

FREE

The Appalachian VOICE

October/November 2013

Traditions of Resistance

Lessons from the struggle for justice in Appalachia



Appalachia's Contested History

The Spirit of Foxtire

ALSO INSIDE

- TRIP PLANNER: Historical Hidden Treasures
- Rebound of the Peregrine
- Citizens Speak Out on Power Plant Pollution



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A Note from Our Executive Director

The history of Appalachia is traced in the lines of mountain ridges receding in the distance, the gurgle of cold streams running over ancient boulders, and in the songs and stories of the region's people. Appalachia's human history is interwoven with the history of the land.

In this issue of *The Appalachian Voice*, we explore these connections between place, people and time. We learn about some of the early advocates who sought to protect the people of Appalachia by protecting their land on p.8, and celebrate the museums, trails and battlefields that embody our mountain heritage on p.10.

History changes over time, and its accuracy largely depends on who does the telling. As guest writer and former *Voice* editor Bill Kovarik points out, it takes constant vigilance to preserve the truths that some powerful forces would rather let us forget. Follow Bill's journey into West Virginia's contested history beginning on p. 12.

The story of Appalachia's land and people is still unfolding, and every day we have the opportunity to chart a better future. Appalachian Voices and partners recently launched a bold new plan for clean energy in Virginia (see p. 22). Called New Power for the Old Dominion, the campaign will insist that state utilities, regulators and lawmakers get serious about clean energy.



Together we can work to make sure the next century's history books remember these years as a time when people across the region united to hold polluters accountable and build a cleaner, more just Appalachia for all. We hope you'll join us.

For the mountains,

Tom

Tom Cormons, Executive Director

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Appalachia's proud history is steeped in tales of defiance, creativity and resilience. This issue, we devote a special section to stories of our mountain past.

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About the Cover

With a brilliant eye for natural beauty, D. Rex Miller took this scenic photograph of a restored grist mill along Glade Creek in West Virginia, at Babcock State Park. Miller is a member of Appalachian Voices and a native of North Carolina's Appalachian Mountains. As an enthusiastic photographer and a passionate supporter of preserving and protecting Appalachia's wild spaces, he hopes to inspire others to cherish the natural environment. Visit: drexmillerphotography.com



Progress on Black Lung Prevention

By Kimber Ray

After over three years of delay, a proposal for stricter coal dust standards appears to be moving forward. The U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration has submitted a final draft of its rules to the Office of Management and Budget for review. This development followed a letter sent by Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) to President Obama in which Rockefeller urged the White House to address delays in approving new coal dust regulations.

Coal dust is connected to black lung disease, an irreversible and potentially fatal condition that has experienced an unexpected resurgence since the late 1990s. Although exposure limits on coal dust were first set by the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, the

number of deaths from black lung since 1970 stands at over 70,000.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration initially proposed cutting allowable exposure limits on coal dust in half in 2010, but the rule was repeatedly delayed. It remains uncertain what MSHA has included in the final rule. However, MSHA cannot adjust the rules without approval from the Office of Management and Budget, which has previously taken many months to approve new mining regulations.

Rockefeller, a long-time advocate for mine safety, has been instrumental in pushing for tighter limits on coal dust exposure. He called on the Office of Management and Budget to expedite their review of the final proposal, and introduced new

legislation this past July. His bill, the Black Lung Health Improvements Act of 2013 (S. 1416), would require that coal dust limits be updated twice a year until disease rates decline, streamline the process of applying for black lung disability claims and create funding for research on the disease.

Some congressional Republicans have cautioned that provisions to prevent black lung will be too burdensome on coal companies. Representative Andy Barr (R-Ky) was quoted in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* saying, "Worker safety is a top priority, but not at the cost of putting that family in a very precarious financial situation." According to the *West Virginia Gazette*, Rockefeller retorted, "If you can't be in business safely, you shouldn't be in business at all."

Workers Exposed to Toxins at Kingston Ash Spill Cleanup

By Kimber Ray

A federal lawsuit alleges that Jacobs Engineering Group knowingly exposed workers to toxic substances during cleanup of the 2008 coal fly ash spill at the Tennessee Valley Authority's Kingston Fossil Plant in Harriman, Tenn.

The lawsuit, filed Aug. 22, claims Jacobs Engineering deliberately misrepresented the health hazards of fly ash, failed to provide adequate protection to workers, and engaged in improper air

quality monitoring. According to the *Knox News*, the cleanup crew was told that "you could drink fly ash daily and suffer no adverse health effects."

Workers contend that not only were requests for protective equipment such as dust masks and respirators denied, but also that some workers prescribed such equipment by their doctors were ordered not to wear it.

Jacobs Engineering is also implicated in manipulating air monitoring systems to cover up the extent of haz-

ardous site conditions. To prevent dust movement near the air monitors, the company kept the area near the monitors wet and placed the systems in locations with favorable wind conditions.

While a number of research studies warned of the health hazards posed by coal ash, Dr. Gregory Button, of the University of Tennessee, told the *Times Free Press* that the TVA assisted government officials in authoring a report that found no harm to the community's health was expected from the spill.

