Cemetery, named for the man who donated the parcel to private landowners — and who owned the most slaves in the county at one point. While the black section of the cemetery consisted of a scant few headstones and nothing else, the white section was completely fenced off, had a large iron gate and was managed by the town.

"The cemetery is adjacent to Appalachian State University and students and others have been observed sunbathing on the property, using the field as a place for pet dogs to relieve themselves, and as a burial ground for pets," wrote Roberta Jackson with the Junaluska Heritage Association when requesting assistance from the town in 2014, according to High Country Press. "Tombstones have been moved, removed or toppled in the past."

Once the group brought this to the attention of Boone officials, the town took over management of the full cemetery, tore down the fence between the two sections and changed the name to the Town of Boone Cemetery.

In 2017, the town installed a stone marker with the names of 65 people known to be buried there, and has since put a fence around the entire cemetery.

Graveyards across the region have fallen into disrepair and obscurity. Since cemeteries are by their very nature exposed to the elements, keeping them well-maintained is a difficult and often costly task. To rectify this, communities across the region are coming together to document and preserve these historic sites before they are lost to time.

And in February, U.S. Rep. A. Donald McEachin (D-VA) introduced the African American Burial Grounds Network Act, which awaits decision in committee. The bill would create a voluntary national network of historic African-American cemeteries under the National Park Service and provide support and grants to aid with documentation and restoration.

At the East End Cemetery near Richmond, Va., members of the Knight family tend to the family plot on Memorial Day in 2018. Photo by Brian Palmer/BrianPalmer.photos

Virginia

In the South, old African-American cemeteries — especially those used before 1900 — often suffer more than Anglo cemeteries from the same time period, according to Brian Palmer, former president of Richmond, Va., preservation group Friends of East End Cemetery. The East End Cemetery, established in 1897, was almost entirely overgrown and in a state of disrepair before cleanup efforts started in 2013.

Palmer says that in Virginia, state laws have mandated funding for the maintenance of Confederate soldier cemeteries since at least 1902.

"From 1902 to around 2018, these Confederate cemeteries have gotten between $9 and $10 million [in 2018 dollars] for maintenance," says Palmer. "Right away you'll see that certain cemeteries are valued and funded, and other cemeteries aren't."

In addition to the decades of funding disparity, Palmer states that the "Great Migration" of African-Americans out of the rural South coupled with desegregation led to people of color leaving these historic cemeteries behind in favor of areas with more opportunity.

"You can't simply reclaim a physical space that has been effectively destroyed by Jim Crow … because it's been devalued in so many different ways," says Palmer. "You have to recover the history in order to reinvest the value in that place."

In 2017, then-Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe allocated approximately $34,000 to the East End Cemetery and neighboring Evergreen Cemetery. Then, in early 2019, Virginia passed a law to give funds to 19 historic African-American cemeteries. However, Palmer states that the degree to which this has helped East End and Evergreen is questionable.

A Richmond judge awarded ownership of East End to the Enrichmond Foundation, a nonprofit community organization — meaning Enrichmond got the state funds plus a separate $400,000 grant. Palmer states they were led to believe that his group would have a partnership role, and that they had spent six years conducting volunteer cleanups and connecting with descendants. Instead, members of Friends of East End and other stakeholders serve on a 25-person advisory group Enrichmond created to provide input for the eventual preservation plan. Enrichmond has held community meetings regarding the cemetery's restoration, which is scheduled to start in 2020.

In contrast, Palmer says the best model he's seen for historic African-American cemetery preservation is in nearby Charlottesville, Va., because the city involves the volunteer community group Preservers of the Daughters of Zion Cemetery in decisions.

Established in 1873, the Daughters of Zion Cemetery in Charlottesville carries the name of the charitable society for African-American women who founded it. The group created the cemetery as an alternative to the segregated Oakwood Cemetery directly across the street.

"Over time it became overgrown, some of the family members moved away or died out," says Preservers of the Daughters of Zion Cemetery co-founder Edwina St. Rose, who has relatives buried in the graveyard.

The original organization phased out in the 20th century, and the city took up maintenance in the early 1970s. While the city did basic upkeep such as mowing, St. Rose states that the cemetery was in bad shape when she formed the new volunteer group in 2015. There were several broken or leaning grave markers, and several trees were in need of care.

"There's a lot of history in that

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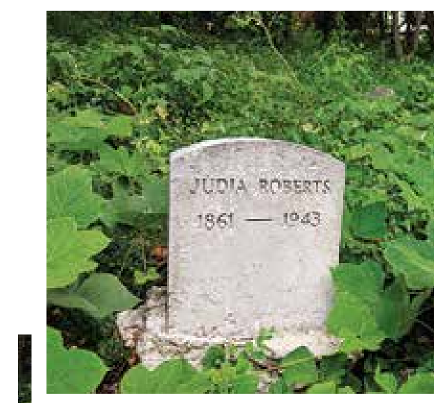

James McKissic at the Beck Knob Cemetery in Chattanooga, Tenn. Photo: Kevin Ridder

ANCESTORS
Honoring the Past Through Work in Black Cemeteries

By Terran Sparkle Young

Ancestors. That's where it all started for me. As a Black American, that is usually a question mark. We can only go so far back until we are no longer human but chattel, property to be counted along with the horses and cattle. Contrary to what many would like to believe, "so far back" really isn't far back at all. I needed more. I needed to be connected to where I come from. Where I come from happens to be right where I am, in Wise County, Va.

When I talk to people in the grocery store or wherever I may be, I often get asked where I'm from or, "Ye'ain't from 'round here are ya?"

I don't have the typical Appalachian twang to my voice. But yes, I am from around here and so are my parents and their parents and at least one set of great-grandparents. I can trace my mother's side to a Virginia coal camp called Stonega, the "colored" section. My mother's mother, Adeline, was the only grandparent living when I was born. She died when I was a baby. My mother and her siblings told me plenty of stories about their parents and what they could remember of their grandparents.

My father's side is a different story. Both of his parents died before he reached the age of 10. I don't know where my paternal grandmother is buried. This is particularly significant to me because I was named after her: Sparkle. And I am Terran Sparkle.

When I was a child, my mother's sister lived in a small single-wide trailer in the South Side neighborhood of Norton, Va. The trailer sat alone on a hillside with a wooded area directly across the one-lane road. The tree line started at the bottom of the hill where the road began and it extended far beyond my aunt's trailer where the road ended. My parents told me that there was a graveyard hidden behind the tree line.

At the time, being a child of six or seven years old, I imagined all the horrors that were there; snakes, bears, wolves, zombies, all the terrors that my little mind could think of. Also, I could not understand how a graveyard was in the woods. To me, a graveyard was a cleared lot that was nicely manicured with fancy headstones and flowers.

As I got older, my parents explained that I had many family members buried there, including an uncle, great-grandfather and grandfather on my mother's side, and my dad's mother, Sparkle. I cannot recall exactly when, but I was told that her grave was moved due to the construction of a highway coming through South Side. This was something that my uncle, my father's older brother, handled, so neither my father nor I know exactly what had happened.

I can remember being a child and going with my father to another graveyard where he thought his mother had been moved. The disappointment on his face when he was told that she wasn't there has always stuck with me.

I moved away from the region at nine years old and came back as a young adult 14 years later. Finding my grandmother's grave was on my mind. Equipped with more knowledge and Ancestry.com, I set out on my journey.

"I'm gonna clear off that graveyard."

That's what I told my mother. She thought I was weird, crazy or both. If my father had any negative feelings about it, he didn't vocalize them. A few weeks later when I asked, he took me to the graveyard. I'm sure by this time no one had set foot in there for decades. As an adult, it wasn't as bad as I had imagined.

Most of the trees only lined the perimeter. It wasn't overrun with snakes and zombies, but it definitely felt like we had entered a world that had been long forgotten. It felt sacred. I felt connected. I took a lot of photos and we cleaned off graves.

My mom still thought the idea was wild. She told a few friends of our escapade and as people, both local and those who had moved away, found out that my father and I had gone there, they wanted to know more. They had questions. "What does it look like?" "Whose grave did you see?" "Did you run into any snakes?"

I wanted to know more, too. I went digging — a little graveyard humor. After what seemed like a wild goose chase through records at city hall, the health department and the county courthouse, I still couldn't find an owner for the graveyard itself. However, I was able to contact the company that owns all of the surrounding land. Let's just say that they didn't want to have anything to do with "that colored people's graveyard" and leave it at that.

The author discovered the grave of her uncle, above, at Chestnut Grove Cemetery. Fallen headstones signify the site's condition. Photos by Terran Sparkle Young

I also discovered that the graveyard had a name, Chestnut Grove, which is the same name as a church in the South Side neighborhood. More importantly, I found records indicating that my grandmother had been moved to Oakview Cemetery in neighboring Big Stone Gap, Va., except she wasn't there either.

Let's fast-forward a few years. I was still doing research on my family, but not so much on my grandmother. I met a woman named Joanne Golden Hill. She, too, was researching her family history, including graveyards. Joanne informed me that relocated graves often are not relocated at all. Some dirt may be moved but many times the caskets actually aren't exhumed. Around the same time that I met Joanne, maybe even the same day, I received my father's Ancestry DNA results. This new information motivated me to pick up where I left off.

One day while at work, I overheard a conversation about an abandoned black graveyard in a neighboring county. I joined the conversation with my knowledge of Chestnut Grove and a few other local black cemeteries. With that conversation, William Isom of East Tennessee PBS, Marley Green of Appalshop, Amy Clark Spain of University of Virginia – Wise, Willie Dodson of Appalachian Voices, which publishes this newspaper, and myself began looking into black and slave graveyards around the region. There is a black cemetery in Haysi, Va., that Willie registered with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. And at a slave graveyard found on Amy's family property in Jonesville, Va., ground-penetrating radar has been used to identify graves. William documented that work for PBS and has researched several black cemeteries in East Tennessee. Of course, I focused my energy on Chestnut Grove Cemetery.

Since then with the help of my family and some friends, we have had several clean-up sessions. We have removed overgrowth, cleaned off graves and turned headstones upright. Most importantly, I have had the privilege of visiting and placing flowers on some of the graves of my ancestors.

One day, after taking particular care to clear off a grave, I noticed that it belonged to Buford Noaks, my uncle. Buford was tragically killed years before I was born. I photographed the headstone and shared it with my family. Many family members commented and told me their personal stories about him. Older cousins expressed that he was their favorite uncle and wished I could have met him. Some cried and hugged just at the memory of the forgotten grave. My family's reaction confirmed for me the importance of the work.

The graveyard sits at the foot of a mountain backing on to national forest. From the top of the last row of graves looking down, it is easy to see the settling of the land into the sunken graves.

There appears to be more than an acre that holds nearly 200 graves. The end goal is to have the graveyard registered, completely cleaned up and to begin to identify some of the unmarked

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Black Cemeteries

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cemetery, people who helped build the city of Charlottesville," says St. Rose. "We wanted to make sure we didn't lose that history."

So in 2016, the group successfully petitioned the city to allocate $80,000 for restoration of the cemetery. That money has so far been used to install a fence, restore markers and conduct ground-penetrating radar to locate burial sites on the recommendation of the community organization.

"We're trying to get the local family members involved with the cemetery," says St. Rose. "Hopefully they will continue with the upkeep."

Knoxville

What started as a small burial plot in 1873 in Knoxville, Tenn., has grown into three predominantly African-American cemeteries with at least 15,000 grave sites total. The people interred in the Crestview, Longview and Southern Chain cemeteries consist of teachers, mechanics, shopkeepers, clergymen, politicians and more.

After caretakers who kept up the cemeteries for decades passed, dishonest owners misused funds and the area deteriorated, according to historical organization Knox Heritage. By 1977, the cemeteries were completely overgrown — some families even moved their loved ones into more well-kept burial grounds.

Finally, in 1993, the state took over the graveyards and gave them to the West View Community Action Group, which holds frequent cleanups of those and other area cemeteries. Ellen Adcock with West View states that they could not handle cemetery upkeep alone.

"It takes not only concerned citizens, but it takes law enforcement, it takes historic societies," she says. "You need gravel for roads, dirt for graves that have caved in, and to get someone who works at a local cemetery to talk to workers about how important it is for them to not disturb the graves."

According to Adcock, it's not just the African-American cemeteries in West View that suffer; illegal dumping, vegetative overgrowth, vandalism and more are all too prevalent at any of the community's historic graveyards. She fears that modern-day cemeteries may meet the same fate as the historical ones with few caretakers.

"Perpetual care gets more costly as the years go on and there's less and less family," says Adcock.

Maintaining the oldest cemeteries presents its own set of problems.

