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# The Appalachian VOICE

Dec. 2011 / Jan. 2012



Regional Craft Schools • The Journey of a Guitar • Cherokee Traditions

## HANDMADE HERITAGE

Regional art, music, language and culture tie us to the land and the past. Take a look at some of the folks helping to keep our traditions alive.

Guide to Woodworking • and more!

• Jackson Green Energy Park • Following the Quilt Trail • The Legend of Tom Doolley • 101

ALSO INSIDE:  Nordic Skiing on the Rebound • Coal Jobs Increase in Appalachia • The Mighty Golden Eagle

# The Appalachian VOICE



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**AppalachianVoices**  
 191 Howard Street • Boone, NC 28607  
 1-877-APP-VOICE  
 www.AppalachianVoices.org  
 voice@appvoices.org

EDITOR.....*Jamie Goodman*  
 MANAGING EDITOR.....*Brian Sewell*  
 ASSOCIATE EDITOR.....*Molly Moore*  
 DISTRIBUTION MANAGER.....*Maeve Gould*  
 GRAPHIC DESIGN ASSOCIATE.....*Melissa Shields*

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## ABOUT THE COVER

At the John C. Campbell folk school, an artisan builds a sturdy, handcrafted chair, ensuring a long life and in a living room or front porch. *Photo by Kether Weideman, John C. Campbell Folk School*



## A Note From Our Executive Director

Dear Readers,

This season, many Americans are voicing concerns that corporate power is compromising our government and that basic ideas of fairness are disappearing. I agree, and I only see one solution. We must consciously abandon our devotion to consumerism and instead become active in our democracy. As long as we are passive, apathetic and mesmerized by “keeping up with the Joneses,” we are trapped. If we want a more just world, we need to capture our moment in history and create change now.

Large international companies are literally blowing up Appalachia, destroying the ‘home places’ of hundreds of families and massively polluting ground and surface water. The only way to stop them is with the collective voice of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

During this season of giving, we at Appalachian Voices want to give you thanks for your support throughout this last year. Thanks to you, we are making great strides in the fight to protect our waterways, communities and the air we breathe in our beautiful Appalachian mountains.

If you are not already a member, please consider joining us in our efforts to protect the natural and cultural heritage of this rich and beloved region.

Wishing you good health and a wonderful start to the new year,

*Willa Mays*



photo by Chris Hornbecker

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# Skiing the Highlands

It's that time of year when devout winter lovers trade hiking boots for ski gear, water bottles for camel backs and sun hats for toboggans and wool gloves. But those who are not into strapping sliding boards onto their feet can still enjoy the challenging, gloriously vibrant days of winter. Layer up, waterproof your hiking boots, throw on a pair (or two) of your warmest socks, grab your trekking poles and join us under the frosty winter skies. We'll meet up afterwards for some tasty hot chocolate.

## Another Nordic Revolution

By Kristian Jackson

It's 5 a.m. and outside the truck, headlights reveal driving snow squalls and drifts as high as the pickup's hood. Our crawl up Roaring Creek Road near the Toe River of North Carolina comes to a sudden halt in a wall of whiteness. We abandon our attempt to dig out the beast and don skis.

Minutes later we are skiing up the Overmountain Victory Trail in search of an adventure higher up in Roan Highlands, a 20-mile group of mountain peaks straddling the border between North Carolina and Tennessee. Winter is palpable and immediate here. The wind

**The Powder Room:** Chris Curtin and John Fennell shush along the Appalachian Trail en route to The Hump Mountain. Photos by Kristian Jackson

scours its way through bare tree limbs and whips up the powdery snow, creating an atmosphere that is felt as much as seen.

We seal our zippers and pockets to keep winter out and stay moving to stave off the bone-chilling cold. Further into the Highlands we pass through a sheltered cove near 5,000 feet in elevation where the trees hang heavy with snow. We reach the open expanse beyond the trees. In calm weather, the nearby open balds of The Hump and Little Hump Mountains would



provide outstanding views, but now everything is white, threatening and loud. We turn our backs to the wind, eager to make some teleturns in the deep powder.

Telemark skiing (also known as nordic or cross-country) has been practiced in the South for decades. The style refers to both a technique and a type of ski and boots. Fixed in the front and free at the heel, the free heel allows the skier to kick and glide uphill (sometimes with the use of skins that help grip the snow) then drop a knee and perform elegant "telemark turns" to descend.

### The New Revolution

Devotees of telemark skiing have waxed and waned over the years. The style almost died out in the 1970s but experienced a resurgence in the 1980s. During that decade, the peaks of the

North Carolina High Country region were so popular that cross country ski rentals were available in several places and a company called High South Nordic Guides offered tours to Roan Mountain and telemark lessons at a nearby ski resort.

Drought and warmer winters in the 1990s and early 2000s brought another slump to the sport, until the high snowfall totals of the past few winters sparked a new telemark revolution. Downhill devotees, snowboarders and cross country traditionalists quickly rediscovered the beauty and excitement of ski touring. Now, formerly obscure pockets of powder are often covered with ski tracks as soon as a winter storm is over, and the word has spread about "secret stashes," where skiers and boarders.

New technology has also added

# EXPORTED

Top: Here, there are no lifts, no lines, no crowds, and only a fraction of the environmental impact of the ski resorts. Nordic skiers in the High Country are rewarded with solitude, unspoiled beauty, and the exhilaration of human powered fun. Inset: The High Country Nordic Association's Justin Studt finds the flow of the telemark turn in the trees.



will invariably be "snow."

Prior to the past three winters, the common refrain of regional nordic skiers was, "It was snowier back in the day." In fact, the first telemark boom in the 1980s ended when "the winters changed," according to High South Nordic Guide co-founder Jeep Barrett.

A look at weather charts from Ray'sWeather.com, a popular amateur weather website that covers the western part of North Carolina, reveals a dramatic decline in snowfall amounts since the mid-80s. Although the past three winters have brought impressive snow, the numbers show that trends

to the latest telemark revolution. In the 1980s, nordic enthusiasts sported skinny skis, leather boots, and floppy three-pin bindings. Today's backcountry skiers use technology that resembles

downhill gear and allows for more efficient touring in varied conditions.

But ask any skier about the most critical component to back country touring in the South and the answer

over the past two decades simply do not measure up to the dumps of 30 years ago.

Snow in the South, even at the highest elevations, will likely remain hit or miss. Perhaps this is what draws the attention and enthusiasm of the Southern skier: When the snow is good, it's really good, and then it's gone. However, even in low snow fall years, nordic skiers will still find enjoyable tours in the Southern highlands.

### Fun Events & More Info

The High Country Nordic Association was formed in 2010, when a group of nordic skiers met to plan a "Tele-Fest." The association is planning many activities this season, including a Film Festival, the 2nd Annual Telefest Jan. 21 at Beech Mountain, N.C., and updates on regional skiing conditions. Visit their group and page on Facebook to find ski partners and ask for tips.

To find the best backcountry spots in your area, check with local ski shops or area outdoor outfitters. If you can find it, get your hands on a copy of Randy Johnson's book *Southern Snow* to discover the vastness of our winter world.

Now go make some tracks.

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### TOURING ROAN HIGHLANDS

No southern skier should go without a tour of the Roan Highlands. Regarded as Nordic Nirvana, when the snow is right the Roan Highlands are the crown jewel for ski touring in the Southeast. The Highlands rise like a weathervane above the hills of Tennessee and catch the full force of arctic weather systems moving in from the northwest. Gale force winds howl through the evergreens, breaking branches and driving snow into massive drifts. On the balds, wind scours the open country nearly clean of snow and deposits enormous snow fields on the lee side.

Tours in the Highlands are as varied as the weather, passing through a unique combination of evergreen forests, hardwood glades and open balds. Some can

be moderate winter excursions, others can cause the most die-hard snow freaks to question their love of extreme conditions. Several classic tours begin from Carver's Gap on the Tennessee/North Carolina line:

● For a short out-and-back tour, ski along the road to Rhododendron Gardens, tour the gardens, then return. To lengthen this tour, head out the old Balsam Road, the first road on the left when heading up from Carver's Gap. This is a pleasant, quick tour with little elevation change.

■ For a more ambitious route that requires a few tele-turns, head up the road to the old Cloudland Hotel site and continue on the Cloudland Trail. After passing the first gate, check the Appalachian Trail

on your right for snow depth. If the creeks are frozen and the snow is at least 12 inches, this should work as a return route. This trail undulates along the top of the massif and climbs to its terminus at Roan High Bluff. Often the winds at the bluff can be heard well before reaching the top. After a snack at the bluff (stay in the woods and out of the wind) head back down the Cloudland Trail. This requires deep snow and a solid tele-turn.

◆ For a fast and exciting downhill from the Cloudland Hotel site, head into the spruce trees and down the Appalachian Trail. This run requires quick reflexes to handle the switchbacks and other surprises.

◆ For more experienced adventures in the Highlands, try the Roaring Creek Area. Flanked by the Yellow Mountains and the crest of the Highlands, this impressive watershed on the North Carolina side rises from the low elevations of the Toe River to the massif crest. For tours beginning on Roaring Creek Road, you will need to be prepared for skiing up and down steeper terrain, turning in trees, route finding, and self-rescue. (Note: the road to Roaring Creek is not plowed, so you may also need to ski to the trailhead). From the Overmountain Victory Trailhead, skiers can access the Appalachian Trail, Little Hump and the Hump. Look for open downhill runs on the lee sides of the fields and be prepared for brutal conditions.

# Naturalist's Notebook



## Golden Eagles Winter in Appalachia

By Molly Moore

With their deep brown bodies and gold-tinged feathery manes, golden eagles are icons of ferocity.

When Americans imagine a golden eagle diving through the air with talons outstretched, they typically pair the image with a Western backdrop. But as Appalachian researchers are quick to point out, the notion of golden eagles as strictly creatures of the West simply isn't true.

"It turns out that there's a small but substantial population of golden eagles in eastern North America," says Todd Katzner, research assistant professor at West Virginia University. Katzner is a member of the Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group, an international partnership founded in 2010 to study the mighty raptor's distribution and ecology.

Katzner's preliminary research suggests that West Virginia and Virginia are the eagles' main winter stomping grounds, though golden eagles have been spotted wintering as far north as upstate New York and as far south as Florida. Eastern golden eagles breed in northeastern Canada. When they migrate south, they primarily winter in the central and southern Appalachian Mountains.

"We don't know if there is a really strict habitat requirement, but we do know that the areas of West Virginia and Virginia where the birds are found are primarily the Monongohela National Forest and the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests," Katzner says. "Those are some of the more densely forested areas that we have in this region."

In other parts of the world, golden eagles are found primarily over open country. This habitat difference has fueled speculation that Eastern golden eagles could be genetically distinct from their Western counterparts.

Maria Wheeler, a doctoral student at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pa. co-supervised by Katzner, is researching the level of genetic distinction present in Eastern golden eagles. Not only is Wheeler studying how separate the Eastern birds are from Western North American populations and those around the world, she's delving into the golden eagles' genetic past. In a well-intentioned attempt to bolster the golden eagle population of the Southern Appalachians,



An Eastern golden eagle is caught on film by a research camera. Clearings were baited with roadkill deer to attract the aerial predators.  
Photo by Barb Sargent/Todd Katzner

Western golden eagles were introduced between 15 and 35 years ago, and these introductions may have changed the biology of Eastern goldens already living in the area.

To determine whether the genetic code of Eastern golden eagles' has actually changed, Wheeler is collecting tissue samples from museum specimens of Eastern goldens collected before the introduction of the Western birds. She then compares the Eastern eagles' historic genotypes with modern genotypes.

Wheeler's genetic study is just one topic being probed by the Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group and their collaborators. To understand the birds' behavior in their Appalachian winter homes, researchers have placed over 80 motion-sensitive cameras at select sites between New York and North Carolina. These cameras are rigged in small, remote clearings that are baited with roadkill deer.

Over the past five years, thousands of images have been recorded at these sites. The high numbers affirm the raptor's winter appetite for carrion.

Less certain is whether Eastern golden eagles dine on other birds during the summer, as some suggest. Katzner's team has placed telemetry tracking devices on about 50 birds, which record location every fifteen minutes throughout the year. Research partners in Quebec have provided some summertime assistance, but often these goldens soar into the roadless territory of Canada's far north.

### Pure Golden Facts

Golden eagles are monogamous, and their partnerships can last from several years to life. Females lay one to four eggs per year, which both parents incubate. Typically, one or two survive to fledgling age. The ladies are typically larger, but both sexes sport the species' trademark plumage — a pattern of brown, gold, grey and sometimes even white feathers.

Golden eagles are used by Mongolian and Kazakh falconers to hunt wolves in Central Asia's wild steppes. With a wingspan that averages from six to nearly eight feet, it's no wonder that the only natural predators golden eagles face are brown bears and wolverines. There's even one confirmed report of a golden eagle preying on a brown bear cub.

There are six known subspecies of golden eagle, which range from Japan to Siberia and North Africa to the Himalayas.

Golden eagle researchers, including Katzner, hope that learning the raptor's migratory flight patterns will help avoid conflicts between future wind energy development projects in Appalachia and the mighty birds. In the most famous conflict between the energy and avian worlds, at California's Altamont Pass Wind Farm the failure to study bird movement patterns — as well as flawed turbine designs — tragically led to high raptor death tolls from turbines.

By analyzing the risk golden eagles face from wind development, researchers could protect a range of other slope-soaring birds of prey, such as redtail hawks, broadwing hawks, bald eagles and osprey.

"In the East we know of no turbines that have killed golden eagles," he says. "What we don't understand is why some turbines are dangerous and some are not. The goal of our research is to figure that out."



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## Wind for Schools Program to Install Turbine at Watauga High School

Watauga High School in Boone, N.C., is making a new addition to their campus, a 2.4 kilowatt Skystream 3.7 wind turbine as part of the Wind for Schools program. A ribbon cutting is set for Dec. 14. Watauga High School is one of seven schools in the state that will receive a free turbine through the nationwide program that moved to North Carolina last year. Sundance

Power Systems of Asheville, N.C., will set up the seven turbines.

## Local Politicians, Community Members Cheer 1.2-megawatt Solar Farm in Mount Airy, N.C.

More than 140 people attended the opening celebration of the Mayberry Solar Farm in Mount Airy, N.C. The Mayberry Solar Farm, built on six acres owned by the town and leased to O2 Energies will feed the Duke

Energy grid, helping to meet the requirements for the North Carolina Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard. Joel Olsen, the founder and director of O2 Energies, says the six-acre solar farm created 100 local jobs, involved 30 contractors, and will generate power for hundreds of homes and small businesses.