N.C. Law Slashes Key Environmental Protections

By Rachel Ellen Simon

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory recently signed the Regulatory Reform Act, H.B. 74, which aims to "streamline the regulatory process in order to stimulate job creation, to eliminate unnecessary regulation ... and to amend certain environmental and natural resources laws." Advocacy groups across the state are calling foul play, arguing that the bill caters to polluters at the expense of human and environmental health.

Under the new law, water quality rules have a one-year review deadline, and any regulations not reviewed by the end of the given timetable will automatically expire. The bill also reduces industry regulations regarding water pollution while cutting the funds available to the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources to monitor such pollution.

In addition, the bill extends compliance boundaries for groundwater contamination, enabling waste facilities to pollute groundwater up to their property line, rather than maintaining a buffer zone as previously mandated.

Under the new law, facilities that pollute beyond the boundary are not required to take remedial action unless regulators prove that a violation also poses an imminent risk to the environment, public health or safety.

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Mining Waste Polluting the New River

Despite mounting evidence that dangerously high levels of zinc are flowing into Appalachia's New River from the Indian Branch tributary in Wythe County, Va., Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality has done little to address the issue.

Local citizens began expressing concerns to the department earlier this year when dissolved minerals in the water caused a milky discoloration. At that time, the level of zinc in Indian Branch was over 30 times the EPA established safe limit. By July that level had soared to 130 times the allowable limit.

A former zinc mine site, now owned

by Dixon Lumber Company, was identified as the source of the pollution. A pipe that channeled Indian Branch beneath a field of mine tailings had a leak that was complicated by this year's unusually heavy rains, contaminating the waterway.

Zinc poisoning can result in headaches, nausea and diarrhea; long-term exposure compromises immunity and cardiovascular health.

Following a *Washington Times* article by Lisa King regarding the zinc contamination, the department has met with associates from Dixon Lumber to establish a plan for addressing water quality issues.

Summer Rains Dampen Fall Colors

Among the vibrant display of autumn leaves, red may be missing from this season's palette. According to Kathy Mathews, an associate professor of biology at Western Carolina University, there are three main factors that bestow

red coloration: ample sunshine, dry air, and cool temperatures. With this year's uncommonly wet summer, yellow and orange could be the dominant fall colors. However, the cool nights of September might yet redeem the brilliant reds of fall.

Regional Mountain Photography Contest Seeks Entries for 2014

By Kimber Ray

The 11th annual Appalachian Mountain Photography Competition is now open for registration. The competition invites both amateur and professional photographers to "showcase their interpretation of the unique character, people, places and pursuits that distinguish the Southern Appalachians."

Competition categories include: Adventure, Best in Show, Blue Ridge Parkway: People on the Parkway, Culture, Our Ecological Footprint, Flora/Fauna, Landscape, and People's Choice. The Our Ecological Footprint category, sponsored by Appalachian Voices and Mast General Store, is a chance for artists and the public to reflect on the human impact on the natural world.

The competition is supported by Virtual Blue Ridge, the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, Appalachian State University Outdoor Programs, the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts,



"Towers" by Rob Travis won the 2013 Our Ecological Footprint award.

and Mast General Store, among others. \$4,000 in cash and prizes is available; winners will be announced at the end of March, 2014. Approximately 46 entries will be chosen for exhibition at the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts in Boone, N.C., from April 4 to June 7. Submission deadline is Nov. 22. There is a \$6 fee per image entered.

Visit: appmntphotocomp.org.

A Victory for Clean Water in Kentucky

This September marked a milestone success on the way to upholding the Clean Water Act, as a Kentucky court overruled a lax wastewater discharge permit at a coal-fired power plant in Trimble County. Under the original permit, Louisville Gas and Electric could release toxic coal ash — which contains pollutants such as mercury and arsenic — into the Ohio River.

The case was brought to court by several Kentucky-based environmental groups who asserted that the Kentucky Division of Water had issued a permit that was both unlawful and a threat to public health. The judge ruled that environmental regulators had failed to conduct proper analysis before issuing the permit, and sent it back to the agency for review and correction.

New River Land Trust Awarded Official Accreditation

After three years of rigorous assessment, The New River Land Trust will be joining the ranks of more than 200 of the nation's most trusted conservation organizations. For its accomplishments in fostering public confidence while ensuring permanent land conservation, the organization has received official accreditation by the national Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission.

"By achieving accreditation, the NRLT has become an even more profes-

sional and capable land trust organization," Board President Ann-Margaret Shortt declared in a recent press release. "Our permanence in, and dedication to, the New River region has been proven."

The land trust has helped protect more than 22 miles of forests and farms along the New River. This year is shaping up to be both busy and fruitful as the group continues to educate landowners on the benefits of devoting their land to conservation.

N.C. Citizens Speak Up About Power Plant Water Pollution

By Sarah Kellogg

Four out of five power plants currently have no limits on the levels of heavy metals they can dump into rivers and lakes. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, however, is preparing to change that, and in the process they are hearing from impacted citizens around the country.