"Over time, some of the caskets start to deteriorate," says Adcock. "I have fallen in up to my knees in graves before."

Even so, Adcock states that it's rewarding to discover a gravestone and connect people with their relatives.

"We've literally had relatives come back in wheelchairs looking for their brother, and you will see the younger family members carrying them in the wheelchair out into the overgrown cemetery," says Adcock.

She describes cemetery preservation as a constant battle, both today and for the next generation.

"What we need to leave them, though, is the inspiration to do it — because I think it is a measure of how kind a community is," says Adcock.

Chattanooga

Under a blanket of kudzu in a north Chattanooga, Tenn., neighborhood, headstones dating back to the 1880s dot the hillside. Some belong to African-American Civil War soldiers. If not for a recently erected sign, most passersby would probably never know that the Beck Knob Cemetery was there.

For decades, members of the 136-year-old Hurst United Methodist Church maintained Beck Knob. But after the caretaker passed away around 2000 with no one to take their place, the cemetery fell into disrepair. Then, in the mid-2010s, a construction company surveying the land for a future housing deveopment stumbled upon the overgrown cemetery.

After this, a community-driven effort to revitalize the graveyard sprung up led by church members including Gary James, who has taken on the role of Beck Knob caretaker. James grew up helping one of the previous caretakers maintain the cemetery, and now hopes to get the cemetery on the state and national historic registers. Even though Beck Knob's location was never totally lost, restoration will still be costly.

"When we started restoration a few years ago, I think we kind of had it in our minds that we'd clean it off, it'd be dressed up and we'd just have to fix a few headstones — but there's a lot more to it," says James. The work requires identifying burial locations, restoring headstones, pouring fill dirt

Members of Wounded Warriors pull several veterans' headstones from a tangle of vines at the Evergreen Cemetery near Richmond, Va. Photo by Brian Palmer/BrianPalmer.photos

in sunken graves and more.

To help with restoration efforts, James McKissic — then Chattanooga's director of Multicultural Affairs — set up the city African-American Cemetery Preservation Fund to supplement volunteer efforts at cemeteries including Beck Knob. The fund supports endeavors like controlling vegetation, landscaping and providing refreshments and a portable toilet for volunteer cleanup days, which happen several times a year.

"Each time we have a cleanup, we've had as many as 80 people," says cemetery caretaker James. "The community is receptive and wants to participate in the restoration of the cemetery."

While the cleanups help, fighting the creeping kudzu is a constant struggle. Standing next to a cluster of headstones that are buried under the invasive vine, McKissic says that he feels like they are "starting from scratch" each time.

Gary James states that the community is seeking help from the Chicora Foundation, a nonprofit historic preservation organization. With their assistance, James hopes to put together a work plan to clean up and restore the cemetery.

"We're expecting to have the total cemetery floor cleaned off of vegetation, and in three to five years to bring this thing to where we have the graves restored and a wrought iron fence put around the entire cemetery," he says.

To James McKissic, one of the most important parts is getting younger generations involved in caring for these historic places.

"You can have all the money in the world," he says, "but if you don't have anyone to organize and get the efforts together to take care of them, then it's still not going to be successful." ◆

Ancestors

Continued from page 11

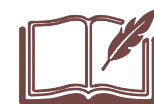
graves. I recently found out that the city of Norton and Chestnut Grove Baptist Church have also shown interest in working together to preserve the graveyard. I look forward to partnering with them in this endeavor.

So now, we sit at the crossroads of heritage and race, ancestral voice and narrative. There is a lack of representation of black people in Central Appalachia. While the stereotype of the hillbilly is harmful to Appalachians, the erasure of black Appalachians is equally as harmful. It is important for Appalachians to control the narrative of the region to prevent some of the shaming that happens when outsiders tell our story.

The invisibility of black people in the region is silencing. We are absorbed into a culture that is not entirely ours and given the choice to either get lost within it or be "othered" because of our differences. To be a black person in the region is to be invisible or to be seen as foreign because often the narrative given does not allow us to exist as both Appalachian and black simultaneously.

It is my hope that this project uncovers our deep history in the region and gives a voice to the ancestors that have been silenced and ultimately forgotten. Representation matters. ◆

For more information, contact the writer at MsTerranSparkle@gmail.com.



Naturalist's Notebook

Tangled Up in Kudzu

By Tamara Marshall Whiting

Kudzu has crept deeply into the psyche, literature and folklore of the people of the South — even into superstitious warnings like this: "Don't leave your bedroom window open at night, the kudzu vine might creep in and strangle you in your sleep!"

Of course there is no real threat like this to people, but kudzu, *Pueraria montana*, is a threat to native plants. Kudzu kills everything in its path, winding itself around tree trunks, breaking down branches and even uprooting trees. It can transform huge swaths of biodiverse mountainside and forest into alien-looking landscapes covered by large green leaves that scientists call "vine barrens."

In its native habitat, insects and pathogens kept kudzu at bay — but it proliferates across the Southeast.

A 2010 U.S. Forest Service study suggests that 227,000 acres of southern forest are covered in kudzu, and that it is spreading at a rate of 2,500 acres per year. However, many websites repeat the unsubstantiated claim that kudzu covers approximately 7 to 9 million acres in the United States.

Kudzu plants from Japan were first introduced to the United States in 1876 at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition as an ornamental vine. During the 1930s, when dust storms ravaged farmland soil, the Soil Conservation Service aggressively promoted kudzu as the cure-all for soil erosion. The agency grew over 10 million seedlings and paid hesitant farmers up to $8 an acre to plant it on their farms, fueling the plant's rise.

Kudzu is a semi-woody perennial vine with broad trifoliate leaves up to four inches wide. It establishes plants by forming roots at nodes where it comes in contact with the soil. These roots enlarge and form new crowns. Kudzu roots can penetrate over 9 feet deep and can be up to 4 inches thick. Vines can extend up to 100 feet in length and can grow as fast as one foot per day.

Kudzu plants begin to flower by their third year in late summer through fall. The fragrant, purple flowers hang in long clusters. After flowering, kudzu produces brown, hairy seed pods, though kudzu rarely spreads by seed.

What is the secret of the success of kudzu to the detriment of all surrounding plants? It is stress-tolerant, with vast underground roots that cannot be damaged by drought or freezing. Kudzu also forms a strong symbiotic relationship with nitrogen-fixing bacteria, making it possible to flourish in nitrogen-poor soil and spread quickly. But kudzu does not just out-compete native plant and tree species; it smothers other plants under a thick blanket of leaves so they cannot access the sunlight to photosynthesize.

The current control methods for kudzu are: mechanical control with brush hogs and shredders, chemical control through herbicides, and prescribed burning, culling or grazing.

One success story is at Great Smoky Mountains National Park. According to Forester Jesse Webster, a program to control kudzu began when the problem was first detected in the park in 1940 and continues today. It is a simple treatment plan using herbicides and clipping repeated every three years on active sites.

"Kudzu is 95 percent eradicated in the park," Webster says. "The other 5 percent remains only in the steepest and hardest-to-get-to places in the backcountry."

Grazing animals like cows are a wonderful help for controlling kudzu on farms, but goats are the best animal to control kudzu in the mountains. Goats not only love to chew kudzu leaves, they like to eat its woody shoots and stems as well. Various programs across the region have released goats in kudzu-infested forests and mountainsides. But to keep the vine at bay, goats must be used often over the same landscape.

Something unexpected happened in the control of kudzu in 2009. A bug that eats kudzu, Megacopya cribraria, arrived in Atlanta on a plane from China, likely from hitch-hiking on a plant, and proliferated quickly. As an insect that feeds on legume plants, it found its way to farm fields and began damaging soy crops, expanding its range until 2014.

"The kudzu bug did help reduce kudzu initially," says Karan A. Rawlins of the Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health in Tifton, Ga., "but unfortunately, kudzu has fairly successfully bounced back."

Where dedicated and vigilant efforts to eradicate kudzu have been made, there has been great progress. "Kudzu is the poster child of success in fighting invasive species," says Webster.

But where control measures are not underway, kudzu spreads along sunny corridors like roadsides, streams and distressed or cleared land. According to Dr. Lewis Ziska with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, kudzu is migrating northward into new areas, fueled by climate change. It not only thrives in warmer temperatures, but it grows faster with increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It is clear that kudzu will continue to be a presence on the land and in the imagination for many years to come. ◆

A volunteer crew with American Conservation Experience clears kudzu at one of the few new kudzu sites in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This site was aggravated by the 2016 Gatlinburg forest fire. Photo courtesy of Jesse Webster

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TAKING ON TVA

Communities are resisting the Tennessee Valley Authority's frequent cost increases and lack of transparency and clean energy

By Kevin Ridder

Since its creation at the height of the Great Depression, the Tennessee Valley Authority has fundamentally shaped the Volunteer State and the parts of the six surrounding states it serves, changing the landscape itself and providing power to millions. The federally owned monopoly utility also provides flood control and navigation assistance along the Tennessee River system with its vast network of hydroelectric dams.

Eighty-six years later, however, environmental and consumer advocates including Appalachian Voices, the publisher of this newspaper, fear the experiment in public power has become a behemoth that offers little transparency, raises electricity costs unnecessarily and is too reliant on fossil fuels. Now, everyday people, environmental and social justice groups and even some of the local power companies TVA supplies are pushing for change.

The utility generates 47 percent of its power with coal and natural gas, 39 percent from nuclear and 13 percent from renewables, with less than 1 percent attributed to energy efficiency measures. TVA's recently released 20-year plan shows its intention to remain entrenched in fossil fuels, slowly trading out coal for natural gas while keeping clean energy at arm's length.

In August, a coalition of environmental groups, community organizations and more including Appalachian Voices are visiting locales around TVA's service area to raise awareness about problems with the monopoly utility and how they can be addressed.

Cost Increases

For the sixth time in as many years, TVA applied a 1.5 percent wholesale electricity cost increase in fall 2018 to local power companies including Volunteer Energy Cooperative, which serves nearly 116,000 member-owners in East Tennessee. These local utilities purchase electricity generated by TVA and then sell it to their customers.

David Murphy, the co-op's vice president of marketing and economic development, states that Volunteer Energy has not raised their rates once in those six years outside of what TVA has mandated.

"Every dollar that we collect, we send 80 cents back to TVA," says Murphy. "If we wanted to have some sort of a program for low-income communities, it's going to be hard for the cooperative to offer that because we just simply don't have the excess money in hand to offer."

"And that's not necessarily TVA's fault," he continues. "We do have the option of increasing our rates and that would give us additional funding, but that would fall back onto the consumers who are buying VEC electricity, and our goal is to keep that rate as low as possible."

According to Murphy, TVA has stated that they don't plan to raise the rates again this year. He explains that TVA keeps raising rates to buy down debt.

"We believe that buying down debt is a responsible business practice," says Murphy. "However, TVA is doing it at such an expedited rate that the burden falls on the back of the consumers. It's not practical to be trying to pay down $1 billion in debt annually."

Murphy adds that it took several years for him and other local power companies to discover that this was the reason behind the frequent rate increases.

"Whenever the local power companies discovered there was this long-range financial plan that included paying down all the debt, one of the comments I heard a TVA employee make was, 'Well, if you guys didn't like this, then you should have said something about it as we were developing the plan,'" says Murphy. "The problem was, TVA didn't tell us they were developing the plan. We didn't find out about it until we were in the middle of the plan."

"While we are involved in the process, TVA ultimately has the final say because they are the regulators," he continues. "If we give them input that they don't like, they can choose to ignore it, and that does happen frequently."

Southern Alliance for Clean Energy staff and supporters, above, demonstrated against frequent fee increases at a Knoxville Utilities Board meeting earlier in 2019. TVA sells electricity to KUB and has raised costs annually for six years. At left, a supporter of SACE's Renew TN campaign for clean, affordable energy sits at the Knoxville Sing for Climate Concert in June. Photos courtesy of SACE

Other local utilities are also struggling with TVA's frequent rate increases. Memphis Light, Gas and Water, TVA's largest customer, is looking into the feasibility of cutting ties with the monopoly utility and creating its own power generation facilities. Multiple independent studies show that the Memphis municipal utility could save up to $333 million a year if it broke from TVA.

A Memphis Light, Gas and Water spokesperson stated that the utility's long-term plan is expected to be completed by early 2020, after which utility staff will make a recommendation to their board. The utility is holding monthly community meetings until then to gather public input on the matter. If the Memphis utility splits from TVA, it is contractually obligated to give a five-year notice before cutting ties completely. Costs would likely increase for other local power companies if Memphis left.

David Murphy states that Volunteer Energy will sit back and watch the situation with Memphis to see how it turns out.