## University of Kentucky Students Say 'Shut Down Coal Boilers'

Students and environmentalists at the University of Kentucky in Lexing-

ton are joining with the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign. With the goal of shutting down nearby coal-fired power plants and replacing it with renewable energy, the group is presenting to the university's Board of Trustees' finance committee and campus chiefs. Because of the university's connections with the coal industry, the group acknowledges renewable energy could be a hard sell. A feasibility study could determine the possibilities of using geothermal, solar and other forms of renewable energy in the future.

## Seeds of Change Initiative To Improve Access to Local Food

The Boone, N.C.-based non-profit group Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture received a \$1.1 million grant from

Heifer USA to strengthen the local food system in what is known as the High Country region of North Carolina. The Seeds of Change Initiative is a multi-year program that will build upon the emerging local food movement to foster economic development and improve

access to nutritious, locally produced food among under-served populations.

According to the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, North Carolinians spend \$35 billion on food every year. If 10 percent of that money was spent locally, the state would gain \$3.5 billion in sales. The grant will support efforts to strengthen the economies of communities across the North Carolina High Country who are choosing to reinvest in local farmers and food producers.

The first phase of the initiative, including organization, assessment and planning, was awarded to the Appalachian District Health Department and Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture with technical assistance from the Center for Participatory Change. Phase two includes four years of funding for implementation of projects that support the goals of the Initiative.

The High Country region, includes

Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes counties in North Carolina, and Johnson County, Tenn.

## EPA Awards Grants to Seven Universities in the Southeast

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded seven universities in the Southeast with the People, Prosperity and the Planet (P3) Phase I grants for the 2011-2012 academic year. Grant recipients will design solutions to sustainability challenges that improve quality of life, promote economic development and protect the environment.

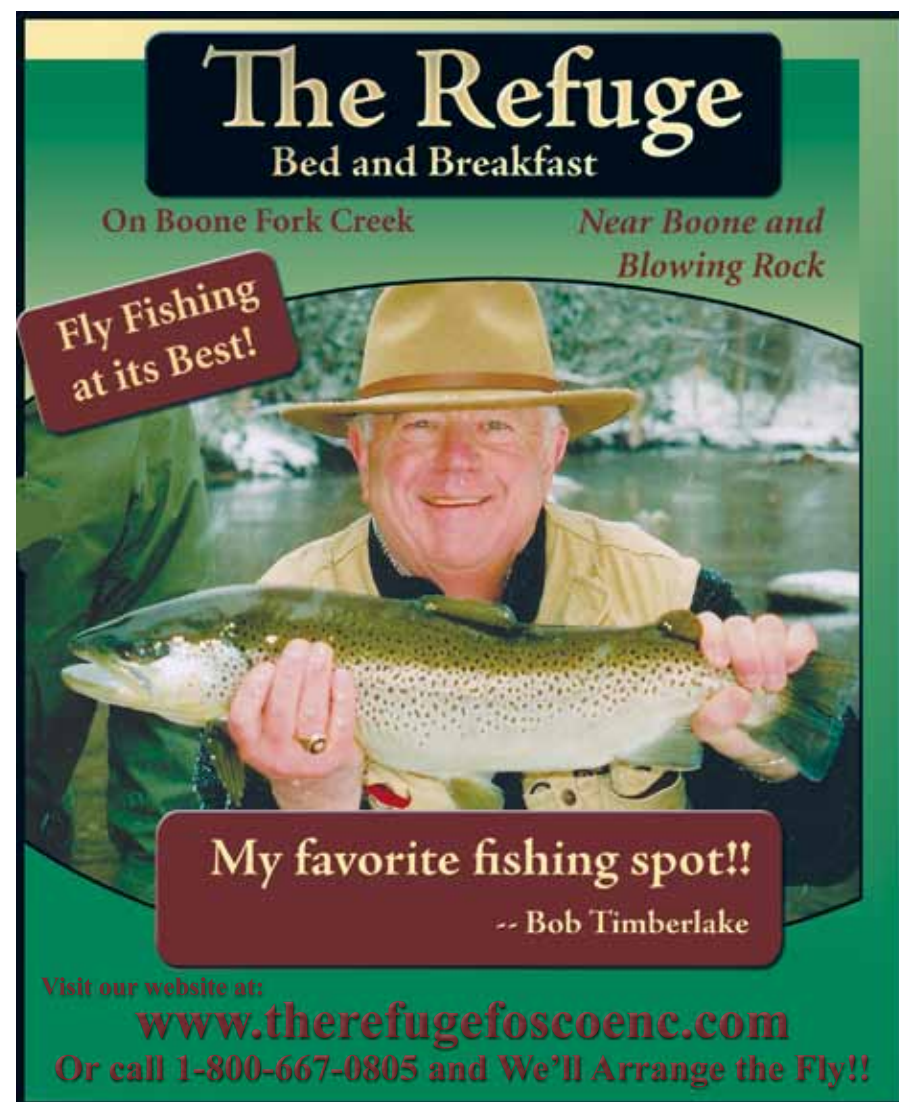
Two Appalachian schools are among this year's recipients — Appalachian State University and Vanderbilt University. Appalachian State is working to develop an artificial wetland suitable for recycling of graywater from

Continued on next page

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## By The Numbers

**78%** : Voters nationwide who support the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's work to hold polluters accountable.

**170** : Votes against environmental protection in the House of Representatives since the beginning of 2011

**1,048.3 million** : Number of short tons of coal the U.S. consumed in 2010, the second-lowest consumption rate in a decade.

**1995** : The last time coal productivity was lower than it is now. Productivity, mea-

sured as short tons per employee hour, fell to 5.57 tons.

**2015** : Year when Central Appalachian coal production is expected to be 49 percent of 2008 levels because of decreased availability of coal.

**59,059** : Number of Appalachian coal mining jobs in the third quarter of 2011, the highest number since 1997.

**10%** : Increase in Appalachian mine jobs since the EPA issued a guidance on surface mining permits in Appalachia in April 2010

**2.3%** : Effective corporate income tax rate paid in 2010

**16** : Number of major energy companies that paid no income tax in 2010

**\$87 million** : Amount of Dominion Resources' Domestic Production Activities tax deduction between 2008 and 2010

**1986** : Last time active, permitted coal mines had the capacity to produce as much coal as they do now.

**1986** : Last time coal mines used as little of their production capacity as they do now.

Data from the Federal Reserve, Public Policy Polling, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Citizens for Tax Justice, Mine Safety and Health Administration

Continued from previous page

small businesses for immediate reuse, and Vanderbilt University is creating a biohybrid solar panel that substitutes a protein from spinach for rare metals, and produces electrical energy.

For more information, visit [epa.gov/P3/](http://epa.gov/P3/)

## WNC Forest Report Card Yields Mixed Results

A comprehensive report card on the state of Western North Carolina's forests shows that while land protection and economic activity have improved, development continues to encroach on the states forested areas. The report was created through a collaboration between the Forest Service and the University of North Carolina at Asheville's National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center. The project began in 2008 and focuses on 18 counties in western North Carolina, covering 7,480 square miles or 4.8 million acres.

Among categories rated as "improving" are overall economic activity, indicating a steady growth in recreation, tourism and arts and crafts. Lands managed for conservation have also grown by about five percent since 2005, with nearly 60,000 acres preserved. Development and population growth are mentioned as increasing forest fragmentation and at-risk species.

The report, aimed at helping decision makers across the state, considers factors such as biodiversity, production, overall ecosystem health and how forests are affected by natural and man-made changes. Categories are rated as improving, stable, at risk, worsening, dynamic and uncertain.

The report card will be updated periodically at [wncforestreportcard.org](http://wncforestreportcard.org)

## EPA to Develop Natural Gas Wastewater Standards

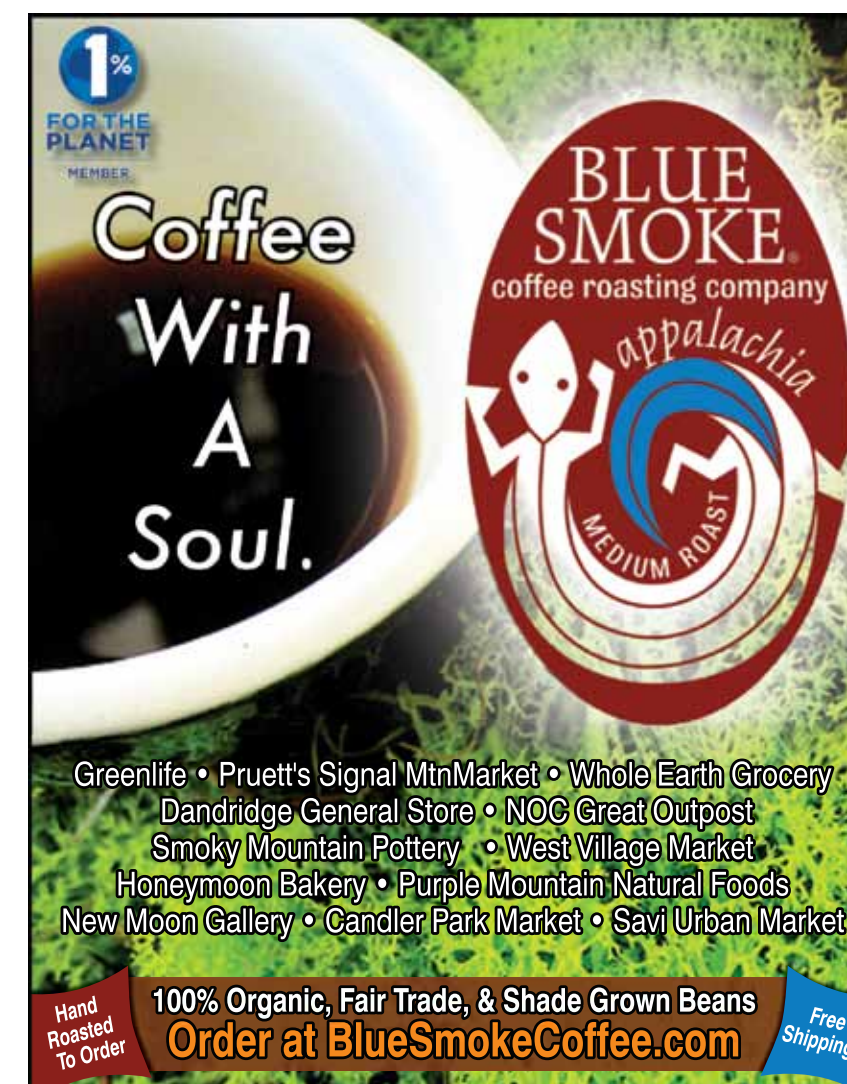
On Oct. 20, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced a schedule to develop standards for wastewater discharge produced by mining and drilling underground coalbed and shale formations. Currently no comprehensive set of national standards exists for the disposal of wastewater discharged from natural gas drilling.

As natural gas drilling increases across the nation and especially in the Marcellus Shale formation, the nation's energy independence increases. But regulators see the lack of standards to regulate wastewater as a liability that can potentially harm the health of the air and water and that of communities where drilling takes place. Information reviewed by the EPA, including state-supplied wastewater sampling data, has documented elevated levels of pollutants entering surface waters as

a result of leaks and inadequate treatment at water treatment plants.

The EPA will gather input on the proposed standard from of stakeholders including industry and

public health groups. The agency will also solicit public comment and plans to announce a proposed rule for coalbed methane in 2013 and for shale gas in 2014.



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# Homemade HERITAGE

Above all else, art conveys Appalachia's character. Whether through storytelling, folk music, quilting, or modern art with a traditional twist, Appalachian art ties our culture to the land and to our heritage. We looked at some of the places and people that are working hard to keep it that way.

## Bringin' Anachronism Back: Modern Adventures in Traditional Appalachian Craft

By Julie Johnson

I was 25, slogging through yet another post-college retail job, when I realized I should run away to the hills and be a craftperson's apprentice. It was a dream nurtured since childhood; I longed to be slavishly worked for naught but the benefit of a hands-on education and perhaps a hot meal.

I shared this dream with prophetic friends who steered me to the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, N.C. There I found, through the hum of this hectic, electrified world of tweets, links and 24-hour rollback pricing, the rare breed of folks who also seek the networks of a bygone era.

The traditional craft and folk schools of Appalachia attract an eclectic bunch of teachers and learners. Some offer full degree programs while others, like John C. Campbell, host short-format classes that offer patrons a chance to take a week or weekend to become conscientious objectors of computational manufacturing.

In my time around the Folk School, I've seen trees become bows, coffins, faces, chairs, garden sheds and baskets, and fibers become quilts, yarns, felt, hats and clothes. I've seen leather shoes cobbled, knives forged, books bound and all manner of things painted, drawn, carved and enameled. I've seen a pictorial woodburning of Sasquatch crossing the ruined landscape of post-eruption Mt. St. Helen's.

The people who create these crafts uphold the delicate processes of the eye and hand necessary to create a product that not only fulfills its function but also

becomes an heirloom-quality treasure, and often feel a call to conserve the natural materials that go into its composition. Even in a listless economy, enrollment holds steady, and I asked John C. Campbell director Jan Davidson why. "When times get hard, people want value for their money," he says. "It's worth more to learn something. It has something to do with being in control of your life, your activities, and their results."

For the same reason, many also continue to spend their hard-earned dollars to support artisans. Cory Podielski, a former John C. Campbell student host, says she chooses to buy handcrafted goods because they are "unique and reflect the style and creativity of the artist. When you buy them, you are taking a stand against the cultural homogenization propagated by corporate attempts to mass-market to our desires," she adds. "You are encouraging diversity, learning and creativity."

Rob Withrow, a Brasstown, N.C., potter is encouraged by his customers often. "People come up to me all the time and tell me how they use one of my mugs every morning for their coffee, and how much they love it," he says. "A bunch of folks, thinking good thoughts about you and what you made every day, where else can you get that? When you're accountable to your neighbors for the product that you make, I tell you what, you put your heart into it."

The Slow Food movement has brought worldwide focus to promoting systems of locally sourced and environmentally conscious agriculture. At a craft school, attendees can exercise the same ideals and become part of the slow stuff movement.

"The convenience of shopping kills



From quilting to blacksmithing, students at the folks schools of Appalachia learn traditional methods from the folks dedicated to their craft. Photos by Kether Wiedeman, John C. Campbell Folk School



our souls and makes us lazy," says Podielski, "but the process and effort of craft builds up love, pride, and satisfaction. Handcrafted items are one of the core ways to build a local economy, and having a more local-based economy encourages community-building and

learning. Yep, handcrafted items just might save the world."

Save the world — or at least your sanity — at one of the fine samples of craft and folk schools of Appalachia listed below, each with its own rich history and specialized programming.