Since June, more than 165,000 people have submitted comments to the EPA regarding its efforts to regulate the toxic wastewater produced by coal-fired power plants. In April, the agency proposed a range of options to reduce toxic discharges into waterways. The proposal constitutes the first update in three decades of the wastewater regulations under the Clean Water Act.

The proposed effluent limitation guidelines have the potential to protect more than 23,000 miles of waterways from up to 5.3 billion tons of toxic wastewater per year.

Appalachian Voices, the publisher of *The Appalachian Voice*, assisted North Carolina citizens living near coal-fired power plants in voicing their concerns to the EPA. Many were worried that water

pollution may be impacting their drinking water and local waterways.

Carl Dale Beck, of Belmont, N.C., lives near Duke Energy's G.G. Allen Steam Station. Coal ash waste is stored just across the street from his home, and G.G. Allen's current wastewater permit allows the facility to discharge toxic chemicals directly into the Catawba River.

Like many in the area, Beck's water comes from a private well, leaving him worried about potential water contamination caused by coal ash waste seeping into the groundwater. Coal ash is laden with toxicants including arsenic, mercury, lead, chromium and selenium and, according to Physicians for Social Responsibility, has "the potential to injure all of the major organ systems, damage physical health and development, and even contribute to mortality."

Wayne Watkins, a Vietnam War veteran, lives near Duke Energy's Belews Creek Steam Station in Pine Hall, N.C.



Residents of the Belews Creek area gather at a community meeting on power plant wastewater hosted by the Pine Hall Ruritan Club.

Watkins is originally from the area, and moved back in 1994 to live in the house his grandfather built.

When he first returned, Watkins was excited to catch his own dinner from Belews Lake near his home. However, he began to worry when he started seeing fish that appeared twisted and deformed.

Watkins was not aware of the selenium poisoning that occurred from the Belews Steam Station's discharge of toxic waste water directly into Belews Lake from 1974 to 1985. During that time, the lake became so toxic that 18 of its 20 fish species died off.

Susan Fischer lives about a quarter of a mile from the coal ash impoundment at Duke's Asheville Steam Station. Although she is on municipal water supply, she is concerned because the current wastewater permit for the coal-fired utility allows it to discharge directly into the French Broad with few limits on what heavy metals the wastewater may contain.

"Clean water is an economic boost for us in northwest North Carolina in particular," writes Fischer. "The French Broad River brings in a lot of income to our area, with lots of boaters and kayakers who love the river. We have worked hard to clean the river up ... are we going to be made to spend more money to clean up after Duke Energy? They should be required to use the best technology to keep their waste out of the water."

If the strongest proposed regulatory options pass, it will cost power companies less than one percent of their revenue to protect the nation's waterways from the toxic waste water that, according to the EPA, accounts for 60 percent of all the water pollution in the country.

Debate Surrounds Duke Energy Coal Ash Settlement

By Kimber Ray

Responding to an unprecedented flood of public comments, North Carolina officials recommended several changes in September to tighten a proposed coal ash contamination settlement with Duke Energy. The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources filed a lawsuit against the utility in March concerning groundwater contamination from coal ash ponds at Duke's Asheville Steam Electric Generating Plant in Buncombe County and Riverbend Steam Station in Gaston County.

The state initially proposed that Duke pay a \$99,000 fine and investigate the source and extent of groundwater pollution. Concerned citizens and environmental groups considered the settlement insufficient given current evidence indicating the scope of water contamination.

During the 30-day public comment

period that ended Aug. 14, the DENR received nearly 5,000 comments, which included calls for Duke to enact a full cleanup and receive a greater fine. Based on these comments, the state added stronger language and tighter deadlines regarding Duke's water contamination monitoring.

Many environmental groups remain dissatisfied, criticizing the changes as minor tweaks that fail to address wastewater discharges to adjacent bodies of water. "(The state) disregarded the views of thousands of North Carolinians and has failed to require Duke Energy to clean up its pollution of Mountain Island Lake, the Charlotte region's drinking water supply," Frank Holleman, Southern Environmental Law Center attorney, told the *Charlotte Observer*.

Tests of local wells three years ago revealed levels of contamination associated with coal ash to be well above state health standards. Toxic contaminants

were also found in both the French Broad River and Mountain Island Lake; Duke disputes the significance of this contamination.

In the *Charlotte Observer*, Duke Ener-

gy spokeswoman Erin Culbert expressed approval of the proposed settlement, stating that "regulators need the outcomes of these studies to make informed decisions about whether corrective steps are needed, and what those are."

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Hiking the Highlands

A Waterfall and a View at Bad Branch State Nature Preserve

By Dana Kuhnline

Bad Branch Falls near Whitesburg, Ky., was one of the first hikes I experienced when I moved to Appalachia almost 10 years ago. I happened to be chaperoning two vans full of at-risk teenagers on a weekend trip from West Virginia to Whitesburg. The last stop before heading home was this hike.