"VEC is member-owned and operated, so we owe it to our members to provide electricity at the least-cost option," says Murphy. "Based on the desire of our membership, we would do whatever they thought best."

Transparency

In November 2018, TVA stopped allowing the general public to attend the utility's quarterly board meetings — instead holding a separate public listening session the day before the meeting. While TVA has stated that this change was intended to help the utility "to more fully consider the comments of the public," consumer rights advocates remain unconvinced.

"It seems to be more a matter of crowd control than actual listening," says Pat Hurley, who has consulted for utility companies for more than 30 years all over the globe. Hurley is a member-owner of Powell Valley Electric Cooperative in Northeast Tennessee, which receives its power from TVA.

"The listening session becomes kind of a public hearing and a data-gathering exercise; it's not at all clear that anything said actually influences TVA's decisions," he continues. "Additionally, there are a number of TVA board committees who meet the week prior to the board meeting and forward their decisions to the TVA board well in advance of these listening sessions."

"By having the listening session in advance of the board meetings, you put in another procedural step that separates the consumers from the TVA board — and that's really a step in the wrong direction," Hurley adds.

In January, U.S. Rep. Tim Burchett (R-TN) introduced the TVA Transparency Act, H.R. 881, which would require the monopoly utility to open board subcommittee meetings to the general public and post meeting minutes online. The bill awaits decision in a House subcommittee. In April, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee signed a resolution in support of the bill.

"It is vitally important to the citizens of Tennessee that TVA, as an entity created and protected by Congress, should conduct their business in the open and be as transparent as possible," reads the state resolution.

Hurley states that the general public that owns TVA does not have a meaningful voice in how the utility is run.

"TVA has become, in a sense, its own regulator — and that's never good," says Hurley. "They not only provide power to the local distribution companies who are the co-ops and municipal utilities, but they also regulate them and how much they charge for electricity. It's a very bad model."

He adds that there is no independent organization the general public can reach out to with concerns other than their congressional representative.

Looking Back

Today, TVA operates 29 hydroelectric dams. Creating these massive structures required the monopoly utility to use eminent domain to relocate thousands of families in the early- to mid-20th century.

In a 1998 article in the journal Agricultural History, Converse College Professor of History Emerita Melissa Walker writes that TVA's programs "were structured to favor prosperous landowning families over poorer owners and tenants." While this affected both black and white families, Walker states that TVA's relocation policies discriminated against African-American families and often moved them to less fertile land, as was the case with Edna Spencer's family who owned land in rural Anderson County.

"Instead of paying the family cash they could have used to buy their own property, the agency traded the Spencers' productive farm for a poor clay farm the TVA owned elsewhere in East Tennessee," wrote Walker, noting that the Spencers eventually sold the unproductive farm and moved to Massachusetts.

White families, on the other hand, were typically referred to other agencies to assist them with locating new homes, according to Walker.

Many people who grew up and lived in the 1930s and 1940s had a more positive opinion of the monopoly utility than later generations, according to Knoxville resident Bill Troy, who was at the helm of a movement that aimed to move TVA away from nuclear power in the late '70s and early '80s.

"[My father] was part of a generation that thought that TVA really sort of saved the Tennessee Valley in a lot of ways," says Troy. "He remembered all the erosion that went on in the mountains, the flooding and everything; it was just terrible. In terms of employment as well, they really thought the world of TVA."

Troy states that after TVA couldn't build any more dams, they moved on to coal and nuclear.

"When I got here in the '70s, suddenly they'd become this monster utility that almost single-handedly created strip mining and had the largest nuclear program in the world," he continues. "They created the biggest market for strip-mined coal, the essential market that made strip mining viable in Appalachia. A heavy burden to bear."

Troy describes TVA in the early to late-20th century as flipping back and forth from progressive ideals to serving corporate interests depending on who was president. He points to the appointees under President Jimmy Carter's administration in the late '70s and early '80s.

"When they left, suddenly it was back to business," says Troy. "And I've not seen them do very much at all that's terribly progressive since then."

Troy says that TVA should be thought of historically as the "government's laboratory for utilities."

"The power behind its creation and its maintenance was always sort of a place where the federal government and all its corporate tentacles could experiment

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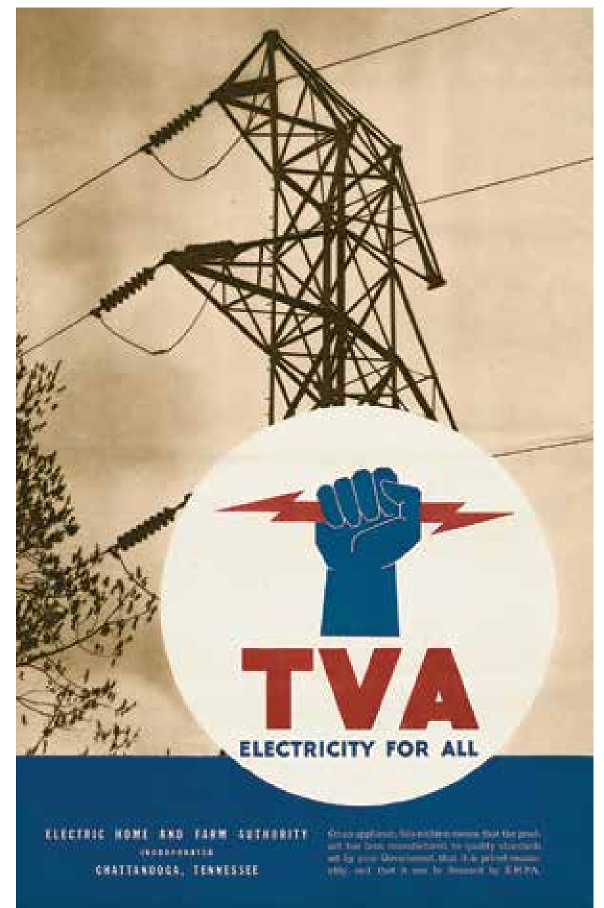

TVA pamphlet from 1934. Public domain photo

TVA Refuses to Excavate One Coal Ash Pit, Will Dig Up Another

By Kevin Ridder

On July 2, the Tennessee Valley Authority announced that they would not excavate 5 million tons of coal ash in an unlined pit at their Bull Run Fossil Plant next to the Clinch River in Anderson County, Tenn. Instead, the monopoly utility plans to drain water out of the pit and cover the top.

Environmental groups represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center, a nonprofit law firm, are calling for TVA to excavate the coal ash.

TVA revealed earlier this year that they would shutter Bull Run by 2023. Testing conducted by the utility from 2000 to 2014 showed levels of arsenic up to three times the legal limit in groundwater near the Bull Run plant, according to the Knoxville News-Sentinel. However, the utility stated that the coal ash will not endanger public drinking water since it is treated by the city and there are no residential wells downstream. TVA is expected to release the latest groundwater testing results in August.

In the meantime, community members near Bull Run are holding meetings on what to do next about coal ash and voicing their concerns about the plant's closure. TVA also held several meetings with the community in late July. Several environmental groups including the Sierra Club, Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment, and Appalachian Voices — the publisher of this newspaper — are supporting the gatherings.

Also attending the Bull Run meetings are workers who helped clean up TVA's massive 2008 Kingston coal ash spill and their relatives. A federal court ruled in November that Jacobs Engineering, the TVA contractor hired to clean up the spill, failed to provide proper worker safety measures. At least 40 of those workers have died and more than 400 have been sickened from coal ash-related toxins, according to an ongoing Knoxville News Sentinel investigation.

Elected officials representing Roane County, Kingston and Harriman are suing TVA and Jacobs for misleading them and the public about the toxicity of the 7.3 million tons of coal ash that spilled from a busted dike at the Kingston plant in Roane County in December 2008. The public officials allege TVA and Jacobs also hid internal records proving its toxicity, destroyed evidence and tampered with threat level testing.

In June, the Tennessee Valley Authority agreed to fully excavate 12 million tons of coal ash from an unlined pit at the Gallatin Fossil Plant in northeast of Nashville. This resulted from a lawsuit against the monopoly utility that state regulators filed in 2015 based on allegations that coal ash pollutants were leaching into the Cumberland River, a source of drinking water for Nashville, Tenn., and the surrounding area.

TVA CEO Jeff Lyash, left, talks with workers who cleaned TVA's 2008 Kingston coal ash spill and their family at a meeting on coal ash at Bull Run. Photo: Brianna Knisley

TVA can either recycle the Gallatin coal ash into concrete or place it in a lined landfill within 20 years. The June decision comes three months after TVA agreed to excavate 5 million tons of coal ash from its Allen Fossil Plant near Memphis, Tenn.

Tackling Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a persistent problem in Appalachia. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines the term as a "condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food." According to Feeding America, a national organization that fights hunger, the average rate of food-insecure individuals for five states in the Appalachian region is almost 14 percent, compared to the nationwide average of 12.5 percent.

Nonprofit organizations are finding unique ways to combat food insecurity in the region. Some of these programs work to fill gaps in federal food assistance programs, while others are getting creative with food systems and supporting local farmers. All of them are making a difference in the fight against hunger, and all face challenges.

Master's student and Community Food Initiatives volunteer Ivan Orquera after his Donation Station shift at the Athens Farmers Market. CFI accepts community and vendor donations and purchases food from vendors with donated funds. This produce is distributed to groups like food pantries. Photo courtesy CFI.

Community Food Initiatives

By Jen Kirby

Community Food Initiatives' mission is simple: provide healthy, locally sourced food for their community in and around Athens County in Southeast Ohio. Susie Huser is the community engagement director and donation station program director. She knows it is a long title, but she has a lot to get done.

According to Huser, Ohio is ranked sixth in the nation for highest food insecurity, and Athens County is the highest for food insecurity and poverty in Ohio. Huser notes that much of the food insecurity is located on the more rural periphery of the county, away from the college town in the center.

The organization's garden programs include community and school gardens that encourage kids to dig around in the dirt. School curriculums educate children on how important and empowering gardening can be. The community gardens are open to anyone, and growers are encouraged to give a small percentage of their produce back to the community.

The Donation Station, which Huser directs, is set up at local farmers and produce markets. People can donate either money or food purchased at the market. This food is then distributed to food banks and to locations that provide free meals. The Discovery Kitchen is also tied to the Donation Station, and provides classes on cooking with fresh food. Since 2008, the Donation Station has distributed 338,536 pounds of produce from local farmers.

To help connect people in Southeast Ohio to places where they can find a meal or markets that accept SNAP, Community Food Initiatives partnered with the Food Justice Lab at West Virginia University to create a regional food access map. The map identifies sites that provide food and includes information on what kinds of assistance each site can provide, and whether or not they offer fresh produce.

The map also reveals places where people may be struggling to find fresh produce or food in general. By identifying these locations, the initiative can offer help and services to these areas, based on the community's needs and requests.

"Sometimes I think our long-term goal is to put ourselves out of business," Huser says. She insists on the importance of collaboration and connection between organizations throughout Appalachia and beyond, noting that food insecurity is not an isolated issue and tackling it requires systemic changes.

Visit communityfoodinitiatives.org

SNAP Stretch Programs Expand Access to Fresh Food

By Kelsey Stratman

One of the most effective ways to combat food insecurity is the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides funds that qualifying individuals and families can spend on food at grocery and convenience stores. Still, this is often not enough for people to comfortably buy nutritious, fresh fruits and vegetables.

This is where many nonprofit organizations are stepping in to increase the amount of fresh, healthy produce people can access using SNAP.

In many Kentucky counties, the Community Farm Alliance and Bluegrass Farm to Table partner to run Kentucky Double Dollars. This program allows people on SNAP and two other federal programs geared towards women, children and seniors to receive up to $20 in tokens per market day to spend on Kentucky-grown produce, meat and cheese, simply by spending the same amount of SNAP money at one of their 41 participating markets. Programs like this double recipients' spending power for local food, fighting food insecurity while also supporting farmers.

Virginia Fresh Match runs a similar program at participating Virginia stores and farmers markets, as does Nourish Knoxville in its city and West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition at West Virginia markets, among other programs. Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture's "Double Up Food Bucks" initiative, available at several markets in Watauga County, N.C., accepts money from programs besides SNAP, as does Kentucky Double Dollars.

These initiatives present difficulties, however. Machines that accept SNAP benefits can run up to $1,000 with a $45 monthly fee, according to Laura Hill with the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, which began their SNAP Stretch program in summer 2018. Hill states that there used to be federal money available to assist in the purchase of these machines, but it's no longer readily accessible.

Consistent wireless internet to run the machines is also an issue. SNAP recipients also often have trouble traveling to farmers markets, though that can be addressed with creative solutions like pop-up markets in certain areas.