### Handpicked Regional Craft Schools

- Kentucky**  
**Berea College:** Offers workshops and bachelor's degree programs. [bera.edu/studentcrafts](http://bera.edu/studentcrafts)  
**Kentucky School of Craft:** Based out of Hazard Community and Technical College, offers certificates, diplomas and AAS degrees. [hazard.kctcs.edu](http://hazard.kctcs.edu)  
**Pine Mountain Settlement School:** Offers day and week-long programs. [pinemountainsettlementschool.com](http://pinemountainsettlementschool.com)
- North Carolina**  
**Haywood Community College:** Offers an associate degree in Professional Crafts. [haywood.edu/creative\\_arts/professional\\_crafts](http://haywood.edu/creative_arts/professional_crafts)  
**John C. Campbell Folk School:** Offers week and weekend classes. [folkschool.org](http://folkschool.org)  
**Penland School of Craft:** Offers classes from one to eight weeks. [penland.org](http://penland.org)

- Tennessee**  
**The Appalachian Center for Craft:** Based out of Tennessee Tech University, offers workshops, craft certificates and bachelor's programs. [ttech.edu/craftcenter/](http://ttech.edu/craftcenter/)  
**Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts:** Offers one- and two-week classes. [arrowmont.org](http://arrowmont.org)
- West Virginia**  
**Cedar Lakes Craft Center:** Offers week and weekend classes. [wvde.state.wv.us/cedar-lakes/craftscenter.htm](http://wvde.state.wv.us/cedar-lakes/craftscenter.htm)  
**Craftworks:** Offers workshops and craft events. [craftworksatcoolspring.org](http://craftworksatcoolspring.org)
- Virginia**  
**Virginia Commonwealth University:** Offers bachelor's and master's degrees. [vcu.edu/arts/craft/dept/](http://vcu.edu/arts/craft/dept/)

# From These Hills

## Contemporary Art in the Southern Highlands

By Paige Campbell

Through Feb. 19, the William King Museum and Center for Cultural Art and Heritage in Abingdon, Va., will host the tenth exhibition of *From These Hills: Contemporary Art in the Southern Appalachian Highlands*, its biennial selection of new works by regional artists.

Guest juror Amy Moorefield, director of Hollins University's Eleanor D. Wilson Museum, chose 38 pieces from 23 artists for this year's collection. Paintings, textiles, photographs, and pencil drawings are represented, as well as more unusual works: moving mechanical sculptures, an interactive digital exhibit, manipulated shoes, stuffed animals and beeswax-based portraits.

Moorefield praises the sophistication of each contributing artist. "What this collection celebrates is the artists' ability to look globally from within a tradition-rich region to make really relevant work," she says.

While Moorefield did not set out to reflect a particular theme, she is mindful of what she calls "strong undercurrents at play." Those undercurrents, include "entropy in nature, the interplay of emotion and desire, systems, the 'ready-made,' the idea of 'other,'

and narrative figuration."

Multi-media artist Travis Graves of Elizabethton, Tenn., contributed two works, both depicting trees but using different materials to create dramatically altered forms. The variety within his own body of work echoes a larger curatorial shift that he says has taken place in the last several decades.

"There's a growing recognition of the validity of many art forms as art in their own right," says Graves. That recognition, he says, has opened the door for this region's art to take so many shapes.

### Drawing Inspiration from Nature, Human Nature

Jake Ingram of Johnson City, Tenn., is just 21 years old, but his quirky spin on a traditional American art form puts him in league with established artists from across Appalachia. One of Ingram's two pieces in the *From These Hills* collection — an intricate and colorful quilt — also puts him in league with the mountain grannies who have been practicing the craft of quilting for generations.

"I learned how to quilt about five years ago," says Ingram. "My great-grandmother had started a quilt sometime in the forties or fifties, and never finished." That king-sized quilt,



The biennial "From These Hills" exhibit highlights forward-thinking artists from across Appalachia. Clockwise from top: "Part of the Field," Isaac Powell; "In Suspense," Travis Graves; "For Munner Who Taught Me to Love the Flowers," Jake Ingram. Photos by Paige Campbell

composed of over six thousand one-inch hexagons, was passed down to Ingram's grandmother, then to his mother. But it was a teenage Ingram who picked it up with the determination to complete it, and the ensuing three-year project nudged him to take up quilting as a contemporary art form as well as a traditional craft.

The piece, titled "For Munner, Who Taught Me to Love the Flowers," consists of twenty hand-stitched renderings of a mythical creature known as a jackalope. This bizarre antlered rabbit — originally a taxidermist's prank — has captivated Ingram for years, and his work explores how its unexpected form reflects the complexity of human nature and relationships.

The intersection of humans and nature is also evident in the work of east Kentucky painter Isaac Powell. The artist's paintings often begin with landscapes inspired by the surrounding

mountains, but quickly delve into the theme of how nature can be manipulated. Powell's interest in geology and map-making add complexity to his works that he likens to an "organic process."

"It's a bit like composting," Powell says of his work style. "There are always layers, and I find that the more layers I'm working with, the richer the painting becomes."

Powell's piece, "Part of the Field," features images of potted plants and other organic subjects taken out of their natural contexts. "[Potted plants] imply human influence and that interaction of what's man-made and what's nature-made," he said. "I like the questions that raises."

*From These Hills* will be on display through Feb. 19, 2012. The William King Museum and Center for Cultural Art and Heritage is located in Abingdon, Va. For more information, visit [www.williamkingmuseum.org](http://www.williamkingmuseum.org) or call (276) 628-5005.

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check out their schedule online at [thehoneydewdrops.com](http://thehoneydewdrops.com)

# Following the Patchwork Path

## Quilt Trails Drive Rural Economic Revival

By Dana Kuhnline

Barn quilts, a relatively new art form that draws on rich rural craft traditions of the past, are helping communities answer an important economic question.

“How do we get travelers off the four-lane highways and into communities where they might never go otherwise? How do we lead them to cash registers and special community treasures?” asks Lindy Turner, an associate of the Appalachian Quilt Trail, a Tennessee-based organization promoting the colorful rural designs known as barn quilts.

Turner says that driving tours of barn quilts, known as quilt trails, encourage rural economic development that celebrates local heritage.

Barn quilts were created in 2001 in Adams County, Ohio, by Donna Sue Groves. Groves wanted to honor her mother, a noted quilter, and celebrate her family’s Appalachian heritage. What began as an idea for one barn quickly became a driving trail with 20 squares across Adams County, but the idea didn’t stop there. To date, Groves’ idea of “a clothesline of quilts” now stretches across 3,000 barns in 29 states.

The idea is simple: a quilt square is painted onto the side of a barn. In many communities, these beautiful barns are linked by trail guides and maps. One

of the first priorities of these projects is to preserve and highlight local heritage skills, including barn building and, of course, quilting.

“There’s a lot of history in the quilt patterns themselves, a lot of them have been in the families for hundreds

of years; it’s similar to a family crest,” explains Charis Endicott, an AmeriCorps

### Homemade HERITAGE

VISTA member with the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council’s quilt trail. “People who don’t know anything about quilting want to know more about the image and about the project. It gives an opportunity for cultural exchange, for the land owner to talk about their family history and to celebrate local history.”

In southeast Ohio, the Quilt Barn Trail in Athens County integrates traditional quilt squares with one-of-a-kind patterns such as the Star Brick Block square, which was based on a historic 1800s brick pattern that was produced in the area.

“About 70 percent of our squares are original, we find this lends that local touch to the quilt barn and tells a local story, just like a traditional quilt square does,” says Paige Allost of the Athens County Convention and Visitors Bureau. “The Nelsonville Coal Miners Block was chosen to be placed on a barn that is located right on the edge of former mining communities.”



Above: The Appalachian sunburst block graces an 1880s barn. Far left: The Star Brick Block was based on a late 1800s brick produced in Ohio. Near left: The Tree of Life block highlights area forests.

Because many heritage Appalachian quilt blocks were inspired by everyday mountain life, quilts are especially suited to tell community stories and highlight local activities. Heritage quilt blocks are often chosen to attract tourists to current community landmarks by featuring designs such as Cabin Windows and Log Cabin blocks at cabin rental locations, the Turkey Tracks quilt block at an eco-tourism destination in Kyles Ford, Tenn. and the Crossed Canoe pattern at a river outfitter.

“In some cases people honor a family quilt, in [other] cases, it’s [the] pattern that has special meaning,” says Turner.

Ideally, barn quilts don’t just preserve local history, but also encourage new growth. “It is expensive and hard to remain on a farm these days,” says Turner. “We are honoring quilting and the beautiful art of barn [building], but we also need to lead people to spend money in the community. We are using a heritage art to create economic development in depressed areas, but in order for it to be a true rural economic development project, it needs to ring cash registers.”

The Dairy Barn Arts Center in Athens, Ohio, hosts Quilt National, a biannual quilt show attended by more than 15,000 people. The Dairy

Barn itself has a quilt square displayed on each end. “Often this is one of the main starting points where people see the squares and then get hooked on the quilt trail. It gets people out to see the beautiful farms and barns on the back roads of Ohio,” says Allost.

Endicott at the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council has seen the same thing happen in Tennessee. “We get calls from people all over the eastern United States, often on their way to Gatlinburg, Tenn., who want to stop and take pictures,” she says. “While they’re here, they enjoy local food and farms and support local craftspeople that would otherwise get less recognition.”

For more information, visit VacationAQT.com, QuiltTrail.org and AthensOhio.com



# Knock On Wood

## How to make a more sustainable guitar

By Brian Sewell

Wayne Henderson, a renowned musician and luthier, spends most of his time in the workshop beside his home in rural Rugby, Va. Some of the finest acoustic guitars in the world are made in that small space. Today, he’s working alongside a few of his closest friends and his daughter, Elle “Jayne” Henderson. As Jayne learns the craft from her dad, they are working together to build a more sustainable guitar.

“I think the name that he’s made for himself as a luthier is so significant that it shouldn’t end with him,” Jayne says. “He is a master at it and I’m his only kid. I think it’s really important to carry on a tradition like this.”

Taking a break from pursuing a career in environmental law, Jayne has carried her environmental ethic into the workshop. She wants to build instruments that move away from the traditionally favored exotic but unsustainable woods. For centuries, instrument makers — also called luthiers — have sought out woods like Brazilian rosewood and Honduran mahogany to craft their superior instruments.

“I can go to my Granny’s land a mile away and cut a walnut or Appalachian spruce or gather some that’s already fallen,” Jayne says. “That movement is happening with our food, why not try and make this more sustainable too?”

Wayne Henderson admits that it hurts to think that one day he may not be able to find Brazilian rosewood to build his near-perfect guitars. But he acknowledges the highly sought-after

materials are being phased out.

“[Rosewood] makes the finest sound you can get and has properties like no other wood has,” Wayne says. A piece of walnut can come pretty close, and with everything that goes into building a guitar, shaping pieces of wood, checking the tone and everything, you can make it come very close.”

If anyone can come close, it’s Henderson. He is known in the guitar community worldwide as one of the most celebrated luthiers working today. Music writers and acoustic aficionados have called him the “Stradivari of the Blue Ridge” and the greatest luthier alive, titles he does not recognize.

“I figure I might be the best one in Rugby,” he says proudly. Rugby’s population is seven.

But, modesty aside, some of the best guitarists of any period delight in the fact they own a Henderson guitar. Australian finger-picking legend Tommy Emmanuel won’t even play his on stage because of his aggressive style. Another player waited 10 years for his, some British bluesman named Eric Clapton.

Each year, thousands show up at the Wayne C. Henderson Music Festival, most to watch the guitar competition. The prize, of course, is a Henderson guitar.

From a young age, Wayne developed the passion for making guitars that he is now passing on to his daughter.

“I’ve always had that drive,” Wayne says. “When I was a kid all I wanted to do was be out in the woodshed making something.”

His life-long affinity for Martin



Above: Wayne Henderson looks on as his daughter carries on his craft. Left: Henderson’s longtime friend Herb Key repairs the neck of a vintage Martin guitar. Photos by Molly Moore.

guitars also influenced his love of music and his lifelong explorations of the sound that can come from just a few pieces of wood.

Nearly 50 years later, Wayne shares his knowledge by teaching workshops at the invitation of craft schools, traveling and playing music. Back home, he doesn’t always have the time, or the workshop space, to help young people along the path. When he does, he likes working with Jayne and those closest to him.

“She does great work and I’m proud of it,” Wayne says. “I think if she would stay at it and have the interest I’ve always had, she would be as good as anyone could get. She’s made some great guitars and she’s watched me enough that she can do it just like I do with some practice.”

By his count, Wayne has built 549 guitars, 116 mandolins, 104 fiddles, 15 banjos, 14 ukuleles, five dulcimers and two dobros in his career. Jayne is working on two ukuleles and her fourth guitar, a cutaway model with koa sides

and a spruce top, as gifts for her cousins. With each one, she comes closer to her goal of a sustainable guitar of the quality her dad is known for.

“My dad knows how tones should sound and what densities get the best instrument,” Jayne says. “I think with his knowledge and my concern for the environment we’ll still make a really good instrument structurally and tonally, but also one that didn’t have to come from Africa or the rainforest. I can meld my two passions that way.”

Jayne intends to carry on the tradition her father began, even if she never reaches his ability.

“There aren’t many luthiers in the world and even fewer that can do it the way [my dad] can,” she says. “I just want to make sure I learn what I can.”

“I’ll never be Wayne Henderson,” she says, as if thinking aloud. “I’ll never be able to make the things he can.”

But Wayne remains humble and, leaning back in his rocking chair, interrupts, “I don’t see a reason why not.”

### From Africa to Appalachia: The Evolution of the Banjo

When thinking of Appalachian music, most Americans would imagine the twang of a banjo. What some might not know is the path the banjo has taken throughout history.

Music historians believe the xalam, an instrument that might have originated in ancient Egypt, is the earliest ancestor of the American 5-string banjo.

The ngoni, a simple instrument fash-

ioned from a gourd, wooden neck and three strings, is still popular in West African music.

The first instruments that came to be known as “banjos” were created by slaves in Colonial America who drew inspiration from similar African instruments.

In the early 1830s, Joel Walker Sweeney, a minstrel performer, learned banjo from local African-Americans in

Appomattox Courthouse, Va.. He was the first known person to play a banjo on stage.

Earl Scruggs joined Bill Monroe’s “Blue Grass Boys” in 1945, developing and popularizing the three-finger “Scruggs style” picking, now a cornerstone of Bluegrass music.

Durham, N.C., locals formed the Carolina Chocolate Drops after attending the 2005 Black Banjo Gathering in Boone, N.C., creating one of two

known African-American string bands. Their album *Genuine Negro Jig*, won the Grammy for Best Traditional Folk Album in 2010.

Banjo virtuoso Bela Fleck went on a pilgrimage to West Africa, and brought the banjo full-circle by exploring the instrument’s roots and playing with musicians in Gambia, Mali, Tanzania and Uganda. The 2009 documentary film *Throw Down Your Heart* was filmed during the trip.