To get to Bad Branch State Nature Preserve from Whitesburg, you take U.S. Route 119 over the impressive Pine Mountain, a ridge stretching from Tennessee to Virginia formed when West Africa collided into North America more than 275 million years ago. Now the second-highest mountain in Kentucky, Pine Mountain's views and hairpin turns left me gasping at the massiveness of geologic forces and the comparative smallness of 16 sleep-deprived youths gazing quietly into the endless green rolling hills.

I've traveled back to Bad Branch State Nature Preserve on the south side of Pine Mountain several times since it first impressed me with its diverse forest and ability to awe angsty teenagers. The preserve started as 435 acres in 1985, but has grown to more than 2,500 acres through a state partnership with several conservation funds. Its rich ecosystems contain a number of rare species of wildflowers, occasional black bears and Kentucky's only known nesting pair of common ravens.

Once on the trail, it's about a

mile of steady uphill to a side trail that takes you to Bad Branch Falls. The well-kept trail climbs along the beautiful Bad Branch, a state-designated Kentucky Wild River. There are several small footbridges that make for easy crossing and pretty pictures. The shady gorge is filled with rhododendron and a healthy forest with a few impressive hemlocks that were spared from 1940s logging. The first mile is popular with local residents, possibly because the sandstone cliffs and 60-foot falls at the end are one of the best places in the world for a picnic.

Bad Branch Falls is impressive year-round, with perfect boulders to scramble over to enjoy the spray at the foot of the falls and startlingly green ferns to frame the rainbows that often appear in the splashing water. The waterfall is too popular to feel completely secluded, but the upshot is that there might be a friendly stranger handy to snap a group photo for you.

After you have finished sunning yourself on the rocks beneath the waterfall, or perhaps even taken a quick shower in the falls themselves, you can head back to the car or continue



The rewarding day hike at Bad Branch State Nature Preserve connects to the Pine Mountain Scenic Trail, which spans 42 miles. Photo by Sherman Cahal, americanbyways.com

up to the High Rock Loop Trail, which is a steep two miles to the crest of Pine Mountain. If you make it to the top, you'll be rewarded with stunning views off of the sandstone cliffs at High Rock. It's a wonderful place to contemplate how this 125-mile-long ridge stymied early settlers, who were forced to travel to Whitesburg via this steep trail. Even today, there are few roads crossing Pine Mountain; its inconveniently rugged beauty has thus far protected it from

BAD BRANCH FALLS, KY.

Where: Letcher County, Ky., 8 miles south of Whitesburg, Ky. From US 119, turn left onto KY 932 (following signs for Bad Branch), travel east for 2 miles to gravel parking area on left side of KY 932.

Length: 1 mile to Bad Branch Falls, 5 miles round-trip to the crest of Pine Mountain along High Rock Loop Trail.

Facilities: None. Bring water or a water filter.
Pets: No pets are allowed at Kentucky State Nature Preserves.

extensive human development.

Watch the signs carefully, because at this point the High Rock Loop Trail meets with the Highland Section of Pine Mountain Scenic Trail, which travels north up and down the ridge for 42 strenuous, view-filled miles. If you have brought a map of the Pine Mountain Scenic Trail, you might enjoy checking out a few of the rock formations and overlooks along this adjacent section – but keep an eye on your time. The lot at Bad Branch does not allow overnight parking, so if you're looking for a longer adventure along the ridge you'll need to leave your car at the trailhead for Pine Mountain Scenic Trail located nearby on U.S. Route 119.

Though the journey back from High Rock Loop to the Bad Branch parking lot will revisit some of the same trail, the varied forest and peeks into the gorge keep the walk interesting. To me, the best walks have rock formations to scramble over, epic views or a waterfall. Bad Branch Falls State Nature Preserve has all three packed into a strenuous but rewarding day-hike just a few miles off the highway.







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Traditions of Resistance

Lessons from the struggle for justice in Appalachia

By Molly Moore

In 1964, a 61-year-old Kentucky woman, Ollie “Widow” Combs, sat in front of a bulldozer to halt the strip-mining of the steep land above her home. She spent that Thanksgiving in jail, and a photograph of Combs being hauled away landed on major papers nationwide. Her action drew national attention to the broad form deed, a mineral-sale agreement that gave companies that owned a property’s mineral rights the freedom to destroy the land’s surface in order to reach the coal reserves beneath.

Months later, an 80-year-old Baptist preacher and coffin-maker, Dan Gibson, stood up to the strip-miners who arrived at his stepson’s property in Knott County, Ky. His stepson was serving overseas in the Vietnam War, and Gibson refused to leave the land until he struck a deal with the offending coal company that kept bulldozers off of his stepson’s land.

It took 22 more years of protest, organizing and lobbying before Kentucky courts threw out that interpretation of the broad form deed.

“There has always been resistance in the mountains,” says Stephen Fisher, professor emeritus at Emory and Henry College and editor of “Fighting Back in Appalachia” and “Transforming Places,” two histories of Appalachian justice movements. “It’s taken different formats, but what’s impressive about this resistance is it has come against just incredible obstacles.”