Hill also describes a necessary change in perception for both the farmers and those using federal nutrition assistance. For example, farmers sometimes aren't willing to buy a SNAP machine for their market because many customers have not asked them for it, which in turn decreases SNAP recipients' access to the market.

"Word hasn't gotten around to everyone," says Hill. "We're increasing awareness, but when [SNAP customers] hear about this program it almost seems too good to be true."

And federal decisions regarding SNAP funding have a huge impact and can lead to uncertainty, as does the amount of donations available to match SNAP dollars.

With proper support, these programs can successfully match two groups — small local farmers and SNAP recipients — who can help one another. The result is increased quality of nutrition and fresh taste for the region's low-income residents and a boon to the local agricultural economy.

At farmers markets in Watauga County, N.C., people using federal nutrition programs can receive these tokens to double their purchasing power through a Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture program. Photos: BRWIA

Appalachian Sustainable Development

By Kelsey Stratman

Anyone who has grown their own veggies and seen how unique they can look might wonder how every piece of produce in the supermarket is almost identical. In fact, grocery stores throw away up to half of their viable produce to keep up these aesthetic standards. A nonprofit in Central Appalachia is working to keep more of the unusual-looking produce, often called "seconds," out of the trash while making nutritious food more accessible in the process.

Appalachian Sustainable Development has worked since the '90s to strengthen the local agricultural economy in 15 counties across Tennessee and Virginia.

Two of their programs, Healthy Families, Family Farms and Practically Perfect, increase food access and decrease food waste by giving "seconds" produce a second life.

"It's not like a cucumber that a field mouse has eaten the end off of," says the organization's Sylvia Crum. "It could be a bell pepper that has an additional lobe … it's gorgeous and nutritional, it just doesn't meet the retail aesthetic."

Through Healthy Families, Family Farms, Appalachian Sustainable Development purchases seconds from farmers and distributes the goods to food banks, donating 80,000 to 125,000 pounds of produce per year and compensating farmers for their less-conventionally-attractive goods.

Practically Perfect works slightly differently; the organization encourages traditional grocery stores to sell "seconds" at a discounted price. Since 2017, the group has worked with Wholesome Wave, an organization that runs produce access programs across the country, to implement this program at six grocery stores, and has plans to expand to new retailers.

In addition to the seconds programs, Appalachian Sustainable Development also encourages self-reliance through the fun, rewarding process of growing produce. Through Grow Your Own, the organization teaches people how to garden and provides seeds and equipment to eligible people.

Each of these initiatives has successes and pitfalls. Money to run these programs is always a concern, according to Crum. But she also indicates that there are also cultural shifts that need to happen and that spreading the word about these innovative solutions will help.

Explaining how the organization's programs tackle different areas on the "continuum" of food insecurity, Crum says, "I don't think people really understand how complicated the issues we have in Central Appalachia are … not a lot of people are aware of the complicated nature, the nuances, and the importance of the work."

Learn more at asdevelop.org

Facing Hunger Foodbank

By Sam Kepple

Based out of Huntington, W.Va., Facing Hunger Foodbank is a regional nonprofit organization working to combat food insecurity in Appalachia.

Facing Hunger distributed more than 7.4 million pounds of food in 2018. Between their many programs, Facing Hunger provides services to around 116,000 people annually across 17 counties in West Virginia, eastern Kentucky and southeastern Ohio.

Facing Hunger's endeavors include mobile food pantries, which visit areas known as "food deserts," meaning the area provides little to no opportunity for residents to access healthy and diverse foods. A variety of products are offered through the pantry, including produce, dried goods, entree meals and bread. Facing Hunger brings between 8,000 to 10,000 pounds of food into a community with each mobile pantry, according to Executive Director Cyndi Kirkhart.

The organization also assists 4,100 children in need each week through programs such as free and reduced school meals and the Backpack Program, which provides food for students to take home in the times during the week that they are not at school. Programs for senior citizens are offered as well, such as a service that delivers food to their homes.

In the five years that Kirkhart has served as executive director, she describes an improvement in the nutritional quality of the food Facing Hunger supplies. The organization works with large businesses, such as Walmart and Kroger, to acquire healthier foods.

"We've increased the amount of produce we distribute, versus what has typically been available through the retail donation program," Kirkhart says. "We've been working with those retailers to increase the amount of produce and healthier foods."

One of Facing Hunger's biggest challenges is providing service to a growing number of financially insecure people in their service area who end up needing services the organization provides, according to Kirkhart.

The group is an affiliate of the national hunger-relief charity Feeding America. Facing Hunger receives some federal funding from the Emergency Food and Shelter Program, and also distributes U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities in West Virginia and Kentucky. Donations from individuals, food drives, universities and businesses are crucial for keeping Facing Hunger's supply stocked.

Learn more at facinghunger.org.

Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council

By Jen Kirby

"We're looking for ways to empower communities and take back control."

That's how Lexy Close summarizes the driving force behind her work to address food insecurity. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as "the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food." According to Close, food insecurity connects to struggles of disempowerment and exploitation that people in Appalachia have experienced for generations.

Close works with the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council, a nonprofit group that serves six counties in East Tennessee. The council is focused on improving local economies through leadership and education.

Among the projects Close oversees is Appalachian Farmacy, which was modeled after a Kentucky program designed to make it easier for people experiencing food insecurity to access local and healthy food from farmers markets, benefitting both them and local farmers. Programs like these have seen successes and struggles.

In 2017, Appalachian Farmacy began "prescribing" fruits and veggies to recipients of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Access Program who have health issues such as obesity or heart disease. Although the Appalachian Farmacy supported roughly $50,000 in vouchers from grocery stores and the farmers market, it ended in March 2018. According to Close, the grant required that recipients provide a one-to-one funding match in order to re-apply, which the team did not have the resources to do.

A grant from the Tennessee Dept. of Health supported another farmers market initiative in 2018. Also inspired by a Kentucky program, this initiative supplied $3 vouchers for fruits and vegetables after recipients logged a mile of walking at the farmer's market. Participants logged approximately 1,400 miles. Close explains that the program was a success, but the funding was limited to one year.

A child shows off radishes from a garden plot. Photo courtesy of ARCD

Grants are useful in proving that a project can be successful. But, according to Close, they are not sustainable and many nonprofits struggle to maintain programs due to the short-term nature of grant funding.

Close does work closely with Grow Appalachia, a foundation that supports gardening education projects in 6 states across Central Appalachia. Grow Appalachia project sites have grown over 4.4 million pounds of food since 2009. Close runs a gardening program that has received funding since 2014, and offers gardening education, materials and supplies, and classes on cooking and canning.

Close says the ARCD is pursuing relationships with other local foundations that might be interested in investing in longer-term funding for programs like Appalachian Farmacy. She advocates for more resources to be put towards preventative health measures that enable people facing health issues and food insecurity to consume more fresh fruits and vegetables. With longer-term funding, Close sees a future where more Tennesseans are able to eat healthy, local food.

Learn more at arcd.org

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A Tale of Orchards Past

Tom Brown's Quest to Save Appalachia's Lost Heirloom Apples

By Eric Wallace

The year is 2001 and a tip has heirloom apple hunter extraordinaire Tom Brown driving 300 miles to Northeast Georgia to look for an apple tree rumored to hold grafts of a variety that has otherwise all but vanished, the Fort's Prize. Around 7 a.m. he stops at a country store in the tiny community of Otto along the North Carolina border.

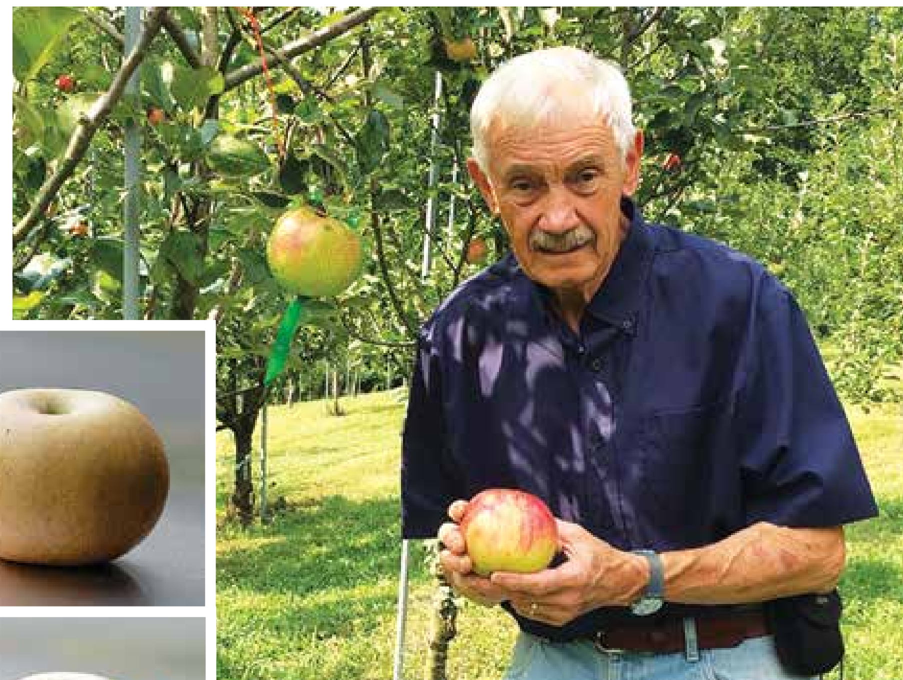
"There were three elderly gentlemen in there and, as usual, I asked if they knew of any old apple trees in the area or could remember the names of any varieties that were around when they were kids," says Brown, 77, a native of Clemmons, N.C. An octogenarian in overalls recalled rare gems like Yates, Cannon, Sheepnose Sweet, Tom and White June. To find trees, he advised Brown to visit neighboring amateur historian and orchardist Johnny Crawford.

Brown spent the day scouring rural Rabun County for Fort's Prize — sadly, to no avail. He went to see Crawford that evening. The man was in his mid-60s and had a home orchard boasting old English staples like Pippin, Pearmain and Nonsuch, but nothing particularly rare. However, he said he would gladly introduce Brown to local elders familiar with old trees and lost orchards.

Brown returned about a week later. Crawford's guidance led him to a rural backroad inhabited mostly by the Speed family. There, Brown discovered a treasure-trove of heirlooms. One home had Bart and Royal Lemon. Another, Neverfail, Hog and Candy Stripe. Still another, Black Winesap and Rabun Bald. Brown took clippings of rare varieties that were no longer stocked in nurseries or orchards.

"In the days before grocery stores, it was a point of pride to have apples that were different from [those of] your family and neighbors," says Brown, explaining the diversity. "On one hand, it was bragging rights over who had what. On the other, it brought access to a wider variety of flavors and usages."

For 19th century Appalachian families, a well-stocked orchard was essential. There were apples for every application — from drying, frying, fresh eating, baking, making brandy, hard and sweet cider, vinegar, feeding livestock and so on. The diversity of their shape, size, color, texture, taste and time of ripening was astounding. In 1905, a U.S. Department of Agriculture report cataloged more than 14,000 varieties growing in East Coast orchards; more than 7,000 were cultivated in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley alone. But the transition toward monocultures and corporate farming in the 20th century changed all that. Today's commercial growers sell around just 90 different types of apples. By 2000, more than 11,000 American varieties were believed to have gone extinct.



Tom Brown holds a Wolf River apple in his orchard, where he raises and sells heritage apple trees. Learn more at applesearch.org. Photo courtesy of Tom Brown. At left, two heirloom apples grown at Foggy Ridge Cider's orchard in Dugspar, Va. Photos courtesy of Foggy Ridge Cider

So, for Brown, finding multiple old apple varieties in a single visit that he could bring back to orchards and nurseries was a huge success. But when J.P. Speed mentioned he'd heard tell of a Junaluska tree in Haywood County, Brown's heart nearly skipped a beat. The legendary variety was more than 200 years old and had long been thought extinct. It took its name from — and was cited as the historical favorite of — an early 19th-century Cherokee Indian chief. Though some claimed the Junaluska was mythical, Brown had dug up references in multiple 19th century southern orchard catalogues.

He consulted Crawford who suggested they try properties near a pair of once-prominent, now lost Haywood County orchards dating to the 1820s. Crawford thought it likely that community members had taken and grafted clippings before the trees had been cut down nearly a century before.

"A lot of times somebody in the community has an old tree, only they don't know what it is, much less whether or not it's rare and on the verge of extinction," says Brown. Trees typically date to the childhoods of homeowners' grandparents; chances are, household knowledge of origin and usage died out with their passing. "Or it might be that somebody young has recently bought the property," Brown continues. The extent of their knowledge "is the tree puts out apples that don't look or taste like what you buy at a grocery store. To them, it's probably a curio or a nuisance."