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# Art as Activism

## Creatively Fighting Mountaintop Removal

There is no way to know how many people have been exposed to mountaintop removal through various artistic methods, whether photography, sculpture, drawing, theater or music. When art and environmental ethic join together, the final product can encapsulate both the stories of those struggling in communities affected by mountaintop removal and those that are fighting to stop it.



Homemade  
HERITAGE



## Paul Corbit Brown: Truth Before Profit

By Jamie Goodman

Paul Corbit Brown's life has come full circle - thanks to the lens on his camera.

He was born into a coal miner's family in Kilsyth, W.Va. For generations, every male in his family had become coal miners, but a chance encounter when he was 12 years old ultimately resulted in a different career.

"In seventh grade, they told us if we kept good grades, that when we got to eighth grade we would have the option to learn photography as part of our science class," says Brown, who became captivated by cameras in his early youth. "So I went to the [teacher] and said 'I don't want to wait, I want to do it now.'"

With Brown's continuous prodding, his teacher relented and challenged Brown to give up his lunch breaks to pursue photography. Brown showed every day, learning first to develop film and then to print. "As soon as I saw that image come up... I was hooked."

After intensively studying photography in college, Brown wound up in advertising

*Documenting an American tragedy: Paul Corbit Brown's photos show all aspects of mountaintop removal, including (top, l-r) aerial of a mine in West Virginia; residents dealing with poisoned water; juxtaposition of signs (and attitudes) in coal country; creeks polluted by mining and slurry.*

and marketing. He quickly grew disillusioned and reached an "existential crisis" with photography around age 23, while also going through a divorce. Around this same time, Brown met a Lakota Medicine Man who would eventually adopt him as a grandson and bring Brown to a pivotal choice.

"I walked away from everything and just moved out onto the reservation in South Dakota."

For three years Brown lived in relative isolation from the rest of the world, teaching in the tribal school and taking pictures of the beautiful mesa countryside. One day a woman from the tribal college asked if he would create a photo documentary of the issues bearing down on Lakota teenagers — pregnancy, alcoholism, drug addiction and suicide — and detailing how traditional tribal culture could help.

"It was a big success, people really loved it," Brown says. "Kids would come to me and say 'You changed my life.' And I thought, wow, here's something I can do with photography that actually does some good and is truthful, and I can live with the results."

*Continued on page 17*



## Bees Share the True Cost of Coal

By Brian Sewell

Outside of Appalachia, artists who acknowledge their connection to coal have adopted the issue of mountaintop removal and taken to the road. The Beehive Collective's True Cost of Coal illustration transforms ways of thinking as it travels by inviting all who see it into a web of stories.

The panoramic poster depicts the complex relationships between industry, commerce, society and the natural world that are inseparable from the fight to end mountaintop removal. The large form pen and ink image transitions from scenes of undisturbed wilderness to industrialized madness. Gradually, the characters, the diverse creatures of Appalachia, actively resist and, finally, take back and restore the land.

Beehive Collective, a Manchias, Maine-based collaborative artists' group, is known for their expansive graphics.

Depicting globalization, free trade and militarism, their works deconstruct some of the most debated issues of the time. But they also understand the power of using their graphics as educational tools and touring to accomplish their mission of "cross-pollinating the grassroots."

"We do a lot of traveling and touring with the work we do and generating conversations and actions," says Zeph Fishlyn, an illustrator and educator who has worked with the collective since 2007. "We're also carrying ideas and stories that people tell us from one place to the next."

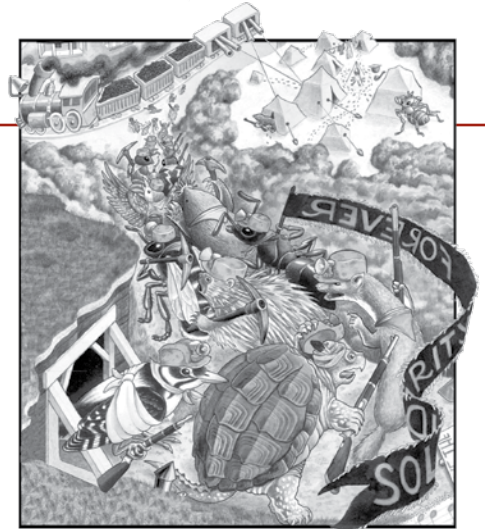
After interviewing residents of Appalachian coalfield communities, the "Bees" collected stories and perspectives of the effects of mountaintop removal and how people are taking action. The challenge arises when they must craft a drawing to convey all the information in a creative and compelling way.

"That's where we are crafting metaphors," Fishlyn explains. One portion of the poster depicts the story of land grab perpetrated by the fossil fuel industry. It's shown by a railroad unrolling itself across the landscape, intruding on homes and farmsteads and causing animals to scurry away seeking protection.

There are hundreds of distilled but profound visual metaphors hiding in The True Cost of Coal - a testament to its power as an education tool.

With the True Cost of Coal, the collective's outreach and education efforts have taken off. The poster and presentation are the most in-demand of any of the collective's projects. Since the poster was printed in June 2010, the group has distributed more than 15,000 copies and given almost 600 presentations.

"The story of mountaintop removal coal mining is resonating with people," says Emma Hornback, a founding



Above: A closer look at a portion of The True Cost of Coal reveals the visual metaphors Beehive Collective found in coalfield communities. Left: The Beehive Collective tour the Americas with their narrative graphics to educate and inspire. Photos courtesy of Beehive Collective.

member and full-time "Bee." "Our allies have told us: 'We know this story. It's useful for us to have this but you need to get this message out to other people.'"

Fishlyn and Hornback have worked on every phase of the True Cost of Coal project since the project began in 2008, from planning research trips and speaking with residents in Appalachia to illustrating and touring throughout the Americas with the poster.

The main theme in the work, resource extraction, resonates with people everywhere. Touring the gulf coast, the collective used the graphic to engage those dealing with the aftermath of the BP oil spill.

"If you were to change the characters from Appalachian songbirds to crawdads and alligators this could be their story," Hornback says. "If you change the bad guy from coal to oil, the story is almost the same."

Sharing their work is as much a priority as creating the graphic itself, and the "Bees" have been busy. In the past year, 25 people have toured with the poster, counting stops in Montana and the Dakotas among other stops. Invitations pour in requesting presentations in Northern Arizona, where locals struggle against Peabody Coal Company on the Navajo reservation. Other presenters recently returned from Alberta, Canada, the epicenter of the heated tar sands debate. They've even taken the poster to Bogota, Colombia where a "Bee" and Colombia native used the graphic to discuss coal mining in South America.

"People have learned about mountaintop removal through the graphic," Hornback says. "A lot of folks associate the two things and point to it as a pivotal moment in their understanding of climate issues and coal issues in particular."



## Putting the Human Perspective into Mountaintop Removal

By Brian Sewell

For every movement, there is a message. This message can take many forms, but often the most moving is the creation of art to inform. Art helps people see problems anew, even those who see them everyday. The campaign to end mountaintop removal is no different.

At the annual meeting of Kentuckians For The Commonwealth in 2004, a life-sized sculpture by Kentucky artist Jeff Chapman-Crane, 16 years in the making, debuted. For many, seeing The Agony of Gaia for the first time had an effect similar to witnessing mountaintop removal in person. Some stared in disbelief, others could not contain their emotions.

"People have always been really moved by it," Chapman-Crane says. "They understand

the issue much better by looking at the sculpture. It's made some aware of the issue for the first time and inspired them to get involved."

Looking at Gaia, the human form of a mountain in agony feels familiar while the damage inflicted on the natural world is put into perspective.

"I wanted to express that the earth is not just this source of raw material we can exploit for coal with no cost to the earth or ourselves," Chapman-Crane says about the piece. "The earth is actually a living thing. It feels what we're doing to it and there is a real price to pay for the kind of abuse and exploitation that we've been subjecting the earth to for so long now."

Adding to the realistic look, natural materials like rock dust and moss cover the surfaces of the sculpture. Even the machinery is to scale.

The most detailed section, the figure's head and the hands, are fired clay. The rest is simple Styrofoam.

Chapman-Crane designed the provocative sculpture with quick and frequent travel in mind, mounting it on a table with folding legs and wheels. Attached to the table are panels that fold up and lock together to protect the piece while its being transported. "I feel good about the engineering of it," Chapman-Crane says. "I wanted to make it lightweight and portable. It's very quick to setup and very easy to move. That's part of the design because I knew I wanted to take it to a lot of places."

The Agony of Gaia has been exhibited at more than 50 venues around Appalachia. It has traveled to New York City and Washington, D.C., and was featured in a billboard

campaign by Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, displaying the work to thousands of daily commuters in Frankfort, Ky.

"We've taken it to college campuses, churches and exhibited it in conjunction with a United Nations special hearing," says Chapman-Crane. "We try to focus on venues where there are people who have never been made aware of the issue. It's a great opportunity to teach people about it."

For a piece so powerful, simply stumbling upon the image on the Internet can inspire action and create drastic personal change. Chapman-Crane was once contacted by a Catholic sister living in India who had seen an image of Gaia online.

"It inspired her to come back here and get involved," he says. "It's really out there." I have no idea just how far reaching it is."

The Agony of Gaia by Jeff Chapman-Crane



# The Qualla Creators

## Conserving Cherokee Traditions

By Molly Moore

On the Qualla Boundary, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians' reservation, local resources have inspired arts traditions for generations. Today the community's rich arts heritage is flourishing.

The town of Cherokee, N.C., positioned at the southern terminus of the Blue Ridge Parkway and bordering the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, was opened to the tourism economy with the birth of the national park in 1940.

"Early on, people began to realize that they could market traditional crafts as souvenirs to the tourists," says Davy Arch, a Cherokee artist who works in traditional and contemporary forms. "People began to supplement their income by selling what they had been using on the farm."

With the influx of visitors came a surge of entrepreneurs. At the time, the tribal levy — a business tax — was a main source of revenue for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The revenue benefited the tribe as well as the artist, but soon outsider-owned businesses flooded the local market with mass-produced goods that promoted disparaging stereotypes drawn from "Cowboy-and-Indian" films.

In response, local artists banded together in 1946 to form the first Native American cooperative, Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual, Inc. The organization

currently has 300 artisan members, and their combined gallery and museum presents a wide variety of goods that blend traditional and contemporary elements.

"We want our artists to grow and try new ways to express themselves," says Tonya Carroll, Outreach Coordinator at Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual.

### Homemade HERITAGE

"We do want items that incorporate Native American culture but that can be open to interpretation."

Basketry, mat-making and wood carvings are some of the best-selling items at Qualla Arts and Crafts, but member arts also include beadwork, stone carving, pottery, finger weaving, doll making, painting, drawing, crocheting, shell engraving, wood burning and metal jewelry.

### An Economic and Cultural Lifeway

Davy Arch is known for fine wooden masks, but he also carves arrowheads that are available on the lower end of the price spectrum. His mother and grandmothers crafted beadwork, and he can't remember a time when he didn't have a carving knife. In his lifetime of involvement in the Cherokee arts community, he's seen the craft economy shift.

"People used to use the baskets to pick up potatoes and gather corn," Arch says. "But now [traditional baskets] are high-end collectibles that can



sell for thousands of dollars, so you're not seeing a lot of people out in the potato patch picking up potatoes in their Cherokee baskets. The shift to marketing artwork as a high-end collectible is something that has controlled the way we market things and the product itself."

The ability to command higher prices has helped these time- and skill-intensive arts survive, but competing with cheap imported goods remains a challenge. Recently, Cherokee artisans have received more support from tribal government and current businesses on the Qualla Boundary. The reservation's casino is a reliable customer of the Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual and sells local crafts at casino and hotel gift shops.

"Tribal government is aware that most families have an artist in the family and have a tradition of artwork that links us directly to the past as a culture," Arch

says. "So it's a concern of the politicians to ensure that there are opportunities for artists."

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians' Principal Chief Michell Hicks campaigned for Artist's Row, an outdoor market area near Oconaluftee Islands Park where artists can sign up for space. An attempt by the Tribal Council to pass a resolution that would have required all craft shops on tribal land to sell a certain percentage of local artists' work did not pass.

### Resourceful Arts

Revitalization of traditional artwork has increased demand on the natural resources used in these crafts. To meet that need, the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, which is funded by the tribe's gaming revenues, established the Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources program to restore the traditional balance between maintaining and using vital resources.

"Land preservation is a wonderful thing but for us it's preservation with a purpose," says David Cozzo, project director for the program. "It's a living act of management."

River cane is one such resource. The Cherokee are known for their intricate double-weave baskets crafted from this member of the bamboo family, but not long ago the tribe was down to just two active basket makers. Thanks to a program at the local high school, there are now 15 teens who can make the signature art. But ensuring an adequate supply of river cane is as important to the craft's survival as the teachers. Fostering river cane stands in the mountainous Qualla Boundary is difficult, particularly since much of the species' former range has been taken over by agriculture and development.

To find suitable habitat for river cane introduction and management,

*Continued on next page*



Above: Artisans from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians harvest river cane with partner organizations. Photo by Land Trust for the Little Tennessee

Left: Beaded jewelry is just one of the local crafts sold in a gift shop at the casino in Cherokee, N.C.

Top: Carved wooden masks by artisans such as Davy Arch are sold at Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, Inc.



## Paul Corbit Brown: Truth Before Profit

Continued from page 17

"I realized I could do something with photography besides just make money. I could make a difference."

In the mid '90s, Brown returned home to West Virginia to help his ailing mother. He took a part time job as a photographer with a local paper, and soon started to hear talk of mountaintop removal coal mining and a group of people campaigning to stop it. He asked his co-workers about it, but heard nothing.

"But it didn't make sense to me, because nobody could really tell me what MTR was," he says.

Then a press release about an anti-mountaintop removal rally in the nearby town of Blair found him. Brown's editor was not interested in the story and refused to let him leave to cover the rally. Brown requested the day off.

Brown was so moved by the event's speakers — including retired miner Jimmy Weekley — that when organizers called for the public to speak, he jumped to the mic. "I was mortified of speaking publicly. But for some reason, the injustice of [mountaintop removal] overwhelmed me to no end."

Rally organizers, impressed with his passion, recruited him to present

## The Qualla Creators

the revitalization program works with outside groups such as the Land Trust for the Little Tennessee and the Watershed Association of the Tuckaseegee River. Land Trust for the Little Tennessee and Cozzo's program are planning river cane restoration at Welch Farm, a tract of land that had been used for corn cultivation.

The resource revitalization program is also working on its first project with the U.S. Forest Service. If all goes well, South Carolina's Sumter National Forest will house 29 acres of river cane, which would make it the largest actively managed cane site in the Southeast.