Neighborhood action to regional coalitions

From the hardwood treasures that led to the clear-cutting of nearly all of Appalachia in the early 20th century to the coal reserves that are uncovered by blasting away mountaintops, the abundant environment that gifted regional residents also brought about a “resource curse.” As outside interests capitalized

on the extraction and export of Appalachia’s riches, the economic reward rarely reached mountain residents, who often suffered consequences such as contaminated water and poorer hunting and fishing habitats.

Generally, Fisher says, episodes of resistance were driven by people “reacting to attempts to destroy their way of life or break down their community or take away their land.”

History books recount numerous local struggles that reflect the range of threats. In 1982 the community of Brumley Gap, Va., prevailed against a plan from Appalachian Electric Power to drown their valley behind a hydroelectric dam. In 1989, residents of Dayhoit, Ky., whose water was dangerously contaminated with toxic waste from a manufacturing plant, joined together to demand answers and protections from industry as well as state and federal agencies. Also during the 1980s, communities in western North Carolina began denouncing clearcutting — channeling their outrage into the Western North Carolina Alliance’s Cut the Clearcutting campaign, which led to a revision of the long-range plan for the Nantahala and Pisgah national forests in 1994.

Though the history of environmental justice movements in Appalachia is largely a story of citizens fighting one problem at a time, decades of local defiance have also inspired some organizations to address multiple progressive issues and foster the endurance to work on long-term reforms.

Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment — formed as Save Our Cumberland Mountains in 1972 to fight strip mining in the area — now has chapters throughout Tennessee addressing issues from nuclear energy to access to healthy food. Similarly, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth began in 1981 as the Kentucky Fair



Outraged by the broad form deed, which gave owners of mineral rights precedence over landowners, members of Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, above, successfully pushed for a constitutional amendment against the practice. To bring attention to water problems caused by mining, oil and gas drilling and landfills, KFTC members, at left, took water samples to Frankfort, set up a “lemonade stand” and offered passersby drinks like Brine Brew. Photos courtesy of Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, kftc.org

Tax Coalition to reform a tax code that favored coal operators; today the group is concerned with environmental struggles, voting rights and more. Appalachian Voices, which publishes *The Appalachian Voice*, initially addressed forest restoration and air pollution — now the organization focuses on the environmental and health impacts of mining and burning coal and advocates for energy efficiency and clean energy.

Today, these three groups are all members of The Alliance for Appalachia, a coalition of 15 local and regional groups working to end mountaintop removal coal mining and support a sustainable regional economy. This alliance formed in 2006, and while its focus and strategies reflect current challenges and politics, the formation of a coalition to share knowledge and influence is rooted in the past.

One such coalition, the Council of the Southern Mountains, formed in 1912 with a focus on education and community development. The group persevered until 1989, by which time it had expanded its work to include issues such as opposition to strip mining and support for miners’ strikes. It weathered a period

of upheaval in the late ‘60s that saw an ideological and organizational split between the council and the Appalachian Volunteers, another group invested in the region’s “war on poverty.”

The Council of the Southern Mountains also overlapped with the Appalachian Alliance, a coalition of grassroots groups that formed in the ‘70s, around the same time that activists were arguing that Appalachia’s poverty stemmed from its colonial relationship to the rest of the country.

“That [viewpoint] sort of tried to demonstrate how we were invaded like the Third World was, in terms of outside interests coming in that took over control of resources and the land and also imposed a culture and maintained that control,” says Fisher. “And that was a very convincing model because you can sit on your porch in the coalfields and see the coal going out. Then seeing your kids go to school with broken-out windows and no healthcare — you could see the resources falling out. And there’s a bit of truth to it.”

Fisher was involved with the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force,

Continued on next page

Traditions of Resistance

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formed in 1979, which trained citizens in six states to visit local courthouses and track down information on landowners and their property tax payments. After delving into the data, he says, researchers were able to clearly document the way outside land ownership and the property tax code correlated with poor roads, healthcare and other services. These findings inspired action — the Kentucky Fair Tax Coalition successfully lobbied to remove the property tax exemption for unmined minerals.

Tracking the Money

Though some lessons from Appalachia’s history are abstract, others are as concrete as cash. Dianne Bady co-founded the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition in 1987 to successfully fight what would have been the world’s largest chemical waste incinerator near Ironton, Ohio. Since then, the organization has undertaken a host of issues, but one of the most enduring lessons the group encountered came during a 12-year campaign to stop pollution problems at an Ashland Oil refinery in Catlettsburg, Ky.

According to Bady, if a citizen had a complaint about the refinery, regulators at the local Ashland air pollution office would investigate and write violations in response. But when those violations reached the state office in Frankfort, they were usually dismissed. Advocates realized how political contributions from Ashland Oil — the largest in Kentucky — were making it nearly impossible for local regulators to enforce the law.

Eventually, after sustained citizen pressure, Ashland Oil was forced to pay a hefty fine and upgrade pollution controls — the company was the first in the nation ordered to install video cameras linked to regulatory offices.