Brown and Crawford met again and visited the mountaintop homestead of Kate Mincey about two weeks later. Then in her late 80s, Mincey directed the men to a grove of overgrown apple trees. In it they found vintage varieties like Bank, Wolf River, Sweet, Winesap and two oddities she called John Berry Keepers. The name commemorated both the farmer that had gifted her father the clippings and the apples' prodigious keepability. With no ripe fruit on the tree, Brown asked Mincey for a verbal description. In addition to the skin having blotchy brownish patches and a slight reddish blush, the apples had compact, mostly yellow flesh, a short, stout and knobby stem, extra rich taste and ripened in late October. It was a match for old orchard records describing the Junaluska!

That fall, Brown returned five times — making a 4-hour drive each way — seeking to harvest ripe apples. Eventually, the effort paid off: consulting experts and historical records, the find was confirmed.

"Can I describe the feeling of rediscovering an apple variety that everybody, including myself, thought had vanished from the world forever?" says Brown, laughing gently. "Well, I'd say it's… the experience is just pretty darn miraculous. Lucky for me, it's something I've been fortunate enough to experience many, many times over the years."

Indeed, Brown has spent the past two decades and counting seeking to reclaim the lost diversity of Appalachia's heirloom apples. To date, he has recovered more than 1,000 different varieties. Taking clippings from each, he established an 800-variety heirloom orchard and nursery—and now sells upward of 1,000 trees a year. Through donating countless limbs for grafting, he has helped found another seven nonprofit heritage orchards. The net effect has been to bring long-lost apple flavors and tastes to eaters and drinkers throughout the United States.

"To know I've played a part in bringing these amazing trees back from the brink of destruction is incredibly special," says Brown.

The quest has carried him through Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Hunting an average of three days a week, he's driven about 600,000 miles looking for rare apples.

"But I have to say, the work has been, on average, more fun than hard," Brown continues with a laugh. "I've gotten to see so many interesting places, meet all kinds of great people and hear more good stories than I can possibly recount. None of that would've happened if I hadn't been out there looking for these apples. My only wish is that I could've started 20 years before I

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did—then I would've saved probably five times as many varieties."

Interestingly enough, Brown's apple quest didn't start until he retired in the late-1990s. And it came as a surprise.

Though he had helped his parents tend and graft a few trees as a boy, his career was far from agricultural — by profession he had been a chemical engineer. His interest in heirlooms was sparked at a Salem, N.C., farmer's market.

"There was a gentleman there that had these little baskets of apples with odd names," says Brown. "I thought to myself, 'Now there's something you don't see every day.' So, I go up and ask him what's the deal and he says, 'These're heritage apples.' Well, I didn't know what that was, so I asked: 'What the heck is a heritage apple?' I didn't realize it at the time, but that question marked the beginning of what was to become an obsession, consuming passion, and, as I think of it now, my true life's work."

Needless to say, Brown's interest was piqued. Learning the vendor had searched for and recovered two or three varieties sealed the deal. Brown quickly began researching the history of Appalachia's orchards. The volume of lost diversity astonished and saddened him.

"These apples were important to people," he says. "They were part of a culture that, nowadays, we've basically all but forgotten. … Trying to save as many of these trees as possible before they died out felt imperative."

Brown soon returned to the market. He asked the gentleman about North Carolina varieties that were rumored to still be around but had yet to be recovered. The man mentioned the Harper's Seedling and counties where reports occasionally surfaced.

"Within a few weeks, I'd taken out ads in local papers asking for information," Brown confides with a laugh. Dozens of responses followed. "Nobody mentioned the Harper's, but they told me about a lot of other varieties. So, I started paying visits and finding apples."

Only then he had to figure out how to identify them. That led to making friends with orchardists and other experts.

"Soon enough, it was like a full-time job," says Brown. By 2003 or 2004, he was driving more than 30,000 miles a year looking for apples. "By then I'd put up a website with photos and my contact information, and started writing an annual newsletter about the apples I was finding."

Brown's efforts have won him praises from more than conservation-minded orchardists. These days, foodies throughout Appalachia and points beyond are enjoying slightly livelier fall farmers markets. But Brown's work is also impacting cidermakers: The availability of 'new' heirloom apple varieties is helping spark a cider revolution.

"If you're running a cidery and you're not offering one or two single-variety heirloom ciders, that's a big mistake," says Mt. Defiance Cidery co-owner and cidermaker, Marc Chretien. He likens beverages made from apples like Albemarle Pippin and Arkansas Black to wines crafted from noble grape varieties like Merlot. "The more quality varieties we have at our disposal, the more room we have to experiment," says Chretien. Similar to craft beer, consumer interest is "driving rampant experimentation. Basically, we're in the midst of a cider renaissance."

As such, Brown's apples are in high demand. And craft cidermakers appreciate his efforts.

Tom Brown with his apple display at the Lincoln County Apple Festival in North Carolina.

"Tom has done more than anyone alive to help preserve the legacy of Appalachia's heirloom apples," says Foggy Ridge Cider founder Diane Flynt. The Dugspur, Va., cidermaker established what has often been called the first modern orchard in the South devoted to growing heirlooms for hard cider in the mid-1990s. Her work to introduce Appalachian-grown, single-variety, Old-World-style heritage ciders to the contemporary palate won her a James Beard Foundation Outstanding Wine, Spirits or Beer Professional award in 2018.

"Tom arrived at this calling in the nick of time," Flynt continues. "The people that knew about these old apples were — and still are — fast dying out. Because of Tom's incredible devotion, we have countless 'new' varieties of apples to work with. As Appalachian cidermakers, we now have the ability to craft true terroir beverages that have histories dating back centuries."

And that, says Flynt, is no small achievement. ◆

Ready to see if you can tease out the tastes of different apples in your beverage? Find a cidery near you at appvoices.org/orchards-past

Orchard Goes Beyond Growing Apples

More than 100 years ago, the Clinchfield Railroad planted apple trees in Spruce Pine, N.C. At its peak, the Clinchfield Railroad packed and shipped over 125,000 bushels a year. The original owners planted many of the heirloom trees that still exist in what is now The Orchard at Altapass.

In 1995, Katherine Trubey purchased the 280 acres running along the Blue Ridge Parkway to prevent development. The orchard grows over 40 varieties of apples including "Lop-eared Johnson," Stayman-Winesap and local favorite Virginia Beauty.

Trubey, her brother Bill Carson and his wife Judy Carson started the nonprofit Altapass Foundation, Inc., in 2002 as an offshoot of their commercial orchard. The foundation hosts events with folk artists, naturalists and mountain musicians. It also preserves wetlands and supports butterfly gardens full of milkweed to nourish monarchs.

Learn more at altapassorchard.org, or read the 2003 story in The Appalachian Voice at appvoices.org/2003-altapass. — *By Christine Dudley*

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Vineyards in Appalachia Move Toward Sustainability

By Christine Dudley

From the vine to the bottle, many vineyards and wineries in Appalachia have implemented sustainable practices or gone completely organic.

The climate throughout the region is challenging for growing grapes, much less doing so sustainably. Fall and spring frosts and relatively high rainfall and humidity are not conducive to wine grape growing, according to David Lockwood, a plant sciences professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

The European varieties, *Vitis vinifera,* need "Goldilocks" sites. The elevation cannot be too high because it would get too cold, but they must be high enough for good air drainage. High humidity in the vines leads to fungal diseases like powdery mildew and black rot. Soils need good internal and surface water drainage, because "grapes will not tolerate wet feet," Lockwood says. Most vintners say *Vitis vinifera* cannot be grown in Appalachia without synthetic sprays.

Because of concerns over synthetic fungicides and pesticides, many vineyards are opting for more resistant grape varieties. Hybrids of native North American grapes and Vitis vinifera withstand the Appalachian climate while capturing the aroma and flavor of European wines.

Organic-certified Carolina Heritage Vineyard and Winery in Elkin, N.C., grows Cornell University hybrids like Traminette, a white variety, and Arandell, a disease-resistant red. To keep diseases like powdery mildew at bay, Carolina Heritage uses neem oil and an eco-friendly spray called OxiDate to suppress fungus. These treatments don't work as well as conventional ones but are less harsh on the vines, according to Carolina Heritage co-owner Patricia Colwell.

Because of its 2,600-foot elevation and rough winters, Daniel Vineyards in Crab Orchard, W.Va., grows cold-resistant Frontenac — a University of Minnesota Cabernet hybrid — and Esprit, which can survive temperatures as low as -35 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the vineyard's event coordinator Chad Fox.

Pests also make sustainable and organic grape growing difficult. To keep Japanese beetles from consuming their young vines, Carolina Heritage used a kaolin clay coating on the leaves, which allows photosynthesis while stopping the beetles from eating the leaves. After two or three years, Colwell wanted to find a cheaper and less time-consuming solution.

"One of the things you learn when you are organic is you learn to think like nature," Colwell says. "Nature's got to have another answer or there wouldn't be a leaf left on the planet."

Colwell started raising guinea fowl, which she describes as "really noisy and stupid birds," but they love Japanese beetles. The fowl did not eliminate the beetles completely, but it ultimately worked out as the grapevines matured. When there are too many leaves, the grapes do not get enough sunlight to ripen well. A few Japanese beetles eat some leaves, keeping the grapes exposed to sunlight.

A view of the vines and ponds at Daniel Vineyards, and a cluster of the white grape variety Espirit. Photos courtesy of Daniel Vineyards

At Daniel Vineyards, rose bushes grow along the edge of the trellis and act as a warning system that helps limit pesticide use to times when it is most vital. Fox explains that when the bugs start attacking the rose bushes, they know they need to spray the grapes.

To reduce the need for pesticides at DuCard Vineyards in Etlan, Va., owner Scott Harliff said they apply strips of pheromones among the vines to disrupt insect mating. The female scent among the vines overwhelms the males and prevents them from finding mates.

At McRitchie Vineyard and Cidery in Thurmond, N.C., Sean McRitchie follows the Oregon standard for integrated pest management, which lists permitted chemicals and the number of times they can be used. For example, the standards only allow growers to spray Roundup, which contains glyphosate, twice per season at a 1 percent solution. McRitchie also uses sulfur and copper sprays for pest control.

The International Agency for Re-

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Local Ingredients, Local Spirits

By Sam Kepple

Appalachia has a long-standing tradition of home-brewing and moonshine-making. Today, distilleries in the region are taking the initiative to craft creative products that pay tribute to their heritage with ingredients sourced from local growers.

In North Carolina, two such distilleries have a particularly unique approach. Eda Rhyne Distillery in Asheville produces three herbal spirits inspired by and fashioned from the flavors of regional plants and medicinals, such as wildflower and black walnuts. Eda Rhyne locally sources heirloom corn and grains, and botanicals used in their products are organically harvested and grown either by owner Rett Murphy or wild-harvested in the surrounding mountains.

Meanwhile in Wilkesboro, N.C., Copper Barrel Distillery makes moonshine in multiple flavors. Founder Buck Nance designed and created the first legal steam-injected distillation system, which Copper Barrel uses to produce their spirits. Copper Barrel also sources ingredients such as rye and corn from North Carolina farms and mills.

Ragged Branch Distillery in Charlottesville, Va., grows corn for their products on leased land at Pounding Branch Farm. They then add locally sourced wheat or rye to create their two Virginia straight bourbons. Hopping over to Jonesborough, Tenn., Tennessee Hills Distillery produces 13 spirits of a wide variety, from gin and vodka to all kinds of flavored rums. The motto of Tennessee Hills is "Embracing Heritage," a sentiment that they express through exclusively using locally grown yellow dent corn and barley.

Photo courtesy of Ragged Branch

Moving further north to Ripley, W.Va., Appalachian Distillery produces sour mash moonshine, whiskey and bourbon in their 10,000-square-foot facility. Appalachian Distillery states that from corn stalk to bottle, their product is 100 percent made in West Virginia. The company prides itself on mashing, fermenting, distilling and bottling their products all on-site. In Maxwelton, W.Va., Smooth Ambler Spirits uses locally sourced grain to make their whiskeys.

Jumping over to Kentucky, the birthplace of bourbon, Wilderness Trail Distillery in Danville, Ky., uses rye from a local farm to craft their Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey. Kentucky Mist uses Appalachian fruits such as apples and wild blackberries to help craft and flavor their spirits. Based in Whitesburg, Ky., Kentucky Mist also sells its products in Lexington, Ky., and Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Tastings and tours are offered at each of these locations. To learn more about the distillery of your fancy, visit their website or give them a call! ◆

Taking on TVA

Continued from center

with what they wanted to do," says Troy. "And that included coal-fired plants, the nuclear industry, etc."