The butternut tree is another key species, since the bark produces a distinct dark dye. But a fungus has decimated the butternut population, and the tree's survival is threatened. A partnership with high school students aims to help researchers find ways to select disease-hardy butternut for cultivation. Organizations are also experiment-

the issue and he soon recognized a need for impactful images conveying the scope of devastation. Brown connected with the newly-formed SouthWings organization to produce some of the first aerial photographs of mountaintop removal mine sites.

"My first thought was "Oh my God, these things are huge," says Brown of his first overflight.

Brown worked to document the families affected by mountaintop removal, making international waves with his images. He was invited to testify in front of Amnesty International about the issue. "I told them, "We in the coalfields of Appalachia are suffering from a genocide,"" he says.

Shortly after, Brown started his travels around the world documenting humanitarian issues in exotic and turbulent places like Rwanda, Indonesia, northern Iraq, Laos and, most recently, Haiti.

"I don't use the word genocide lightly. I've been to Rwanda five times, I've slept on the streets with kids who were orphaned by genocide. I know what genocide looks like," Brown says. "The death of my people doesn't come quickly and at the end of a gun," he adds, "It comes slowly and from the

Continued from previous page

ing with growing white oak for basketry. But recreating traditional environments has its challenges. Because white oaks grown too quickly are too fibrous for weaving, Cherokee artisans prefer white oaks that grow slowly in laurel thickets with acidic soil. The Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, University of Tennessee and the tribe's resource revitalization program are working to replicate that habitat on available land trust property. So far, the groups have seen mixed results, but recent plantings are still a few years away from harvest. "It takes eight to 10 years to test the idea," Cozzo says.

Between the efforts of tribal government, schools and non-profit organizations, there is a network of economic and educational support behind traditional Cherokee crafts. With thoughtful management of natural arts resources, young hands will weave these venerable traditions into the future.



Brown, pictured here on assignment in Israel, says of photography, "I have such a pure and passionate love for the artform, that it felt wrong for me to use it for purposes of misleading people."

simple act of drawing water from your kitchen sink. And we have a government who's complicit in it."

Brown's photographs are haunting and evocative: a family holding jars of sludge-brown water drawn from their kitchen sink; a stream frothing with thick, orange and red ooze; a man examining his property destroyed by out-of-control flooding from mountaintop removal operations

"The strength of a photo is that it captures a moment, and gives you a chance to study that moment for a long time," he adds. "Photos are a way to give a voice to people who otherwise would not be seen or heard."

Brown chooses to live simply in

order to pursue humanitarian photography. He shares his images freely with organizations who cannot afford to pay. Situated on family land in Barrett County, Brown built his home with recycled and reclaimed materials. He exists primarily off the grid, refusing to add to the problems created by coal-fired electricity generation, and farms to grow most of his food.

"I never got in this movement as a way to make a living, or become famous," Brown says. "I got in this movement because I want to end mountaintop removal."

On a recent photo shoot with two West Virginia civil rights religious leaders, the Rev. Jeremiah Watts made a comment that resonated deeply with Brown and epitomizes his work to document the tragedies of the world. "The only thing that powerful people fear is the truth," quoted Brown. "And that is what we can do, we can offer the truth."

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# Old Folktales Die Hard

## The Ballad of Tom Dooley

By Brian Sewell

"Murdered in May of 1865," a white gravestone on the banks of the Yadkin River in Wilkes County, N.C., reads. "Tom Dula hanged for crime."

The grave belongs to Laura Foster, the victim in one of the most popularized and retold murder cases in Appalachian folk history. Like a game of cultural telephone, the story of Tom Dula (sometimes spelled "Dooley") has been passed through time in songs, ballads, film and poems. Now, it has been put into novel form by Appalachia-focused author



**Homemade HERITAGE**

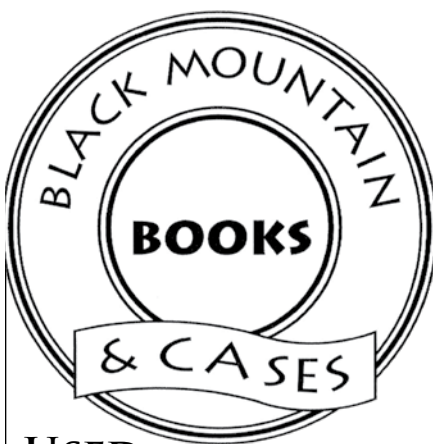
Sharyn McCrumb.

In *The Ballad of Tom Dooley*, McCrumb does the legend justice by searching for the truth, and where the case goes cold, she does a little guesswork of her own (it is a work of fiction after all). Her account is much closer to the truth, she argues, than The Kingston Trio's, the group that truly made the folktale famous with their 1958 song "Tom Dooley."

After returning from the Civil War, Dula worked as a laborer in the Yadkin River Valley. Soon after, he fell for Laura Foster, cousin of his long time love interest, Ann Foster Melton. Folklore suggests that Laura became pregnant with Dula's child and the lovers decided to elope. The morning they were to leave, May 26, was the last time Laura would be seen alive.

Everyone knows, if you tell a story enough the facts begin to grow a bit hazy. The shopkeeper, banker and borrower all have their own versions. But since the murder, the guilty verdict and the hanging of Tom Dula outside of a train depot in Statesville, N.C., the details haven't truly mattered in a story that has made an indelible mark on the area's past and present.

Originally recorded in 1929 by Gilliam Banmon Grayson and Henry Whitter, the murder ballad "Tom Dooley," also known as "Hang Down Your Head Tom Dooley," became a hit when the Kingston Trio harmonized the dark history. The Trio's version has been

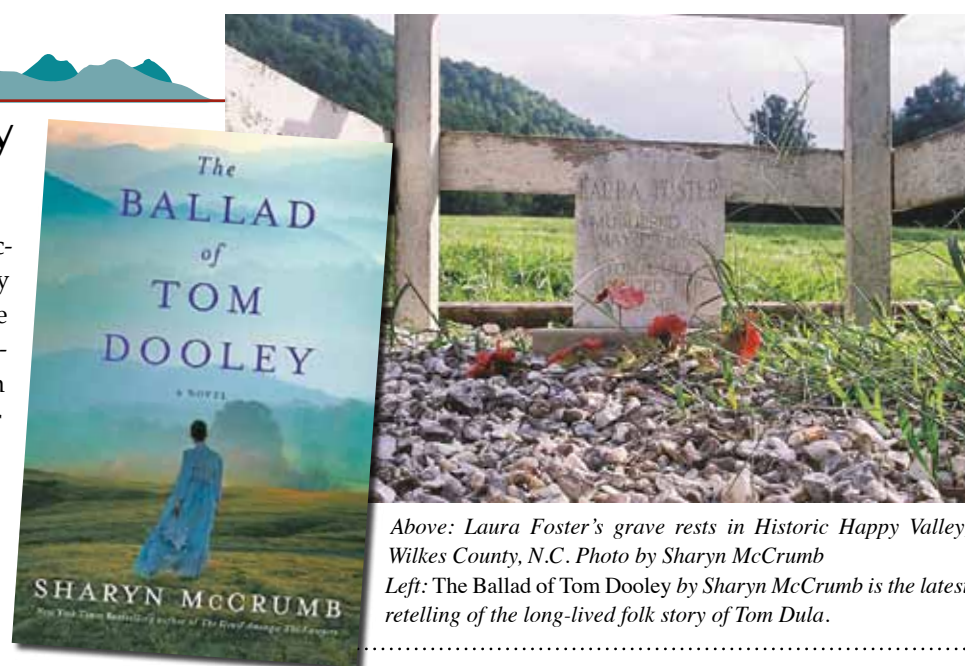


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Above: Laura Foster's grave rests in Historic Happy Valley, Wilkes County, N.C. Photo by Sharyn McCrumb  
Left: The Ballad of Tom Dooley by Sharyn McCrumb is the latest retelling of the long-lived folk story of Tom Dula.

selected as a "Song of the Century" by the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Endowment for the Arts and was inducted into the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress.

The Laura Foster grave lies on a private farm in a culturally significant area of Wilkes County called Happy Valley. Even today, passers-by will leave flowers for Laura. The story of her death draws visitors to the site and, due partially to its cultural significance, the Jones Farm is being placed under conservation easement by Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina land trust to prevent the farm from being developed or subdivided.

Each year in his open pastures, landowner Tony Jones hosts the Happy Valley Fiddler's Convention and invites hundreds of folk musicians to the very valleys and hills that Tom and Laura walked. The fiddler's convention began because the story is so well known in folk music circles, Jones says. He is us-

ing that impetus to develop economic benefit through agritourism, rather than selling his land for development of riverfront homes.

Investigating for *The Ballad of Tom Dooley*, McCrumb walked the same hills. She spoke with those who had grown up hearing the story, each with their own opinions and no two stories the same. In becoming an item of pop culture — hit cartoon *The Simpsons* once included a verse of "Tom Dooley" in an episode — even what little is known of the truth has been twisted.

What could have been a closed case, a dusty trial record in the North Carolina Archives and a solitary forgotten grave, over time has become the Appalachian equivalent of a Shakespearean tragedy. One historical fact that McCrumb couldn't get wrong: Though it had no legal force, Tom Dula was acquitted in 2001 after a petition circulated around Wilkes County.

Fact or fiction, it's how a story is told that makes it last.

### Writing the Ballad Novels: Sharyn McCrumb In Her Own Words

My father's family settled the North Carolina mountains in the 1790s, and I grew up in a swirl of tales: mountain legends, ballads and scraps of Appalachian history. My first ancestor to settle in these mountains was Malcolm McCourry, chronicled in my novel *The Songcatcher*. As a child in 1751 he was kidnapped from a Scottish island. He later practiced law in New Jersey and ended his days homesteading on the Carolina frontier. Perhaps from him I inherited my regard for books,

the gift of storytelling and my love of the mountain land, its music and its history.

I decided to become a writer in the second grade, when the rest of the class was evenly divided between cowboys and stewardesses, and, after publishing a few early comic novels written in graduate school, I settled in to explore mountain culture in my work.



Author Sharyn McCrumb is best known for her Ballad novels, set in Appalachia. She is pictured here holding Tom Dula's fiddle. Photo courtesy of Sharyn McCrumb

My "Ballad" novels, set in the Southern mountains, weave together the legends, natural wonders and contemporary issues of Appalachia. Each story is

Continued on next page

# Talking Tradition

## Storytelling Moves to Center Stage

By Molly Moore

According to Gary Carden, the Scot-Irish people of Appalachia don't communicate in dialogue. They communicate in stories.

"When I was a child, [storytelling] was called lying," Carden says. A renowned storyteller, Carden was raised by his Scot-Irish grandparents in the Balsam Mountains of Western North Carolina.

Carden recalls a childhood scene from his great-grandmother's funeral, where her daughter Elsie was overwhelmed with grief. Elsie pulled the corpse upright from the coffin and held her. "We'll never look on her sweet face again!" she cried, and collapsed over the coffin. Carden remembers a similar display from Elsie at the next family funeral and his grandfather telling his grandmother, "If you would, see if you can keep it a secret when I die. I don't want Elsie to know."

Most of Carden's stories come from tragic experiences that have acquired humor over the years. "If you're blessed or cursed with an exceptionally disastrous life, that's great material," he says.

Nearly two years ago, Carden formed a group called the Liars' Bench to revive the casual, tale-telling atmosphere of small Appalachian towns. Their storytelling programs have moved to an auditorium at Western Carolina University's Mountain Heritage Center in Cullowhee, N.C., and even with the auditorium's 92 seats

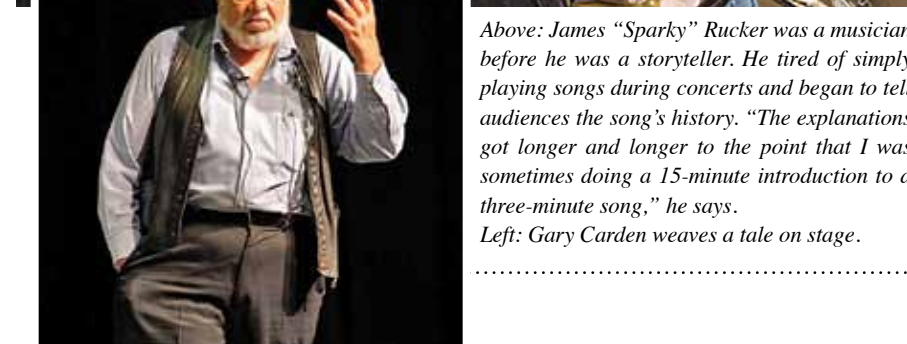
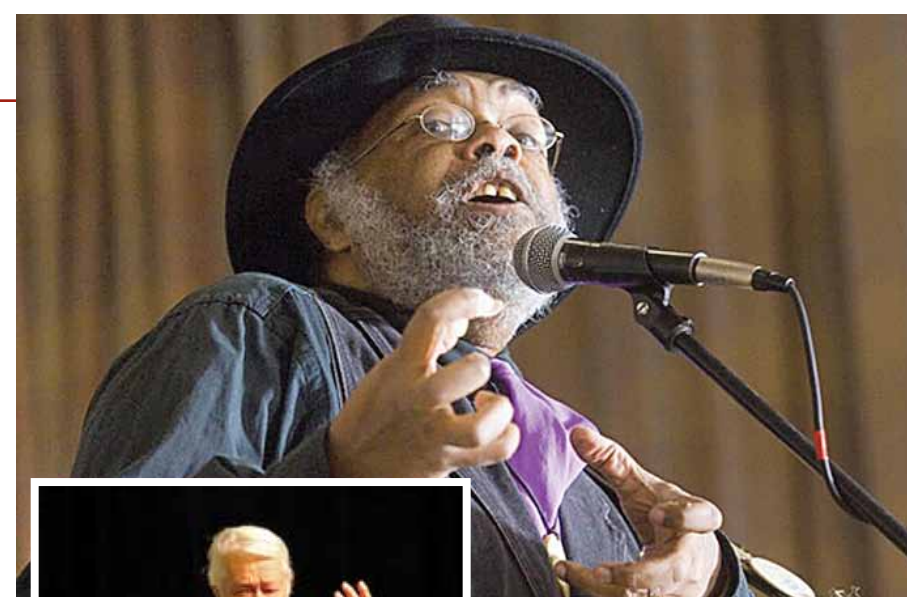
and crowds standing in the hallway, each event has still turned people away.

The popular Liars' Bench programs aren't the same as stories told during the winters of Carden's childhood, nor are they quite like the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tenn., or the hip Synergy Story Slams in Asheville, N.C. Instead, their stories, music and visual presentations study a regional theme. Carden hopes future Liars' Bench sessions will cover topics such as the last hanging in Webster County, N.C., and local lore surrounding a charismatic Cherokee chief from the 1950s.

Just down the road from Gary Carden on the Qualla Boundary — the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians' reservation — traditional tales are also moving into the spotlight. This summer, regularly scheduled storytelling sessions were held at a bonfire at Oconuluftee Islands Park and, near Halloween, the tribe held its first Myths and Legends Tour, featuring contemporary and ancient haunted tales.