After seeing the power of political contributions in the Ashland Oil episode, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition added campaign finance reform to its priorities. The organization influenced the passage of several West Virginia campaign finance laws, including

one that gives the state’s supreme court candidates a public financing option.

“When we started working on mountaintop removal coal mining, nobody in the state was talking about campaign contributions from the coal industry to politicians,” Bady says. Along with West Virginia Citizen Action Group, the organization researched every state campaign contribution greater than \$250, connecting donations to businesses.

Not only did the research reveal what Bady calls “the extreme influence the coal industry had,” it also showed that candidates who received more funding from the industry were more likely to vote in favor of coal interests on contentious state bills.

“We were so proud at the time, when we saw that statewide media began to look for themselves for [information on campaign finance reform] whereas before it wasn’t something anyone was really looking at,” Bady says. “Unfortunately in West Virginia, Kentucky and other states, coal still controls our politicians so it hasn’t been a panacea.”

History Builds a Case

When Cindy Rank reflects on the environmental struggles she’s participated in since stepping up to fight proposed surface mines near her home along West Virginia’s Little Kanawha River in the ‘70s, her mind turns to the surface mining and clean water laws passed around the same time that she was getting involved.

Rank, now chair of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy’s mining committee, says that even though many Appalachian advocates at the time didn’t think those laws went far enough, they have been valuable. She notes that these laws give environmentalists more legal options when it comes to mining than currently exist with issues such as Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling.

It’s not just the legal victories that matter, she says, it’s the opportunities that court cases present to call upon national experts in fields such as flooding or stream health. She cites a 1998 mountaintop removal lawsuit, which led to a 1998-2005 environmental impact statement that in turn “kicked off the

Appalachian Voices Milestones

From mountain communities to the halls of the nation’s capitol, Appalachian Voices, the publisher of *The Appalachian Voice*, has played a role in the region’s justice movement.



1996: *The Appalachian Voice* was created by Harvard Ayers and first published by the Sierra Club’s Southern Appalachian Highlands EcoRegion Task Force.

1997: Appalachian Voices organization was founded by Ayers.

1998: Began community organizing work in southern West Virginia.

2000-2002: Brought together 12 North Carolina groups for a campaign that succeeded in passing the Clean Smokestacks Act, then one of the nation’s strongest air pollution laws.

2003: First Appalachian Treasures Tour marked start of Appalachian Voices’ national campaign to end mountaintop removal coal mining.

2004: Helped form Christians for the Mountains, a non-denominational religious campaign founded on the idea of caring for creation.

2006: Joined with 12 other organizations to form The Alliance for Appalachia, and held the inaugural citizen End Mountaintop Removal Week in Washington, D.C., and congressional briefing on mountaintop removal. Launched iLoveMountains.org.

2007: Established an office in Washington, D.C., and helped found the Wise Energy for Virginia Coalition. Also launched the “Appalachian Mountaintop Removal” layer in Google Earth and the online “My Connection” tool.

2008: Helped to launch an energy efficiency campaign in Virginia and campaigned with Wise Energy for Virginia partners to achieve dramatic reductions in permitted emissions for a proposed coal plant in Wise County.

2009: Worked with Sens. Lamar Alexander and Ben Cardin to introduce the Appalachia Restoration Act and hold the first Senate hearings on mountaintop removal coal mining. Launched campaign with the Wise Energy for Virginia Coalition that successfully opposed the largest proposed coal-fired power plant in Virginia.

2010: Launched Appalachian Water Watch program in Kentucky to train citizens how to monitor water quality in streams adjacent to mountaintop removal mines; program is later expanded to Virginia. Documented more than 30,000 Clean Water Act violations from two coal companies in Kentucky; initiated legal actions against the companies that led to unprecedented fines.

2011: Launched the Red, White & Water campaign to educate the public about negative health effects of coal ash and coal-fired power pollution.

2012: Promoted the Scenic Vistas Protection Act, a bill to ban mountaintop removal in Tennessee that reaches floor of state Senate.

2013: Launched an Energy Savings for Appalachia program to help mountain communities save electricity through energy efficiency financing programs. Partnered with SkyTruth to create Appalachian Water Watch pollution alert system. Worked with Wise Energy for Virginia coalition partners to launch New Power for the Old Dominion campaign for clean energy in the state.

avalanche of research” on mountaintop mining.

“It is these studies then that have carried the message to media and the country and regulatory agencies on a level that we as citizens and citizen monitors can only begin to penetrate,” Rank writes. “We offer compelling firsthand experience and stories and offer anecdotal evidence, where concerted peer reviewed studies by nationally recognized folks lend credence to what every person living below or near mountaintop removal experience, see, feel, hear, smell, witness every day.”

Nearly 50 years after Ollie “Widow” Combs marched up the slope behind her home to put her body in front of the approaching bulldozers,

the struggle for environmental justice in Appalachia continues. Large companies seeking coal and gas reserves still hold great political influence, and the region’s people still grapple with the “resource curse” of the mountains.