In the present day, Troy states that TVA could experiment with renewable sources instead of doubling down on fossil fuels.

Planning for the Future

In June 2019, TVA announced a nearly 300-page document called an integrated resource plan outlining how the monopoly utility plans to generate and transmit power through 2038. TVA has released these long-range plans to the public three times; in 1995, 2011 and 2015.

TVA's basic scenario projects a moderate decrease in coal over that time period, while ramping up natural gas usage to take its place. The utility predicts a near-zero increase in energy efficiency measures with a sluggish gain in renewable sources over the 20-year period.

Stephen Smith, executive director of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, an environmental and consumer rights advocacy organization, says that he was "underwhelmed and disappointed" by TVA's latest plan. Smith and other critics state that TVA did not give near enough attention to renewables or energy efficiency measures.

"This is by far the worst as far as transparency and meaningful public debate," says Smith. "They pretty much ignored public comment from us and others."

Smith points out TVA's claim that there were comments both for and against coal plant retirements — but only three of the 1,200 comments TVA received called for continued operation of coal and gas power plants.

"TVA is not really interested in meaningful public comment, what they want to do is just create the cover to say, 'We went out and talked to our customers, and they didn't agree on stuff so we're going to do whatever we want,'" says Smith.

Additionally, Smith criticizes the utility for laying out a large, misleading range of new potential renewable projects that might never get developed.

But Smith's main criticism centers around TVA's statements on energy efficiency, which the utility claims will be "up to 1,800 megawatts by 2028 and 2,200 megawatts by 2038." Smith explains that since the plan does not establish a minimum amount of energy efficiency measures, TVA could easily implement none. He notes that the monopoly utility has dramatically cut their budget for energy efficiency in recent years.

"By ignoring energy efficiency, what TVA's doing is they're locking their customers in to a future of higher bills," he continues. "This is particularly bad for low- and moderate-income folks who may not have the resources to buy a modern refrigerator or modern air conditioning system."

Smith argues that TVA's plan should include much more renewable power generation and should treat energy efficiency as another resource just as they do with coal and natural gas. Beyond that, he sees a need for major systemic changes at TVA, especially the board. To accomplish this, Smith says that it is critically important for the general public to become more involved in their electric utility.

"It is especially the responsibility of citizens in the Tennessee Valley to be engaged in this because the lack of engagement leads to policies like what we're seeing, where a select few industries get preferred rates and get the benefits of lower-priced fuel," he says.

Energy Democracy Tour

Throughout August, several community organizations including Appalachian Voices will be traveling throughout TVA's service area to provoke discussion about the history and impacts of the monopoly utility's energy system, governance and decision making. Organizers of the tour aim to compile ideas from communities about how to address problems with TVA.

"In the Tennessee Valley, our 'public' power often feels no different than if we received an electric bill from a private utility," says Appalachian Voices' Tennessee Field Coordinator Brianna Knisley. "When big decisions are made about our energy, community voices get sidelined by outside decision makers." ◆

To learn more about the Energy Democracy Tour, see page 26 and visit EnergyDemocracyYall.org

Vineyards

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search on Cancer announced in 2015 that glyphosate is probably carcinogenic. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said in an April press release that glyphosate is not a risk to public health and is not carcinogenic when used according to the label — but McRitchie wants to be cautious.

"I want to drink my own wine and not be worried, and I want my kids to be able to walk around the vineyard," McRitchie says.

Beyond pest management, some regional wineries have found other ways to be sustainable. DuCard uses bottles that are 20 percent lighter than average to decrease fuel costs. The solar panels on their buildings offset 50 percent or more of their total electricity usage and power an electric-vehicle charging station that is free for customers. DuCard processes winery wastewater with an artificial wetland system that uses plants to filter out sugars and other matter.

McRitchie purifies water using an ozone machine that injects another particle of oxygen into the water to kill bacteria. They heat up the ozonated water and use the steam to clean their tanks. Using purified steam prevents them from having to use chemicals like bleach or iodine to clean their equipment.

Carolina Heritage maintains a pollinator-friendly wildflower habitat behind one of their fields. Pollinators help the wildflowers thrive and vice versa, which helps promote beneficial insects such as spiders. And Daniel Vineyards has a 100 percent gravity-fed irrigation system that cuts down on electricity use.

Although hundreds of vineyards now inhabit the Appalachian region, local restaurants rarely carry local wines, according to Appalachian State University English professor Jessie Blackburn, who researched the topic for her upcoming book, Appalachian Terroir: A Rhetorical Approach to New Landscapes. Menus often tout local food and beer, but only have Californian or European wines.

Blackburn suspects this is because people do not expect good-quality wine from a region beset by negative national stereotypes. She expresses hope that Appalachia will replace extractive and environmentally destructive industries with farms and vineyards, and that more sustainable and organic vineyards will distinguish the region.

"We're reinventing ourselves here as a wine destination," Blackburn says. ◆

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Hiking the Highlands

Summiting Grandfather Mountain

By Molly Moore

Approaching by foot or car from any angle, the jagged contour and rocky peaks of Grandfather Mountain are distinct.

Although the landmark mountain was beset by intensive logging from 1916 through the 1930s, it is now remarkably well-conserved. The land falls under the purview of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Pisgah National Forest, Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, Grandfather Mountain State Park and private land trusts.

The Profile Trail begins on the mountain's western slope at the state park. Its well-earned reputation as a classic North Carolina High Country hike stems from the trail's sweeping views, its route through a wide range of natural communities and a memorably strenuous ascent.

With roughly 2,000 feet of elevation gain from the trailhead to Calloway Peak, it is typically 10 to 20 degrees cooler at the top than at the mountain's base. On a hot summer day, hikers are rewarded with cooler air and refreshing breezes on the ridgeline.

The journey starts at an access parking area constructed in 2017 where hikers can fill out a required free permit. Visitors begin by following a relatively flat footpath that winds through rhododendron thickets and fern-laden cove forest along Grandfather's base.

Eventually, the trail draws alongside and then crosses the Watauga River, which parallels N.C. Highway 105. The Watauga is narrow and lively here, providing a pleasant alternative to the sound of the road beyond. Unless water levels are unusually high, the crossing should be simple. After passing by large boulders flanking the river, the trail turns up into the forest, gradually gaining in elevation as it passes under a hardwood canopy.

Hikers reach Foscoe View, the first notable overlook, at 2.2 miles. A bench offers respite while a sign points out the peaks beyond the community of Foscoe in the foreground. At this point, the upward climb becomes more pronounced, mounting stone steps and switchbacks toward a charming trailside campsite. Campers in Grandfather Mountain State Park must reserve sites in advance, pay a fee and fill out an on-site permit at the trailhead.

Midway up the trail, hikers can see the cliffside profile, above, that gave Grandfather Mountain its name. Photo by Maeve Gould. At left, stone steps pave part of the hike. Photo by Jimmy Davidson

The subtle changes in ecosystem become more evident beyond the campsite, as more red spruce, yellow birch and mountain maple appear and the forest grows damper, with lush beds of moss clinging to stones and logs. But the footpath is not as wet as its surroundings; this section's well-built stone trail was constructed in the late '80s by the private Grandfather Mountain attraction. Stay on the path to protect endangered plants nearby.

At 2.7 miles, a sign on the right points to a gap in the trees and the striking Profile View, a cliff face that resembles the side view of an older man's face. This feature is rumored to be the true reason behind Grandfather Mountain's name.

The trail grows steeper as it courses through a high-elevation forest of red spruce and Fraser fir. At 3.2 miles, the piped Shanty Spring is the last source of running water before the summit, and is a good place to take a break and dip bandanas in the water to cool off.

Beyond Shanty Springs, hikers navigate an arduous incline strewn with rocks and roots for a third of a mile. The Profile Trail levels out for a stretch, and then, almost unexpectedly, ends at its junction with the blue-blazed Grandfather Trail. This area is often thick with summer wildflowers, which usually bloom a few weeks later than their valley counterparts.

Turn right onto the Grandfather Trail and you'll experience the most rugged section of the mountain, climbing ladders and walking along exposed cliffs to pass landmarks such as Indian House Cave, Attic Window Peak and MacRae Peak. Follow this path roughly two miles to reach the Swinging Bridge maintained by Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation. Hiking into the travel attraction and conservation education center is free, but driving in costs $22 for adults. You can opt to park a car here to facilitate a one-way trip, or hike in and out.

Alternatively, turn left onto Grandfather Trail and hike 0.4 miles toward Calloway Peak. This area is home to rare Fraser-fir-dominant forest that is only found in Western North Carolina, East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia on a handful of mountains over 5,500 feet, according to Grandfather State Park Ranger Luke Appling.

Hikers scale three short wooden ladders to reach Calloway Peak at 5,964 feet. This could mark the hike's terminus — or hikers can continue to the other side of the mountain alongside the Blue Ridge Parkway by descending on the challenging Daniel Boone Scout Trail.

In clear weather, you can lounge on the flat rocks at Calloway Peak and gaze southeast toward the Blue Ridge Parkway and Pisgah National Forest — you'll likely spot raptors riding the thermals below. ◆

Profile Trail

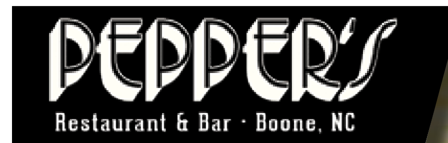
LENGTH: Profile Trail is 3.6 miles one way; taking Grandfather Trail to Calloway Peak adds 0.4 miles each way.

DIFFICULTY: Strenuous

BE PREPARED: Wear sturdy footwear. Temperatures drop sharply from base to summit and precipitation is common; bring rain gear. Dogs may have difficulty with the ladders on Grandfather Trail. Bring a flashlight in case your hike takes longer than intended. In winter, expect snow and ice even if there is none in the valley.

DIRECTIONS: From Boone, N.C., take N.C. Hwy 105 south 11.3 miles; turn left on The Glens Blvd for .7 miles to parking area.

CONTACT: (828) 963-9522 or ncparks.gov/grandfather-mountain-state-park



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Appalachia's Political Landscape

The Trump Administration's Environmental Record: A partial summary

By Kelsey Stratman

On July 8, President Donald Trump claimed responsibility for environmental strides in a speech at the Washington Monument, despite the dozens of environmental protections he has cut since taking office.

In fact, the Trump administration has cut so many regulations that in early June seven former leaders of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency representing both Democratic and Republican presidencies testified together to the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee, expressing concerns about the president's changes to environmental policy.

While Trump's weakening of environmental protections varies in form and impact, there are many possible large-scale ramifications, including impacts to the world's climate.

In May, the New York Times reported that the Trump-appointed head of the U.S. Geological Survey, James Reilly, had ordered the agency not to predict climate change impacts past 2040 or include worst-case scenarios in certain reports. The administration is also attempting to diminish the Clean Car standards, which were on track to halve global warming pollution from car emissions by 2025. And, among other measures to halt climate action, the president ignored current international consensus about solving the climate crisis with his June 2017 announcement that the United States would withdraw from the Paris climate agreement.

Climate change threatens Appalachia with severe rainfall, storms, drought, forest fires and rising temperatures, among other unforeseen impacts. The area also stands to suffer from increased damages to air and water due to regulatory changes that affect the fossil fuel industry.

On June 19, the EPA issued its final Affordable Clean Energy rule, which replaces the Obama-era Clean Power Plan. While the Clean Power Plan had set a federal limit on emissions from coal-fired power plants, under the Affordable Clean Energy rule, states can ignore the EPA regulations and set their own limits for power plant emissions. An April study published in the journal Environmental Research Letters indicated this rule could lead to 28 percent more emissions from power plants by 2030 than if there was no comparable policy.

Since taking office, the Trump administration has also weakened regulations on coal ash storage, ended a proposal that would have required mines to prove they had the resources to clean future pollution, and cancelled a requirement that oil and gas companies have to report methane emissions. In January 2018, the Bureau of Land Management issued a memorandum to expedite oil and gas drilling on public land and cease use of an Obama-era system designed to resolve issues regarding drilling for fossil fuels on sensitive land, including national parks.

In April 2019, Trump issued an executive order intended to make it harder for states to stop oil and gas pipelines. Among other provisions, the executive order asks the EPA to revise a section of the Clean Water Act in order to expedite the permitting process for pipelines.

Trump also claimed in the July speech that his administration has prioritized clean air, citing a 74 percent decrease in air pollution since 1970. Most of this decline occurred under previous administrations, however, and the independent research organization Rhodium Group found that carbon dioxide emissions rose "sharply" in 2018.