"In a couple generations there has been a huge renaissance in storytelling and in passing [traditional] information along," artist and storyteller Davy Arch says. Some stories remain underground, such as tales that refer to sacred medicine or contain gender-specific information. But general folk tales from Cherokee, European and African traditions are resurfacing.

Growing up, acclaimed storyteller and folk musician James "Sparky" Rucker's family was closely tied to



Above: James "Sparky" Rucker was a musician before he was a storyteller. He tired of simply playing songs during concerts and began to tell audiences the song's history. "The explanations got longer and longer to the point that I was sometimes doing a 15-minute introduction to a three-minute song," he says.  
Left: Gary Carden weaves a tale on stage.

Knoxville's African-American Church of God. As a child, Rucker would listen as his father's large family told stories over supper. At annual memorial services for his grandfather, a prominent bishop in the church, he heard humorous "preacher tales" poking fun at the people in power. Older folks in the community shared Brer Rabbit tales, African-American stories that date to the days of Aesop's famed fables which were merged with Cherokee "trickster rabbit" tales during slavery.

"The fundamentalist preacher's role is to give the people a sense of mystery, that there's something beyond their meager lives," Rucker says. "And that's what the storyteller is for, too. As I

often tell audiences, these old folk tales and these old folk songs, these are the words of your ancestors being spoken directly to you."

Those audiences are growing. Some, like Carden, are concerned that the popularization of storytelling is drawing the form away from a poignant blend of humor and tragedy and toward a stand-up comedy future. But Sandra Kelley, editor of *Southern Appalachian Storytellers: Interviews with Sixteen Keepers of the Oral Tradition*, isn't worried.

"People need humor right now," Kelley says. "A storyteller can give that to you while they teach you a life lesson that you might never had heard any other way."

### Sharyn McCrumb In Her Own Words

Continued from previous page

built around a theme, intended to express an overall idea.

In *The Songcatcher*, a modern descendant of a mountain family looks for a ballad brought to this country by her ancestor, a Scotsman who fought in the American Revolution and homesteaded the frontier. The song passes from singer to singer through the family, giving readers glimpses of America's past. The song is

the constant, and to each succeeding generation the song resonates with a slightly different meaning.

The concept of "losing the land" is the key theme of *The Rosewood Casket*, as the land passes from Ice Age animals to the first people who settled here, then to the Native Americans, the settlers, and lately to the developers and urban professionals. *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter* explores the issue of industrial pollution, from the chestnut blight to the poisoning

of rivers by paper manufacturers.

The Civil War figures into my work in *Ghost Riders*, and again in *The Ballad of Tom Dooley* when I researched the legend to discover the real story behind America's most famous folk song.

In *She Walks These Hills*, everything and everyone is on a journey, beginning with the geological fact that the first journey

was made by the mountains themselves and exploring how people forced to leave a land they loved came to America. Hating the crowded, flat eastern seaboard, they

followed the valleys south-southwest down through Pennsylvania, until they came to a place where the ridges rise high above the valleys, where it looks and feels right. Like home. Like the place they left on the other side of the ocean. And they never knew that they were right back in the same mountains they left behind in Britain.

Sharyn McCrumb is an award-winning Southern writer, best known for her Appalachian "Ballad" novels, including the New York Times best sellers, *The Ballad of Frankie Silver* and *She Walks These Hills*.

# Jackson County Green Energy Park

## Garbage to Gas to Arts

By Cynthia Milner

It is hard to imagine that a landfill, the final place for mounds of household trash, could ever be a valuable resource, but Jackson County, N.C., is proving that even garbage has a use.

In 1994, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency created the Landfill Methane Outreach Program in an effort to reduce gas emissions from municipal landfills. The goal was to help communities find a way to capture methane and use it as a resource, eliminating leakage from the landfills and reducing environmental damage.

As a result of this plan, the town of Dillsboro, N.C., held a series of meetings to determine what to do with the methane gas at the county landfill, filled with 750,000 tons of old trash.

"The public was very supportive of an art facility that would bolster the already viable tourist industry," says Timm Muth, director of the Jackson County Green Energy Park. "The ideas just kept building on each other, and we finally settled on the fire arts — the arts that actually need fuel to create."

Methane is created when organic materials such as yard waste, food scraps and animal waste — most of your basic

landfill materials — decompose without the presence of oxygen. Approximately 60 percent of gas from a landfill is methane, which has roughly 27 times the environmental impact of carbon dioxide. The good news, however, is that methane can be used as an energy source for large generators, power plants, manufacturing facilities, furnaces, boilers — and kilns.

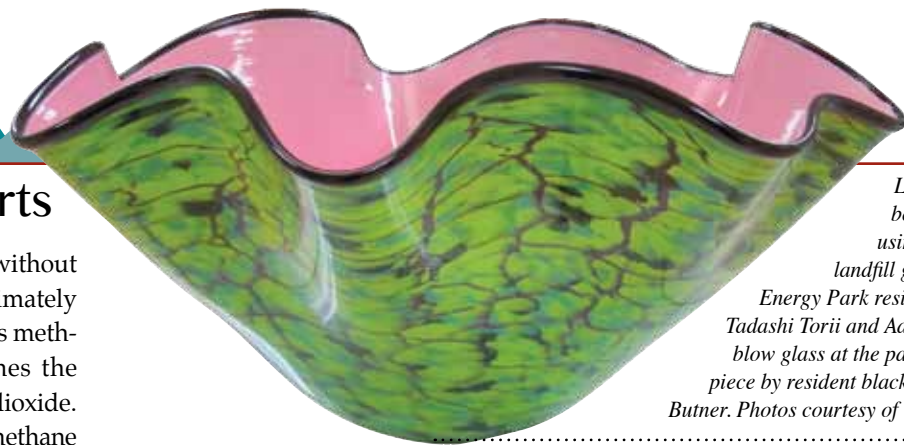
### Homemade HERITAGE

Blacksmithing, glass blowing, and pottery are all considered fire arts. Tadashi Torii, a glassblower and recent tenant at the park, explained that glassblowers could spend up to \$4,000 a month in fuel.

"Many artists and even glass manufacturers are going out of business," Torii says. "They can't afford the cost of fuel." A park and studio that uses methane gas as

fuel for glassblowers, foundries for blacksmiths and kilns for potters made perfect sense.

The park is located on eight acres of land next to the old landfill, in the former transfer station and recycling center. The building now houses a blacksmith shop, a glassblowers' studio and a gallery to display the artists' work. Recycled greenhouses were added and are heated with methane gas. A local florist and the Jackson County Grounds Depart-



Left: A glass bowl created using methane landfill gas. Below:

Energy Park resident artists Tadashi Torii and Aaron Shufelt blow glass at the park. Inset: A piece by resident blacksmith John Butner. Photos courtesy of Timm Muth



ment use the greenhouses to propagate and grow their own plant material, which saves \$ 40,000 for the county. A ceramics house is currently awaiting construction.

The concept was to provide fully functioning spaces and eliminate the need for artists to obtain large loans to open their own studios. They simply had to pay the park the first month's rent to cover the cost of the methane fuel, move in and start working.

For the park's resident blacksmith, John Butner, it is a perfect fit. "I wrote my first check to the park four years ago," he says, "and for a small business that started in bad economic times and continued in worse economic times, I'm doing okay."

The park opened in 2006, and in the same year won the Landfill Methane Outreach Program's project of the year award. To date, the park has prevented 888 tons of methane from

entering the atmosphere, equivalent to removing 916 vehicles from the road, or planting 1,305 acres of forest.

What was once a landfill and old industrial site is now home to artists and greenhouses — turning garbage to gas to art — a productive and innovative way to deal with trash.

To learn more about the park and events at the Jackson County Green Energy Park, visit [www.jcgep.org](http://www.jcgep.org) or call 828-631-0271. The park is open weekly for tours and holds regular classes, demonstrations and a yearly youth art festival. Check the website for dates.

# Woodworking 101

## From Forest to Furnishings

Woodworking has been described as humanity's attempt to garden indoors, to cultivate the loveliness of the woods within one's walls — a human activity that seeks not to fly, but to nest. It was Jesus' first profession. Most who've had the experience of working downed, local,

sustainably harvested or reclaimed timber know how to listen. The wood grain tells the story of the tree and speaks to you as its worked on a table saw and planer — or quietly admired.

Like many great art forms, woodworking grew out of the practical need

to create material tools and goods out of timber. As one of the world's oldest artisan techniques, its diverse expressions have been used to create ancient plows, sailing ships, butcher blocks, English Tudor homes, wagon wheels, carriages, split rail fences, Chinese Pagodas, baskets, wine

casks, Cherokee dwellings and pirate chests. If the human mind can imagine it, it is almost certain that it can be fashioned from wood. Below are a few of woodworking's many mediums and Appalachian woods, in admiration of this ancient and oh-so-modern art form.



### "Big Board" Carpentry

**Definition:** This type of woodworking utilizes large boards, often with "live" or unseasoned edges, to create structural accents or furniture.

**Examples:** Want to make a bar top out of a monolithic 18-foot-long oak slab that's three feet wide and four inches thick? This form of carpentry is perfect for you! While you're at it, go ahead and trim out your doors and windows in the same style, or make a staircase that will hold your house up.

*Photo by Patrick Dinnen*



### Luthiery

**Definition:** Luthiery is the age-old craft of creating stringed musical instruments from wood, often utilizing dense hardwoods such as maple and mahogany

**Examples:** What do Stradivarius violins, classical guitars, Martin Dreadnoughts and fiddles have in common? Yes, they all sound great — but they're also excellent examples of luthiery. If you enjoy detailed precision woodworking, perhaps a career as a luthier is right

*Photo by Molly Moore*



### Cabinetry

**Definition:** Wall-mounted or standing cabinets are created from different hard or soft woods with specific wood-jointing and carving techniques

**Examples:** French chefs and fine artists agree — cabinetry is just too cool. Build the kitchen of your dreams or design a series of minimalist European-inspired cabinets that hang on your kitchen wall with a "French Cleat." That way you can take your cabinets with you when you move in to your next dream house.

*Photo by Andreas Praelcke*



### Timber framing / "Post-and-Beam" Construction

**Definition:** This form of building construction uses heavy square timbers attached or joined to one another through specialized cuts and wood pegs.

**Examples:** Timber framing is a true Appalachian art form. Large rectangular timbers are jointed by velvet-smooth joinery and large, expertly lathed wooden pins. Create carports, covered decks or entire homes. Timber framing can't be beat for beautiful "bomb-proof" construction that you'll share with generations to come.

*Photo by Vermont Timber Works Inc.*



### Coopering

**Definition:** Coopers create containers and vessels out of wood with special attachment techniques and wood or metal bands.

**Examples:** Wine and whiskey both love aging in oak barrels — sometimes with a bit of fire-induced charring inside for a smoky finish. Perhaps your tastes run more toward ice cream and homemade hand-churned butter? All these spirits and delectables owe a huge debt to coopering, the art that joins wood together precisely enough to hold water.

*Dewet (from Wikipedia)*



### Whittling

**Definition:** Whittling is the carving of shapes from wood or bone.

**Examples:** Small statues, candle sticks, busts, toys — all can be sculpted while sitting in a rocking chair on the porch with some of the simplest and most elegant tools ever conceived by carpentry.

*Kaiserb (from Wikipedia)*



### Chair Caning

**Definition:** Chair caning is the method of weaving seats for chairs or other pieces of furniture.

**Examples:** Traditional Appalachian "settin' chairs" woven from river cane provided comfortable seats for front porch tale-telling. Be warned: If you offer a caned chair to an unwelcome guest, they might wear out their welcome.

*Photo by Moutain Maid*

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# Appalachian Documentaries

## Films Scrutinize the Impact of Coal

By Theresa L. Burris

Residents of Appalachia have encountered prejudice through all types of media, some based on stereotypes of coal mining society. Fortunately, conscientious documentarians have surfaced over the years. They counter negative images of the region and examine the humanitarian struggles that come from the nation's fossil fuel dependency and its inevitable consequences to Appalachians, their land, and their culture.



Mimi Pickering's *Hazel Dickens: It's Hard to Tell the Singer from the Song* (2001, Appalshop) gives a glimpse into the life of the singer/songwriter powerhouse. Viewers witness the power of song as protest when they hear Dickens croon "Black Lung" a cappella in homage to her brother who died from the dreaded miners' disease in a state of destitute poverty.

Pickering's *The Buffalo Creek Flood: An Act of Man* (1975), her first documentary for the nonprofit media arts center Appalshop, offers tragic footage of the 1972 slurry dam failure that killed 125 people. The testimony from victims of the flood is compelling, as is the arrogance of the Pittston coal executive, who unabashedly talks down to Pickering when she interviews him.

Catherine Pancake maintains a

similarly unflinching stance in *Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal and the Fight for Coalfield Justice* (2006, Bullfrog Films). She looks at coal-mining issues in the twenty-first century, focusing on the destruction that occurs as a result of mountaintop removal and offering a space for the human victims to express their outrage.

### Homemade HERITAGE

In *Coal Country* (2009, Evening Star Productions) Phylis Geller and Marilyn Evans issue a hard-hitting look into the lives of those living with the devastation of mountaintop removal or residing in the dark shadows of coal-fired power plants.

David Novack's *Burning the Future: Coal in America* (2008, Specialty Studios Entertainment) dispels the industry-inspired myth of "clean coal" as he explores the toxic sludge and slurry ponds that result from "cleaning" the coal.

Robert Salyer delves even further into the dangers of coal waste run amok in *Sludge* (2005, Appalshop), which covers the 2000 Martin County, Ky., coal slurry spill, when 306 million gallons of sludge burst through a storage pit and into two tributaries of the Tug Fork River. Salyer captures how coal officials attempted to reassure people of the benign nature of the sludge by saying there was nothing to fear because



Everyday Appalachians' stories are heard through cultural and environmental documentaries produced by the Appalshop Media Arts Center and other studios. Photo Courtesy of Tom Hansell

everything in the sludge could be found on the periodic table.

In 2009, Tom Hansell produced *The Electricity Fairy* (Appalshop) about the building of Dominion Power's coal-fired power plant in Southwest Virginia and is currently working on another documentary, *After Coal: Welsh and Appalachian Mining Communities*, which explores Welsh lessons on community

and cultural survival after coal.

Another ongoing documentary project is examining the health tolls of a different fuel. *Acceptable Limits*, which has been in production since Feb. 2011, examines an aging nuclear plant in Erwin, Tenn., and the community impacted by the plant's perilous pollution.

As threats to Appalachia evolve, so will the films that show the truth.