Yet the abundance that can inspire greed is part of a natural landscape that also inspires pride, independence and community traditions of resistance. In this issue, we devote a special section to stories of Appalachian resistance — to environmental and economic abuses and to attempts to bury the region’s proud history. And in the December/January issue of *The Appalachian Voice*, we will hear from the visionaries and innovators that are setting the tone for the region’s next chapter.

The **HISTORICAL** Hidden Treasures of Appalachia

By Rachel Ellen Simon

KENTUCKY



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

U.S. 23 Country Music Highway Museum (Paintsville)

In the mid-20th century, an eastern Kentucky saying put a new spin on the “three Rs” – “readin’, writin’, and Route 23.” With the post-war decline of coal, millions of Appalachians sought work in cities north along U.S. Hwy. 23. This “Hill-billy Highway” also connected area musicians to national prominence. Today, the Country Music Highway Museum honors the many musicians who were born or lived along this route. Visitors can view memorabilia from the likes of Dwight Yoakam and Loretta Lynn, or catch live music sessions at “Front Porch Pickin’.” Open year-round. Museum: adults \$4, students \$3, front porch pickers \$1. Visit: us23countrymusicwymuseum.com



Photo by Sydney Poore

Magoffin County Pioneer Village (Saylorsville)

Intent on “preserving our past for our future,” the Magoffin County Historical Society runs Pioneer Village, which features 19 log cabins from the early 1800s. Check out 19th-century craft demos or the Society’s genealogical collection. Open year-round. Call ahead: adults \$2.50, children (under 12) \$1.25. Visit: rootsweb.ancestry.com/~kymhs

VIRGINIA



Photo by Brian M. Powell

Pocahontas Exhibition Coal Mine (Pocahontas)

Most may know it as the title of a lullaby, but “Baby Mine” is also the name of the first mine to open in the Pocahontas coalfield in 1883. During the mine’s 73 years of operation, over 44 million tons of coal were exported. Now a National Historic Landmark, the original mine is an exhibition site and museum. Visitors can take an underground tour, learn about early mining methods, and view the famed 13-foot Pocahontas #3 Coal Seam. Open April 1 - Aug. 31. Museum is free. For tours, adults \$8.50, children (6-12) \$5.50, under 6 free. Visit: pocahontasva.org/museum.html

Appalachian African-American Cultural Center (Pennington Gap)

Though the Lee County Colored Elementary School closed its doors to students in 1956, they opened them again — for tourists — in the late 1980s. The former one-room schoolhouse now serves as a cultural center that aims to preserve the heritage of Appalachian African-Americans. The center includes a collection of oral histories, historic artifacts and a library of African American literature. It also hosts public forums and an annual Race Unity Day to encourage interracial dialogue in the region. Open year-round. Free. Call ahead for tours: (276) 546-5144. Visit: virginiaheritage.org/lee_co.htm



Photo by Jimmy S. Emerson, DVM

WEST VIRGINIA



Photo by Tim Kiser

Grave Creek Mound Archaeological Complex (Moundsville)

Well before humans began tearing down hills in West Virginia, they were building them — in miniature. Over 3,000 years ago, the area was home to the Adena, a society of Mound Builders that settled throughout the eastern United States. The Adena left behind massive burial mounds, only a number of which are still intact. The largest of these, the Grave Creek Mound, spans 295 feet in diameter, and reaches nearly 70 feet high. Visitors can explore the archaeological site around the mound, and learn more about the Adena at the adjacent Delf Norona Museum. Open year-round. Free. Visit: wvculture.org/museum/GraveCreekmod.html



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Pearl S. Buck Birthplace (Hillsboro)

World-renowned author Pearl S. Buck was born in the West Virginia mountains in 1892. Buck was the first American woman to win both the Pulitzer Prize — in 1932 for her novel *The Good Earth* — and the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1938. Though she spent most of her childhood in China, Buck maintained a deep attachment to West Virginia; in *My Mother’s House*, Buck calls her first home “a living heart in the country I knew was my own.” Now a museum and cultural center, the 19th-century house and estate display an array of Buck’s belongings and antique farming equipment, a log cabin and the Pearl S. Buck Memorial Garden. Guided tours May 1 - Oct. 31. Adults \$6, seniors \$5, students (K-12) \$3, under 5 free. Visit: pearlsbuckbirthplace.com

TENNESSEE



Photo by Brent Moore

Lost Sea / Craighead Caverns (Sweetwater)

Sweetwater, Tenn., is home to the largest underground lake in America. Spanning over 4.5 acres, the Lost Sea lies hundreds of feet beneath a mountain within the Craighead Caverns cave system. Exploration has uncovered Pleistocene-era jaguar tracks, Cherokee artifacts and graffiti from Confederate soldiers who were sent underground to mine saltpeter during the Civil War. Fragile crystalline clusters known as anthodites adorn the cavern walls, a feature found in only a handful of caves worldwide. Open year-round for guided boat tours. Adults \$17.95, children \$7.95, under 4 free. Visit: thelostsea.com