In addition to the actions that will likely increase emission levels of greenhouse gases, the administration has implemented a bevy of other changes that could harm air quality. In June 2018, the EPA proposed a review of the way the agency calculates the costs and benefits of regulations, with former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt stating in a press release that "the previous administration inflated the benefits and underestimated the costs of its regulations." Changing these calculations could result in lower estimates of the positive health effects of reduced air pollution, for instance, weakening the case for strengthening emission standards. Also in 2018, the EPA disbanded its Particulate Matter Review Panel, which helped to determine levels of pollutants that are safe to breathe.

Similarly, the president's speech hailed the importance of water quality. "We want crystal-clean water, and that's what we're doing and that's why we're working so hard," Trump said.

But he left out his administration's proposal to remove protections for 51 percent of the United States' wetlands and 18 percent of its streams by modifying the Clean Water Act's jurisdiction. His administration has also delayed EPA regulations for toxic runoff from power plants and undone a rule limiting the amount of debris coal companies are allowed to dump into waterways.

These rollbacks of air and water quality protections pose a threat to natural habitats, and other regulatory changes directly impact wildlife. In July 2018, the administration began a process to revise the Endangered Species Act. The proposed changes would make the economic impact of regulations a larger part of the decision-making calculus when deciding if and how to protect endangered species. These changes could impact Appalachia, home to some of the most biodiverse and already-threatened landscapes in the country.

These changes and others increase companies' license to pollute by lowering emission standards, delaying updates or weakening regulators' ability to enforce environmental rules. Many of these environmental protections are the result of years of citizen organizing. The current administration has stalled or reversed dozens of these regulations, and there is little reason to believe the trend will change. ◆

Appalachia's Environmental Votetracker

116TH CONGRESS: Below are recent congressional bills and amendments on environmental issues and how central and southern Appalachian representatives voted. To see other recent votes, or for congressional representatives outside of the five-state area, visit congress.gov. 🍃 =pro-environment vote ✗ =anti-environment vote 0 =no vote

HOUSE	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	T. Burchett (R) TN-02	Fleischman (R) TN-03	S. Desjarlais (R) TN-04	V. Foxx (R) NC-05	P. McHenry (R) NC-10	M. Meadows (R) NC-11	D.Riggleman (R) VA-05	B. Cline (R) VA-06	M. Griffith (R) VA-09	D. McKinley (R) WV-01	A. Mooney (R) WV-02	C. Miller (R) WV-03
H. Roll Call 395, an amendment to H.R. 3055, would prohibit spending funds to weaken existing EPA regulations on mercury and air toxics emitted by power plants. AYES 253 NOES 177 NV 8 … PASSED	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	🍃	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
H.R. 2740, a funding bill for several departments, would, among other provisions, increase resources for solar power, energy efficiency, and scientific research to address climate change. AYES 226 NOES 203 NV 3 … PASSED	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

SENATE	M. McConnell (R)	R. Paul (R)	M. Blackburn (R)	L. Alexander (R)	R. Burr (R)	T. Tillis (R)	T. Kaine (D)	M. Warner (D)	J. Manchin (D)	S. M. Capito (R)
S. Roll Call 203, Confirmation of Peter Wright as Asst. Administrator of the U.S. EPA Office of Solid Waste, approved the president's nomination of the former Dow Chemical Co. lawyer to lead the cleanup of brownfields and Superfund sites. AYES 52 NOES 38 NV 10 … PASSED	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	🍃	🍃	0	✗

Miners Take Black Lung Demands to D.C.

Approximately 150 coal miners, widows and their loved ones traveled by bus from across Appalachia to Washington, D.C., to demand that Congress reinstate the tax rate that supports the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund and extend that rate for 10 years.

For miners suffering from the severe health effects of black lung disease, making the trip in the July heat was a challenge. In the capitol, the delegation met with 22 congressional offices and held a roundtable discussion that included four U.S. senators, miners and the president of the United Mine Workers of America. Miners and miners' widows shared powerful testimony about the debilitating effects of the disease and the frustrating process required to access modest medical and living benefits.

Black lung disease is caused by repeated exposure to coal and silica dust, and rates of the deadly disease have hit a 25-year high in Appalachian coal mining states. The Black Lung Disability Trust Fund helps support coal miners and their surviving dependents in cases where the miners' employer has gone bankrupt or has been found not responsible. Several coal companies have recently declared bankruptcy, highlighting the importance of this fund — but its solvency is in jeopardy.

The trust fund is supported by a small excise tax paid by companies per ton of coal sold domestically, at a rate that was unchanged for more than three decades. But Congress failed to extend the tax rate before the end of 2018, and it has now been cut by more than half. A May 2018 Government Accountability Office report projects that, at the slashed tax rate, the fund's revenue will be unable to cover beneficiary payments and administrative costs as soon as 2020.

The reception in Congress was mixed. Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) hosted the roundtable discussion and introduced the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act, S.2205, which would help miners access benefits and reinstate cost-of-living increases. And Rep. Robert Scott (D-VA) introduced H.R. 3876 to restore and extend the excise tax to support the benefits fund.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) met with miners for a couple minutes and offered assurances that benefits would not be cut, but did not commit to restoring the tax.

"We rode up here for 10 hours by bus to get some answers from him because he represents our state," George Massey, a miner from Harlan County, Ky., told Reuters. "For him to come in for just two minutes was a low-down shame."

While in Washington, D.C., the miners also urged the Mine Safety and Health Administration to enact a rule to lower the amount of silica miners can be exposed to in an effort to prevent the spread of this incurable, but preventable, disease.

The miners were joined by numerous organizations including chapters of the Black Lung Association, Appalachian Citizens Law Center, BlueGreen Alliance, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, The Alliance for Appalachia and Appalachian Voices, the nonprofit group that publishes this newspaper. *— By Molly Moore*

Clarence Whisenhunt and David Mullins with David's nephew Holden Hunnicutt were among the delegation that traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for fair policies for miners with black lung disease. Photo by Marcy Tate

Blackjewel and Revelation Energy Coal Bankruptcy Raises Concerns for Workers and Mine Cleanup

On July 1, coal companies Blackjewel and Revelation Energy announced they were entering Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The announcement is one in a long string of bankruptcies plaguing the coal industry, though this bankruptcy is unfolding differently than others — mines shut down immediately, workers had paychecks retroactively withdrawn from accounts, and Jeff Hoops, the founder and leader of the companies, was forced out within days.

The companies employed about 500 miners in Virginia, about 600 in Kentucky, about 30 in West Virginia, and none in Tennessee during 2018, according to the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration. They also employed about 700 miners at two large Wyoming mines that were passed to Hoops following the Alpha Natural Resources bankruptcy restructuring in 2015.

It's difficult to assess the potential impact of this bankruptcy on mine reclamation in the region. Staff at Appalachian Voices, the nonprofit organization that publishes this newspaper, have determined that the companies are responsible for roughly 13,000 acres of unreclaimed mine land in Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia, a number that is likely to rise as the analysis continues. In all three states, taxpayers could potentially be on the hook for mine cleanup costs if the companies cannot find another buyer for the properties.

Later in July, Blackhawk Mining filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The company operates 10 mining complexes in Kentucky, West Virginia and Indiana.

Read more on the Appalachian Voices blog at appvoices.org/blackjewel-blog *— By Erin Savage*

Trump Administration Charged with Weakening Endangered Species Protections to Favor Coal

On May 10, environmental groups issued a formal notice of intent to sue the U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of West Virginia for violations of the federal Endangered Species Act. At press time, no action had occurred.

According to the Center for Biological Diversity, the conservation group leading the lawsuit, records obtained through the Freedom of Information Act reveal West Virginia officials appealed to the Trump administration to weaken protections for the endangered Guyandotte River and Big Sandy crayfish. The officials claimed regulations to protect the species were harming the coal industry.

Interference from a high-level U.S. Department of Interior official led to West Virginia issuing mining permits in crayfish habitat, thus allowing the risk of mine sediment and pollution in violation of the Endangered Species Act.

At the time, the Fish and Wildlife Service was still developing its own guidance to protect the crayfish. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, "the public records reveal extensive efforts by Trump administration appointees to prevent the Fish and Wildlife Service from following science and doing what is needed to protect the crayfish."

The center was joined on the May 2019 action by Appalachian Mountain Advocates, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, the Sierra Club's West Virginia Chapter and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. *— By Hannah McAlister*

Competitive Electric Cooperative Election in Virginia

The annual board of directors election at Rappahannock Electric Cooperative in Virginia is unusually competitive this July as three reform candidates challenge incumbent board members for their seats.

The challengers are supported by Repower REC, a group of member-owners that disagree with some of the board's decisions and policies. The reform candidates are pledging to revise the co-op's election process, open board meetings to the public and increase the amount of renewable energy the co-op uses.

Member-owners can vote online, submit a mail-in ballot or vote in person at the Aug. 22 annual meeting.

Southwest Virginia Communities Designated as Solar-friendly

On July 25, eight Southwest Virginia communities achieved designation under the national SolSmart program for encouraging the growth of local solar energy markets.

These municipalities were each awarded the designation for taking local action to reduce the time and expense required to install solar energy systems. For example, Wise County updated their zoning ordinance so that solar installations don't require special permits or hearings.

Wise County achieved SolSmart Silver, while the following communities achieved SolSmart Bronze: Dickenson County, Lee County, City of Norton, Russell County, Scott County, Town of St. Paul, and Tazewell County. These are the first communities in Central Appalachia to have applied for and received the SolSmart designation.

"Southwest Virginia prides itself on the production of energy, and this is just a different way of continuing the energy production," said Lou Wallace, a member of the Russell County Board of Supervisors. "Many manufacturing companies are looking for communities and counties who are forward-thinking, and having this designation just solidifies our commitment to our future."

Already, at least seven large-scale solar projects totaling more than 4 megawatts are expected to begin construction by the end of 2019. The SolSmart designation will help facilitate additional residential, commercial, and utility-scale level solar projects in these communities.

SolSmart is led by The Solar Foundation and the International City/County Management Association and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office. *— By Chelsea Barnes*

Representatives of the communities receiving SolSmart designation at the awards ceremony. Photo: Chelsea Barnes

Congressional Support for RECLAIM Act Grows

In June, advocates for coal mine reclamation traveled to Washington, D.C., to urge their legislators to support the RECLAIM Act, a bipartisan bill to accelerate the clean-up of abandoned coal mines and boost economic opportunities in areas historically dependent on coal mining.

Those in the nation's capitol included local people from communities affected by abandoned mines as well as staff from multiple nonprofit groups including Appalachian Voices, the organization that produces this newspaper.

In a couple of days, the team met with 45 offices, and in the month following their visit, the number of RECLAIM Act co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives grew from 39 to 57. A version of the bill in the Senate has 7 co-sponsors.

The RECLAIM Act, H.R. 2156, would accelerate the spending of $1 billion that is currently sitting in the federal abandoned mine cleanup fund. The funds would be disbursed to states and tribes over five years starting in 2020. The money would go to abandoned mine cleanup that ties in to economic development projects with local support. These funds come from a tax on coal production that is specifically designated for reclaiming the millions of acres damaged by mines that were abandoned before 1977.

At a press conference in Washington, D.C., Kentucky State Rep. Angie Hatton said that passing the RECLAIM Act is an urgent issue for her struggling district in the eastern part of the state.

"We are pleading at this time for Mitch McConnell to join this fight for us, to be our voice and to move this legislation along," Hatton said.

The bill's legislative backers and other RECLAIM supporters are urging Congress to hold a full floor vote soon. *— By Molly Moore*

W.V. Landowners Win Case Against Fracking Company

On June 3, the West Virginia Supreme Court unanimously ruled that mineral companies must obtain express permission from the surface owners to use their land to reach gas reserves under neighboring properties.

The decision upheld a 2017 Doddridge County Circuit Court ruling against EQT Corporation siding with two Doddridge County residents, Beth Crowder and David Wentz, who had sued the gas company over trespassing on their property to drill. The residents were awarded $190,000 in damages.

EQT appealed that decision to the West Virginia Supreme Court and oral arguments were heard in March.

This ruling counteracts the longstanding property rights laws that state mineral owners may do whatever is "reasonably necessary" to extract natural gas from the ground, regardless of land ownership, according to the Charleston Gazette-Mail. *— By Hannah McAlister*

Fifteen Coal Facilities Face Pollution Lawsuit

On June 4, environmental groups including Appalachian Voices, the publisher of this newspaper, announced their intent to sue the parent companies of 15 coal facilities and one chloride plant for alleged violations of the Clean Water Act and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act.

The West Virginia and Pennsylvania facilities include mines, preparation and processing facilities and a power plant. Murray Energy's Harrison County Coal Mine in West Virginia, for example, is cited for discharging 220 times its permitted limit of aluminum into tributaries of the West Fork and Ohio rivers.