## Grassroots Filmmaking in Appalachia

By Tom Hansell

Amazing documentaries come from the Appalachian region. From the Academy Award-winning *Harlan County, U.S.A.* to the recent premiere of *The Last Mountain* at the Sundance Film Festival, these mountains are full of compelling stories that have attracted documentary filmmakers from across the world.

A great source of homegrown documentaries from the Appalachian region is the Appalshop Media Arts Center in Whitesburg, Ky., where I have worked since 1990. Appalshop's work provides an interesting model of how the arts can help create sustainable mountain communities.

I was drawn to documentary filmmaking because of my desire to make films that create a better future. My most

recent project is titled *After Coal: Welsh and Appalachian Mining Communities*. This documentary will examine how Welsh coal mining communities adapted after the nation's mines were closed, and explore how Appalachian mining communities can learn from the Welsh experience to create a healthy economy.

In the planning phase of a project, there are two simple ideas I use to maximize the impact of my work:

### 1. Clearly state vision and goals

Although documentary is a visual medium, writing down a plan will help achieve that vision. It is important to clearly state what the project is about and where it will be seen when approaching people to interview or act as guides to locations. A short written description is a valuable tool that will help in

finding funding and distributors for the project.

### 2. Create Partnerships

Connecting with groups and organizations that have a stake in the people and issues of the project helps with fundraising and assists with distribution of the documentary. Partners may be groups like the 13 members of the Alliance For Appalachia, local collectives like the Birdhouse in Knoxville, Tenn., or educational institutions such as local community colleges, schools, or universities.

Above all, I've realized that being true to the vision for the project and cultivating patience and perseverance helps create a better future for Appalachia and the world.

Learn more about the grassroots films of Appalachia at [appalshop.org](http://appalshop.org).

# Editorial

## Time to Stop the Denial

Let's talk about losing touch. According to a 2011 study by the Pew Research Center, fewer Americans believe in global warming than did five years ago. Politicians treat climate change as a non-issue and wage war on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as if Americans asked for it. In reality, the opposites are resolutely true. Surveys by the Public Policy Polling show that Americans want the environment protected and peer-reviewed studies confirm that we cannot afford to wait any longer to accept and proactively deal with climate change. After all, these are not political issues to be used; they are issues of conscience.

Upon completing the two-year Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature study, American physicist Richard Muller, a long-time climate skeptic, changed his position. "Global warming is real," he declared in the *Wall Street Journal*, citing findings that global temperatures have risen around 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit over the past 50 years.

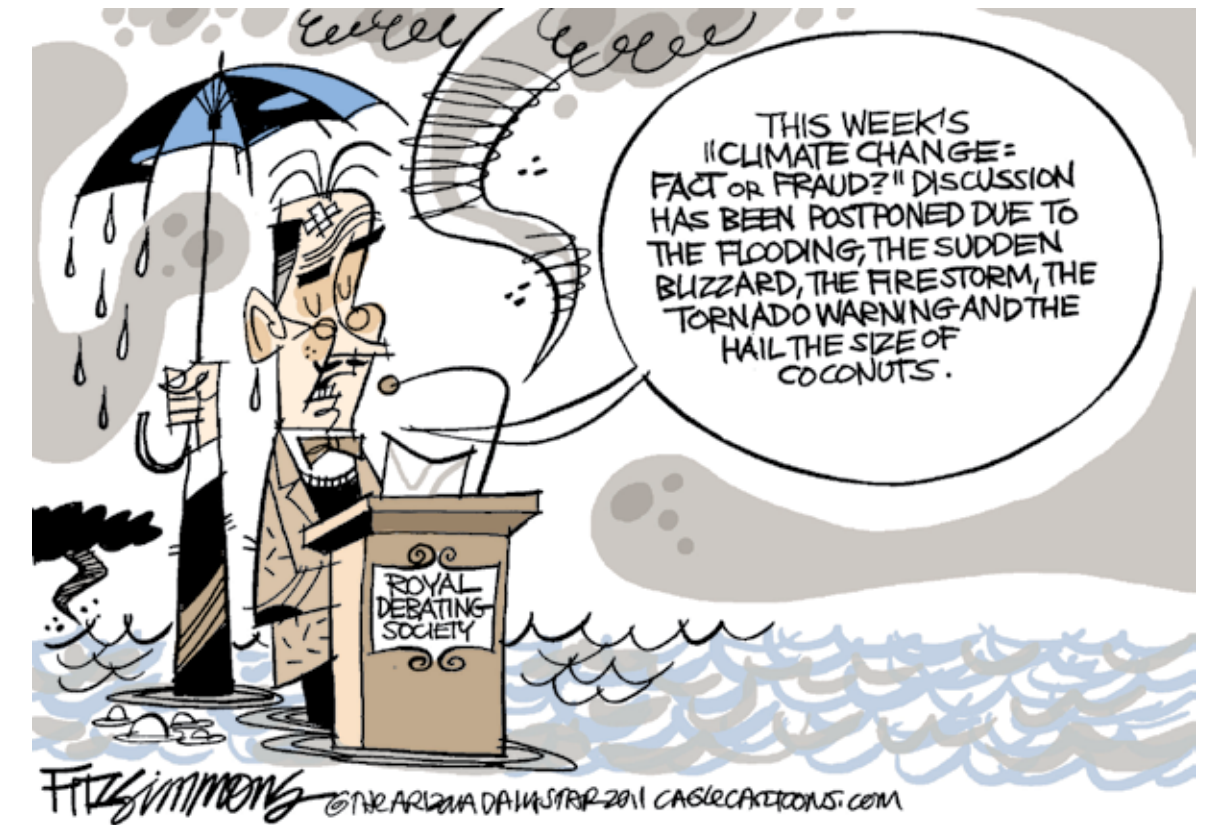
It's unlikely these are the results that the right-wing Charles Koch Foundation (one of the study's funders) had expected or hoped for. The foundation released a statement reminding that, amidst the media frenzy, the Berkeley study is under peer review. But Koch is a climate change denier, not a skeptic, an important distinction as one changes their views to fit the evidence — the other ignores it.

At a Nov. 14 congressional hearing organized by the ranking member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Muller briefed policymakers on the results of the study. There is no way to know, however, if Muller's recommendations will result in any positive change.

Meanwhile, the EPA continues to fight off attacks by politicians clinging to the unsupported argument that environmental regulations kill jobs. Surveys by Public Policy Polling show that attacks on the agency's ability to protect the air and water won't get politicians far with the majority of American voters. Among the results: 78 percent of voters want the EPA to hold polluters accountable for their toxic emissions.

It's time to stop denying and start listening. How many more so-called studies funded by pro-industry climate change deniers will yield the same results, while they continue to ignore the fact that 95 percent of the scientific community accepts climate change?

In 2010, we saw the largest increase in carbon dioxide pumped into the atmosphere since the industrial revolution began — 564 million more tons than in 2009, an increase of six percent. The approval rating of Congress is hovering around nine percent, the lowest ever. I would not go so far as to claim that these numbers are correlated, but I'm not going to deny it.



## Viewpoint

### A Simple Approach to Stewardship

An excerpt from a sermon by Pat Watkins

Lots of people of faith have rejected the overwhelming attractions of consumerism and have begun to give simple gifts at Christmas. Consumerism, which seems to overshadow Christmas far more than any theological reflections, has caused untold damage to our relationships with each other and with the planet. And as those relationships suffer, so too does our relationship with God.

Christian theology is clear. A simple life, free of possessions, is a God-centered life in which spirituality can have room to exist. Jesus told a story in the New Testament about a farmer who at harvest had more crops than he knew what to do with. Instead of giving away his excess food, he decided to tear down his small barns and build bigger ones so he'd have room for all his

stuff. Then he decided to eat, drink and be merry. God called him a fool!

Greed is at the root of almost every environmental problem the planet faces. Mountaintop removal coal mining is a great example. All we seem to care about is selling coal in order to make a few rich people even richer. It's not about supplying electricity or providing jobs in Appalachia. It's about building even bigger barns for those in power while the people and the planet, continue to suffer. Greed is even more important than human life, as was evidenced in the Upper Big Branch mine disaster of 2010 in which 29 Massey Energy miners lost their lives in the name of greed.

The Psalms have beautiful words about the mountains: "The peaks of the mountains are God's also," and, "Let the mountains sing together for joy." I can't imagine what God must feel as He watches the mountains of Appalachia disappear.

Nowhere in the Biblical witness is there any evidence that

God created the mountains so we could destroy them in order to become even richer; in fact, the Biblical witness declares just the opposite. When humans succumb to greed, our relationship with God is in peril.

In the Old Testament, God instructed the Israelites to allow the land to observe a Sabbath — or let the land lie unplanted — every seventh year. But the Israelites disobeyed God and ignored the Sabbath rule to make more money with that planting. When greed becomes more important than all else, our relationships with each other, the planet, and God become compromised and can be lost all together.

As we enter this holiday season, may we contemplate a simple life for ourselves and our families in terms of our gift-giving, and may we contemplate a simple life for the land as well. My prayer for all of you this holiday season is that in love and light you will find your birth and that in peace and freedom you will continue to redeem the Earth.

## Appalachian Coal Mining Jobs Reach 14-year High

### Increase Comes Despite Arguments that Regulations Kill Jobs

Some congressional representatives claim that federal oversight of mountaintop removal mining in Appalachia threatens domestic coal production and the regions coal mining jobs, but new government data indicates the opposite is true.

Data released by the Mine Safety and Health Administration show that the number of jobs at Appalachian coal mines in the first three quarters of 2011 is at its highest level since 1997. In contrast to previous predictions by coal industry supporters, the number of miners in Appalachia has increased by six percent since the Obama Administration announced plans to strengthen the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's scrutiny of mountaintop removal permits in June of 2009.

Since the April 2010 issuance

of an interim guidance on surface mine permitting in Appalachia by the EPA, the number of Appalachian miners has grown by 10 percent. Based on this correlation, environmental groups contend that strengthened enforcement of mine safety and environmental rules is creating jobs in Appalachia.

Congress has held numerous hearings this year suggesting that government regulation of surface mining leads to fewer mining jobs. A Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources hearing in November involved legislation introduced by Representative Bill Johnson (R-OH) called the "Coal Miner Employment and Domestic Energy Infrastructure Protection Act." Johnson's bill would stop the federal Office of Surface Min-

ing Reclamation and Enforcement from rewriting the federal stream buffer zone rule. The bill would also greatly restrict the surface mining agency's ability to regulate coal mines by prohibiting it from taking any actions that would reduce coal mine employment, reduce the amount of coal available for mining, consumption, or export, or designate an area as unsuitable for surface mining techniques such as mountaintop removal.

Some members of Congress have claimed that deregulation of coal mining is necessary to increase domestic coal production. But, according to the Federal Reserve data released in November, the capacity of active and permitted coal mines is the highest it has been in 25 years. At the same time, coal mine capacity is being utilized at its lowest rate in 25 years.

## BLM / OSM Merger Postponed

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar has announced a postponement of a merger between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE) to Feb. 15, 2012.

In late October, Salazar announced the proposal and received immediate and staunch criticism. Some argued that the two agencies have little overlap and expressed doubts over whether the merger would be effective. Others questioned if Salazar's proposal is legal, since both the BLM and OSMRE were created by acts of Congress.

At a hearing held by the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, panelists gave testimony questioning the effects of the merger. West Virginia University College of Law Professor Patrick McGinley noted the order was made with no prior notice or consultation of Congress, coalfield citizens or the coal industry and argued that mingling OSMRE employees with those of agencies that promote development or use of coal is explicitly prohibited by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA).

The BLM is the federal agency tasked with administration of the United States' public lands, while the OSMRE, an unrelated branch of the Department of the Interior, is entrusted with implementation and enforcement of 1977's SMCRA legislation.

## Proposed Coal Ash Regulations Weaker than Household Waste Laws

Nearly three years after the Tennessee Valley Authority coal ash disaster spilled over a billion gallons of toxic sludge into the Emory River in Harriman, Tenn., the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is set to finalize guidelines regulating coal ash ponds. However, a bill in the Senate could put a permanent hold on the EPA's ability to create federal protections on coal ash.

Currently, there are no federal laws governing coal ash disposal. If passed, Senate Bill 1751, the Coal Residuals Reuse and Management Act would essentially prohibit the EPA from implementing a national

standard for the management of coal ash ponds.

Coal ash is the nation's second-largest waste stream after municipal garbage. Coal ash slurry — a by-product of burning coal for electricity — is highly toxic. According to a 2010 EPA risk assessment, people living near an unlined coal ash pond are at a 1-in-50 risk of cancer from arsenic exposure.

The same month that the coal ash bill reached the Senate, the EPA released new data showing a threefold increase in the number of "significant hazard" coal ash ponds since the 2009 inventory, which brings the total to 181. There are 47 "high hazard" coal

ash ponds. Ratings assess the damage that would likely occur should a dam containing coal ash sludge fail. "High hazard" dams would endanger human life during a dam failure.

Just this past October, a bluff at a We Energies coal plant in Wisconsin collapsed and sent an estimated 2,300 cubic yards of ash and soil from a former coal ash landfill into Lake Michigan. The EPA has presented two coal ash regulation proposals for public hearings and comments. The agency's Subtitle C plan would classify coal ash as a "special waste" and provide the strongest protections of the proposed plans. The agency's other proposal, Subtitle D, would rank coal ash as "non-hazardous waste" but still allow some federal oversight of its disposal. Since the rule-making process for coal ash began, the agency has received over 450,000 public comments re-

questing that coal ash be regulated as hazardous waste.

If passed, the Senate bill would block both of these proposals and leave coal ash disposal standards weaker than the federal rules that govern household waste. The bill does not require that states inspect ponds for structural stability, detect groundwater leaks, clean up or close slurry ponds that contaminate groundwater or consider public health and the environment.

Proponents of the Senate and House versions contend that any federal regulation of coal ash will impair job growth. A recent study from Tufts University shows that, even when using the coal industry's significantly higher coal ash regulation cost estimate, implementation of the EPA's Subtitle C proposal would create 28,000 jobs.

## Mine Agency Releases Inspection Results, Audited for Poor Fine Collection

In the wake of the 2010 Upper Big Branch mine disaster in Raleigh County, W.Va., the Mine Health and Safety Administration announced a plan to increase their presence in monitoring mine sites for safety hazards in Appalachia. The results of the October impact inspections were announced Nov. 22.

The eight inspected coal mines were issued 145 citations and 18 orders. A mine in Pike County, Ky., operated by Viper Coal LLC., received eight citations for mining in excess of the 20-foot maximum cut depth and exposing miners to potentially fatal roof falls.

Impact inspections target mines that have poor compliance history and require

"increased agency attention and enforcement." Since they began, 6,383 citations, 614 orders and 22 safeguards have resulted from 383 inspections.

Nearly a week after the inspection results were announced, the Department of Labor released an audit documenting MSHA's failure to effectively enforce and collect fines for violations under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977.

MSHA is scheduled to release its official report on the Upper Big Branch Mine Disaster on Dec. 6.

The full audit report concerning MSHA's fine collection can be found on the Office of the Inspector General's website: [oig.dol.gov/auditreports.htm](http://oig.dol.gov/auditreports.htm)

## Delays and Setbacks for EPA Clean Air Rules

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced another delay of new standards limiting the greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants and oil refineries. The delay is the latest setback for proposed clean air rules governing everything from smog to mercury pollution.

As the EPA plans safer air pollution rules, some in Congress have criticized the EPA's proposed regulations, alleging they would kill jobs and hamper eco-

nomics recovery. The delay comes despite new data showing the largest increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide emissions (for the year 2010) since the start of the industrial revolution - 564 million tons more than 2009 - a six percent increase.

EPA administrator Lisa Jackson reports that the finalized plan for power plants will roll out early next year. The new deadline to finalize rules concerning oil refinery emissions is now mid-November, 2012.

### NEWSBITES FROM COAL COUNTRY

**Surface Mines as Military Training Facilities:** Military personnel bound for Afghanistan will be making a stop in West Virginia to learn to operate Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles. The trainings will take place on reclaimed surface mine land adjacent to the West Virginia National Guard training complex. The terrain was chosen for its similarities to eastern Afghanistan.

**Baard Energy Drops Plans for Coal-to-Liquids Plant:** Due to sustained and outspoken citizen opposition and financial setbacks, Beard Energy has cancelled a proposed \$5.5 billion coal-to-liquids plant in Columbiana County, Ohio. The coal-to-liquids facility would have used 9.3 million tons of coal a year, including Ohio high-sulfur coal.

**West Virginia Gov. Tomblin Sworn in, Swears to**

**fight EPA:** On Nov. 13, the 35th Governor of West Virginia, Earl Ray Tomblin, was sworn into office at the state capitol in Charleston. Tomblin has continuously denounced EPA regulations. In September, as acting Governor, Tomblin gave testimony at a Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resource hearing where he decryed the EPA's "anti-coal" agenda and claimed West Virginian's owe their financial health partially to coal.

**Coal Industry Wants Homeland Security Exemption:** The Department of Homeland Security recently accepted public comment on a 2008 rule proposing the regulation of the sale and transfer of ammonium nitrate. Traditionally a farm fertilizer, the compound can be used to create bombs via widely available instructions. The National Mining Association (NMA) has requested an exemption for the purchase of

ammonium nitrate used solely for the production of explosives. A letter from Tawny A. Bridgeford, the association's deputy general counsel, claims the mining industry's ammonium nitrate purchases are adequately regulated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and that "[The] Department of Homeland Security should have a more accurate accounting for the costs of its regulatory program before finalizing its proposed rule."

**Investor Backs Away from Carbon-Capture Program:** Ameren, a Midwest power company and a primary investor in an effort to implement commercial scale carbon capture and sequestration, backed out of the venture over financial concerns. Originally created in 2003, the venture FutureGen 2.0, received \$1 billion through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the conversion of one power plant.



**APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION**  
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### Rally to Save Ison Rock

Hundreds of citizens gathered at U.S. Environmental Protection Agency headquarters in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 16 to call on the EPA and White House to block a proposed mountaintop removal permit that would destroy Ison Rock Ridge in Wise County, Va. More than 2,000 residents living in the five communities that surround the mountain would be impacted by the permit. Members of the Wise Energy for Virginia Coalition joined Wise County residents and several other groups to deliver a letter asking EPA officials to deny the 1,200-acre permit. Prior to the rally, more than 8,000 comments were submitted to the EPA asking the agency to keep Ison Rock Ridge standing.



### Citizens Gather in D.C. for Mini-Lobby Week

This fall, citizens from across Appalachia came to Washington, D.C., to meet with decision-makers about mountaintop removal and coal ash disposal issues. Not only did these citizens sit down and meet with their representatives, they also hosted a screening of the film *The Last Mountain* on Capitol Hill which was open to all congressional members and their staff.

We were honored to join Representatives Kucinich, Slaughter and Yarmuth in hosting the film with non-profit partners Natural Resources Defense Council, EarthJustice, and the Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program.

Appalachian Voices and the Alliance for Appalachia host regular events in the capital for citizens from Appalachia and around the country to gather and talk about the impacts of mountaintop removal. This year alone, hundreds of individuals have met with

congressional offices as well as the agencies tasked with regulating mining.

### Big Thanks to My Morning Jacket

On Aug. 21, My Morning Jacket and opening guest Neko Case played a concert in Charlotte, N.C., that benefited Appalachian Voices. My Morning Jacket is based in Louisville, Ky., and its members have long been aware of the destruction in their home state caused by mountaintop removal mining.

Jim James, front man of the band, has been active in the movement. He produced *Dear Companion*, an album by Ben Sollee and Daniel Martin Moore, who contributed the proceeds to iLoveMountains.org and performed a concert in Louisville last December benefitting Kentuckians for the Commonwealth.

With the support of Air Traffic Control, an organization that helps musicians promote social justice, My Morning Jacket raised \$2,882 for Appalachian Voices at their Charlotte concert.



### Kids in the Creek: Connecting Youth to Their Watersheds

Alan Felker, eighth grade science teacher at Hardin Park Middle School in Boone, N.C., believes it's important to expose kids to the environment around them. In North Carolina, eighth grade students are required to study state river basins and water quality issues. Felker took this opportunity to expose his students to our local and regional water programs.

Erin Savage, Appalachian Voices' Water Quality Associate, spent a day in Felker's classes talking with the students about topics ranging from protecting the Watauga River from pollution to Clean Water Act litigation in Kentucky. Later in the week, we assisted with a field trip to a site along the New River, where students learned to measure stream velocity and turbidity, and identify macro invertebrates. After completing the lab, students cleared several bags of trash from that section of the New.

"The New River is in our backyard, yet many students have never really explored the wonders of this important river system," says Felker.

In the spring of 2012, Felker's students will begin a study of Hardin Creek and explore the possibilities of restoring sections of the creek between Hardin Park and Watauga High School. Felker strives to not



Hands-on activities are connecting students at Hardin Park Middle School in Boone, N.C. to their watersheds and helping them learn about issues ranging from water pollution to Clean Water Act litigation. Photo by Erin Savage.

only educate his students, but also show them how they can have a positive effect on their environment.



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

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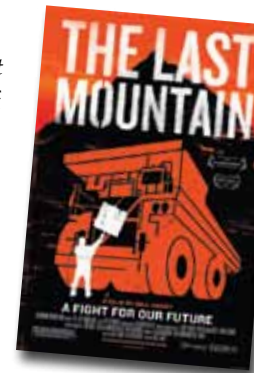
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### Universities Nationwide Screen *The Last Mountain*

This November, universities across the country hosted screenings of *The Last Mountain* as part of a coordinated effort to raise awareness about the impacts of mountaintop removal coal mining.

American University was one of many campuses that showed the film to a packed audience. Following the film, volunteers from Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards of Southwest Virginia led a Q-and-A.

Appalachian Voices partnered with many local venues this summer to host screenings of the film. It was released on DVD last month. For more information visit [thelastmountainmovie.com](http://thelastmountainmovie.com).



# Appalachian Voices BUSINESS LEAGUE

**New & Renewing Members — June/July 2011**

Bare Essentials -- Boone, NC	Care-Full Carpets -- Marshall, VA
Bob McD. Green & Associates	Doe Ridge Pottery -- Boone, NC
Attorney at Law -- Johnson City, TN	Green Tree Experts -- Hillsborough, NC
Community Garden Market -- Berkeley Springs, WV	Keeper Springs -- Dover, MA

To become a business member visit [AppalachianVoices.org](http://AppalachianVoices.org) or call us at 877-APP-VOICE



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*The 2012 Appalachian Mountain Photo Exhibition will begin Feb. 3 at the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts and run through June 2. The contest features six categories and amateur and professional photographers alike have submitted images related to life in Appalachia. Pictured above is "Not Fit for Man or Beast," by Kristian Jackson, a 2011 AMPC Finalist. Read Kristian's story on Southern nordic skiing beginning page 4 of this issue. Check out [appmntphotocomp.org](http://appmntphotocomp.org) for more info about the competition.*

## GET INVOLVED environmental & cultural events in the region

### Lewis Creek Restoration

**Dec. 10, 10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.:** Volunteer with Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy in Hendersonville, N.C. to restore a bog habitat and construct a trail extension on Lewis Creek. Volunteers will spread wood chips to help form the new section of trail and restore the ecological integrity of the bog by removing invasive plants. Visit [cmlc.org](http://cmlc.org)

### Sugarfest on Sugar Mountain

**Dec. 10-11:** Head up to Sugar Mountain during Sugarfest for ski and snowboard equipment demos, bluegrass music, fireworks, preseason adult ski clinic featuring Olympians Diann Roffe, and Keely Kelleher, rail jam sponsored by RIDE Snowboards, and lodging specials are some of Sugarfest's fun happenings. Visit: [seesugar.com/tourism/sugarfest](http://seesugar.com/tourism/sugarfest)

### Asheville Storytellers at UNCA

**Dec. 11, 2:30 p.m.:** Listen to five master storytellers at the Center for Creative Retirement Reuter Center with tales to help you through the holidays. Five master storytellers will delight us with tales of joy, stress and far-out family dynamics – all those things that appear center stage during the holiday season. \$5/suggested donation. Visit [unca.edu/ncccr](http://unca.edu/ncccr)

### Brew & View Movie Night in Afton: The Last Mountain

**Dec. 13, 7 p.m.:** Join Appalachian Voices staff at the Blue Mountain Brewery in Afton, Va. or a screening of *The Last Mountain*, a documentary that shines a light on how America's energy needs are met. All proceeds go to Appalachian Voices. Reservations are suggested but walk-ins are welcome. 40 seats available. \$7 Visit [bluemountainbrewery.com](http://bluemountainbrewery.com)

### High Country Local CSA Workshop

**Dec. 15, 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.:** Join NC Co-operative Extension, the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), and a panel of successful local CSA farmers on Thursday, December 15, 2011 to learn more about the basics (in the morning session) and detailed logistics (in the afternoon) of successfully running a CSA. \$15 includes lunch. Visit: [highcountrylocalfirst.org](http://highcountrylocalfirst.org)

### Coal River Mountain Watch Screening The Last Mountain

**Dec. 15, 7 p.m.:** Coal River Mountain Watch is hosting a screening of *The Last Mountain* at The Turnaround in Princeton, W.Va.. The special screening will include Bo Webb and others. Come out and learn about the destruction of mountaintop removal in the Coal River Valley and throughout Appalachia. Admission is free, donations are appreciated. Visit: [crmw.net](http://crmw.net)

### Winter Solstice Night Hike

**Dec. 22:** Celebrate the darkness of the longest night and quietly welcome the return of the sun to the northern hemisphere on this short stroll (with flashlights) to Hooker Falls, N.C.. Meet at Hooker Falls parking lot, weather permitting. 7-9 p.m.. Free. Call Environmental & Conservation Organization at (828) 692-0385 and visit: [eco-wnc.org](http://eco-wnc.org).

### Ky Artists Partner for Clean Energy

**Dec. 29:** Musicians Jim James of My Morning Jacket, Ben Sollee, Daniel Martin Moore, and Dan Dorff along with Kentucky authors Silas House and Jason Howard are joining together to raise awareness and funds for statewide grassroots organization Kentuckians For The Commonwealth. Doors at 6 p.m., concert at 7 p.m.. \$35. Call (502) 767-5735 or visit: [kftc.org](http://kftc.org)

### Tennessee Wild: New Year's Day Hike

**Jan. 1:** Start 2012 right with Tennessee Wild on a hike to Big Frog Mountain. Lunch and a toast of sparkling cider will be provided. Total length of this strenuous hike is close to 12 miles and involves more than 2000' of elevation gain. A short car shuttle is required. Limited to 12 participants. Visit: [tnwild.org](http://tnwild.org).

### Ric Ledford and Reems Creek Incident

**Jan. 5:** Check out this bluegrass four-piece at the Mountain Heritage Center's regular First Thursday Concert and Jam. The Mountain Heritage Center is part of Western Carolina University and the show is open to the public at the center's auditorium. Concert 7-8 p.m., Open jam 8-9 p.m.. Free. Visit: [wcu.edu](http://wcu.edu)

### Winter Elk Watches

**Jan. 14-15, 28-29, Feb. 18-19, 25-26:** Visit Kentucky's Buckhorn Lake State Resort Park and reserve your spot on the van to see these majestic animals, reintroduced to eastern Kentucky in 1997. Package includes dinner and lodging night of arrival (day before actual tour day) with breakfast and transportation to the elk site. \$150 per couple. Visit: [parks.ky.gov/calendar/details/winter-elk-watches/16324/](http://parks.ky.gov/calendar/details/winter-elk-watches/16324/)

### 2nd Annual High Country Telefest

**Jan 21.:** Join the High Country Nordic Association at Beech Mountain Ski Resort for their 2nd annual Telefest, a friendly gathering of telemarkers to share good company, equipment, and technique and celebrate the revival of telemark skiing in the North Carolina High Country. There will be telemark skiing workshops for men and women of all ability levels. Find the group on Facebook.

Email [voice@appvoices.org](mailto:voice@appvoices.org) to be included in our Get Involved listing. Deadline for the next issue will be Friday, January 27, at 5 p.m. for events taking place between Feb. 5 and April 5, 2012.

### Winter Warmer 2012

**Jan. 21:** The fifth annual Winter Warmer Beer Festival takes place at the Asheville Civic Center. Shake those winter blues with live music, fine food and tasty beverages. Proceeds from the event benefit environmental organization River Link. \$39. Visit: [brewscruise.com/beerfest](http://brewscruise.com/beerfest)

### Green Interfaith Network Speaker Series

**Jan. 15:** Green Interfaith Network, Inc is continuing its monthly Speaker Series on the intersection of faith and environment in Appalachia into 2012. Join the conversation in Johnson City, Tenn.. Free. Visit: [greeninterfaith.org](http://greeninterfaith.org)

### Blowing Rock Winterfest

**Jan. 26-29:** Join the Village of Blowing Rock to celebrate the fun side of winter at the 14th Annual Blowing Rock Winterfest! Chili Cook-Off, WinterPaws, an icy Polar Plunge, WinterFeast and more. Prices for events vary. Visit: [blowingrockwinterfest.com/](http://blowingrockwinterfest.com/)

### Fly Fishing Course

**Feb. 25-26:** Anglers, rejoice! Winter winds give way to warmer days and the fishing season nears. Prepare to learn the essentials of fly-fishing from the region's finest instructors at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Ga.. Two-day course is \$295. Visit: [callawaygardens.com](http://callawaygardens.com)