"After unsuccessfully objecting to the original permitting of these and similar mines, neighbors and citizens groups are left to seek recourse through legal remedies to achieve necessary clean-up of polluting discharges," Cindy Rank of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, one of the groups involved, said in a press statement.

These data were provided to state and federal regulators by the facilities. The groups sent "notice of intent to sue" letters to the parent companies, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Citizens challenging the enforcement of the Clean Water Act and federal surface mining law must first send "notice of intent" letters that initiate a 60-day window for the agencies to address the problem before a lawsuit can be filed. No action had occurred by press time on July 26, and the 60-day period was set to expire August 3. The groups are legally represented by nonprofit law firms Appalachian Mountain Advocates and Public Justice. *— By Molly Moore*

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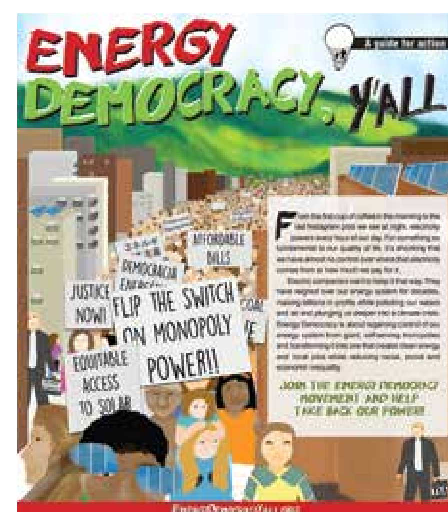
Taking Energy Democracy to the People Through Tours

From the first cup of coffee in the morning to the last Instagram post we see at night, electricity powers every hour of our day. For something so fundamental to our quality of life, it's shocking that we have almost no control over where that electricity comes from or how much we pay for it.

That's why Appalachian Voices, along with partner organizations and citizens concerned about lack of control, is organizing Energy Democracy tours in Virginia, North Carolina, and the Tennessee Valley to educate people on how to take back their electric system.



Representatives from the Energy Justice NC Coalition participated in the energy democracy tour kickoff in Asheville, N.C., on July 22. Photo by Jean Su, Center for Biological Diversity
At right, the group also launched the EnergyDemocracyYall.org website and accompanying handout to educate people about the issue and promote tour dates.

North Carolina

On July 22, the Energy Justice North Carolina coalition launched the Energy Justice Tour with a family-friendly event in Asheville to educate locals and involve them in the community and statewide movements for energy justice. Organizations including Community Roots, which is working on an Energy Democracy ballot initiative to be voted on by the city of Asheville, co-hosted the event. Energy Justice NC is comprised of over a dozen organizations, including Appalachian Voices, that seek to end the Duke Energy monopoly so that local communities can shape their energy system. Future tour stops are being scheduled in Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Charlotte and beyond.

Virginia

In Virginia, Dominion Energy is preventing progress by blocking residential solar panels and other private energy generation from entering the grid, continuing to invest in fossil fuels and buying political influence. States with competitive energy markets saw electricity rates decrease from 2008 to 2017, while the average rate in Virginia increased by more than 16 percent. The Energy Democracy tour in Virginia is concerned with providing energy choice for residents of the commonwealth.

Tennessee Valley

The Energy Democracy tour in Tennessee and Alabama is underway and has more than 10 events planned throughout the Tennessee Valley. This tour will provide an opportunity for community members to examine the history and impacts of the Tennessee Valley Authority's energy system and create a vision for the future. Attendees will learn about TVA governance and decision-making and about reform efforts happening locally. As of press time, an Aug. 3 kickoff was scheduled for Memphis, Tenn., with events planned in Knoxville, Nashville, and LaFollette, Tenn., as well as Hunsville, Ala., and Bowling Green, Ky.

Visit EnergyDemocracyYall.org to learn more and find information on specific events in each area.

Calling on Legislators for Action in Washington, D.C.

Black lung disease is an epidemic in our region, one that is preventable with proper worker protections. From July 22 to 24, we joined a delegation of over 150 miners, widows and families and other groups from the region on a historic trip to Washington, D.C., to ask members of Congress to restore funding to the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund and take steps to stem the preventable surge in this fatal disease. Read more on page 24.

And in June, we traveled to the capitol alongside other organizations and people who live in areas troubled by abandoned mines to ask legislators to co-sponsor the RECLAIM Act, H.R. 2156. The bill would fast-track reclamation of abandoned mines at sites that have economic development potential, cleaning damaged land and water, employing local workers and giving new projects a jump-start. Read more on page 25.

Welcome Josh and Tyler!

Appalachian Voices would like to welcome the two newest members to our team, Josh McClenney and Tyler Hughes!

Serving as the North Carolina Field Coordinator for our Energy Democracy Program, Josh will be working to end monopoly utility control over our power system. He is a Piedmont North Carolina native and earned degrees in American history and communications studies from UNC Chapel Hill as well as a masters in Appalachian Studies from Appalachian State University. A lover of sports (Go Heels!), live music and baking, Josh is looking forward to working with communities and organizations across the state.

And as our New Economy Field Coordinator, Tyler is dedicated to seeing the Appalachian region become a place where everyone can reach their full potential. Hailing from Big Stone Gap in Southwest Virginia, Tyler graduated with a B.A. in Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies from East Tennessee State University. During his free time he enjoys camping, square dancing and spending time with his pet rabbit, Mabry.

Summer of Sound

Your membership matters! Join Appalachian Voices in August and you could win tickets to Bristol Rhythm and Roots Music Festival or Carolina Ramble and Reunion! We will also be hosting a special gift drawing for existing members during the month of September.

AppVoices.org/summer-of-sound

Solar Strides in Southwest Virginia

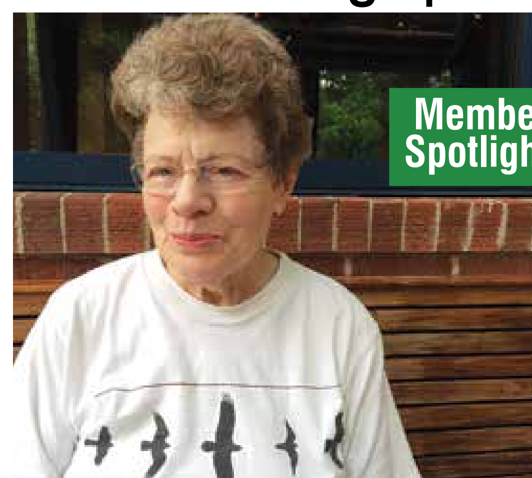
On July 25, we celebrated as eight Southwest Virginia municipalities received SolSmart designations that recognize their work to make it faster, easier and more affordable for residents and businesses to go solar. Read more on page 25.

Additionally, the Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia, which includes Appalachian Voices, and other project partners received new funding from GO Virginia Region One to identify pathways for large-scale investment and job growth for solar manufacturing and utility-scale solar development. We're excited to participate and help bring the benefits of solar power to Southwest Virginia.

Inside Appalachian Voices

Vesta Jean Lenhart: A lifelong spirit of preservation

By Hannah McAlister



There's no doubt in Vesta Jean Lenhart's mind that she inherited her desire to preserve mountains from the destruction she saw as a child.

"Early on as a small child, I witnessed the devastating effects of coal on the people and the land," says Vesta Jean.

Vesta Jean grew up on a farm in the 1930s with her parents and two older siblings in Lenarue, a coal town in Harlan County, Ky. Her father, Albert Morris, was a logger for the coal mines.

"My parents embodied the mountaineer spirit," says Vesta Jean, "I have a lot of love and admiration for them because they preserved the Lenarue valley, which kept coal from being dumped on the land, for many, many decades."

In the early 1970s, Albert died tragically after being hit by a coal train that failed to blow its horn on a curve. Vesta Jean's mother, Laura, continued to protect their land from development until the late 1980s, when the Kentucky Department of Transportation condemned the area to construct a bridge for State Route 421.

"To the family that was a rather disastrous thing," says Vesta Jean. "But I've come to accept it and in some ways, the bridge may have saved the valley. It will never be developed in another way."

"I feel that coal has desecrated the land (in Kentucky)," says Vesta Jean. "If you go back there now, you will see the devastation. Those mountains are pretty much gone from mountaintop removal. Most of the young people have left and the ones that are left, the miners, have been broken down. Coal mining is on its way out and that is what has kept the area alive. A lot of the people are dependent on what miners get after they're retired."

Vesta Jean attended Cumberland College, which is now the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Ky. Shortly after, she moved to Washington, D.C., and worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigations as a typist. In D.C., she met her husband Donald, who also worked for the government.

Vesta Jean and Donald returned to Harlan County. There Vesta Jean taught for two years at the local high school before they moved to Maryland, where Vesta Jean went on to have a 35-year career in both elementary and secondary schools and raise a daughter.

In 1988, Vesta Jean and Donald retired to the base of Stone Mountain outside of Hendersonville, N.C. Donald passed away in 2015, and Vesta Jean preserves the acreage they shared and cares for her two rescue dogs, one of whom is named Moonshine in honor of where she grew up.

Vesta Jean also supports organizations that work towards the preservation of mountains and assist the people who live there, including Christian Appalachian Project and Appalachian Voices, the publisher of this newspaper. She has been an Appalachian Voices member since 2003.

"I really am drawn to the preservation of the environment," says Vesta Jean. "I think what is happening in the country right now is that we've kind of lost our way. So I hope that I can do my part to preserve."

Vesta Jean is hopeful that the mountain region will recover from the devastation of mountaintop removal coal mining through assistance for affected families and the development of sustainable industries.

Always the educator, Vesta Jean's bumper sticker proclaims: "Topless Mountains are Obscene."

"When I go into Hendersonville, I have had people stop me and ask what it means," she says. "There's a lot of people out there that have no idea of what has happened to the mountains."

To celebrate Vesta Jean's 90th birthday in August, friends and family contributed to Appalachian Voices in her honor.

Appalachian Voices Business League

New & Renewing Members June/July 2019

Beech Mountain Resort, Inc.
Banner Elk, N.C.,

Mast General Store
Valle Crucis, N.C.

National Park Posters
Longmont, Colo.

The Spice and Tea Exchange of Blowing Rock
Blowing Rock, N.C.

To join our Business League, visit AppVoices.org or call 877-APP-VOICE

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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Senior Energy Analyst .... Rory McIlmoil
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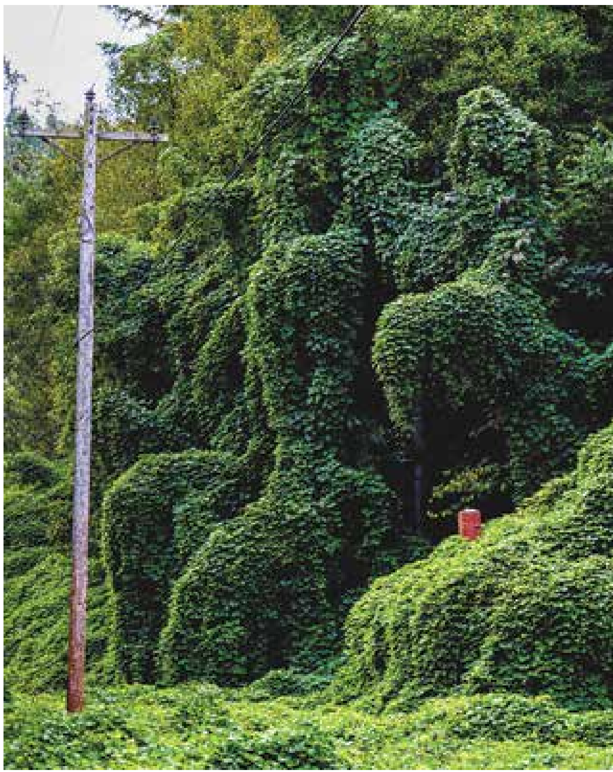

Kudzu, which can grow up to a foot a day, has overtaken this abandoned house near Watauga Lake, Tenn. Read more about the invasive vine on page 13. This image, made by James Magruder, was a finalist in the 2016 Appalachian Mountain Photography Competition's Environment category. View more of his work at magruderphotography.com

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❍ $50 ❍ $500
❍ $100 ❍ Other $_______
❍ Make me a Mountain Protector monthly donor at $_______ /month ($5 minimum)

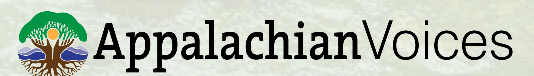
MC/VISA # ______________________________

____

Expiration date ________________ Security Code________

Signature ______________________________

Mail this completed form to:
589 West King St., Boone, NC 28607



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