Photo by Ed Wescott (American Museum of Science & Energy)

Oak Ridge (Oak Ridge)

While World War II raged in Europe, an army of workers in Tennessee were creating the weapon that would end it. In 1942, Oak Ridge was established as a Manhattan Project site, and was quickly transformed into a secret government city; the town’s pre-war population of 3,000 shot up to 75,000 by 1945. With limited knowledge of their work, these uranium plant workers helped create the world’s first atomic weapons. Today, visitors can explore the American Museum of Science & Energy or tour the grounds aboard the Secret City Scenic Excursion Train. Oak Ridge is also home to the Museum of Appalachia, the Coal Miner’s Museum and the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance headquarters. Formed in 1989, OREPA raises awareness about the environmental degradation caused by the nuclear facilities. Visit: oakridgevisitor.com

NORTH CAROLINA



Photo by Kirk Savage

Junaluska Memorial Site, Museum, and Medicine Trail (Robbinsville)

Cherokee warrior Junaluska was among the thousands of Native Americans that were forcibly relocated via the Trail of Tears in the 1830s. Unlike most, however, Junaluska was eventually able to return to his former home in North Carolina, where he died in 1868. Near the Trail route that marked the Cherokee exodus, Junaluska’s burial site is surrounded by a seven-sided monument, in honor of the seven Cherokee clans. A nearby museum contains artifacts and information about Cherokee culture and history, and an adjacent medicine trail showcases plants traditionally used by the Cherokee. The trail is less than half a mile in length, with a moderate climb. Open year-round. Free. Visit: main.nc.us/graham/junaluskamemorial.html



Photo by Ken Thomas

Fort Defiance (Lenoir)

The Revolutionary War was all about defiance, so it is fitting that when General William Lenoir built a home at this former fort site, he named it “Fort Defiance.” Best known for his account of the Battle of Kings Mountain — a key Patriot victory — Lenoir served as a state legislator and the first president of the Board of Trustees at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. Completed in 1792, the home is now a historic site. Visitors can explore the five-acre estate, which includes a 200-year-old garden and family cemetery. Open year-round. Tours: adults \$6, children (5-15) \$4, under 5 free. Visit: fortdefiancenc.org

The Spirit of Foxfire is Alive in Appalachia

Story and photo by Peter Boucher

In 1966, a high school teacher in Rabun County, Ga., tried a new teaching approach in order to win the attention of his disobedient, disinterested students. He assigned his English class the task of interviewing Appalachian homesteaders about the essential skills, passed down from generation to generation, that enabled them to survive without money, modern plumbing or electricity.

These interviews were recorded, compiled and published as the first *Foxfire* magazine, named after the bioluminescent glow from a certain fungus in the area forest. The magazine eventually expanded into a series of books that drew national fanfare due to their candid portraits of these innovative Appalachians. More than 45 years later, students at Rabun County High School continue to publish *Foxfire*.

Today, the Foxfire Museum at Black Rock Mountain, Ga., sits on a site that students and teachers purchased in 1974 with royalties from the magazines and books. It serves as a place of pilgrimage for fans of *Foxfire*, who come from all over the world for group tours and to see demonstrations of traditional art forms.

The curator of the museum, Barry Stiles, emphasizes that throughout its history, the organization has pursued the same goal of preserving the culture of Appalachia. Stiles credits the success of the books to their value as primary sources, citing the “authenticity of the people who were interviewed” as giving the books universal value and appeal. The books passed down the knowledge directly from homesteaders, “not people who were interpreting it.”

Book sales and visits to the museum have increased dramatically in the last few years, an occurrence that Stiles believes is due to the recent economic turmoil. “People have comfort in knowing how to do something ... some of it’s nostalgia, some of it’s people learning how to be self-reliant.”

At the Wild Abundance Living Skills School in Barnardsville, N.C., which teaches homesteading skills much like those in *Foxfire*, many students echoed Stiles’ claim about the resurgence in

popularity and it’s connection to the economy. One student, Jacquelyn Dobrinska, noted that the living skills classes help her learn the original stories behind the essentials she buys, and engender “an appreciation for the time, the ingredients [and] the work,” put into those products.

For Stiles, the difference between past and present is that people don’t necessarily have to develop skills to live off the land in order to survive. He says that recently, the dwindling population of Appalachian homesteaders who reside “off the grid” has challenged *Foxfire* students on the hunt for stories. “That type of person has nearly vanished,” Stiles says.

Many modern homesteaders, however, might disagree with Stiles’ claim.

The frontier spirit that *Foxfire* tries to preserve is alive and well in people like Natalie Bogwalker, director at Wild Abundance. After years of experience organizing classes and events with other sustainable skills teachers and traditionalists, Bogwalker claims that the “number of people who were practicing [self-sufficiency skills] in the past is equal” to that of today. Bogwalker runs programs on her land that teach basic life skills such as log cabin construction, wilderness survival skills like recognizing edible plants, and primitive arts such as clay pottery.

Corinne Lee, an apprentice at the living skills school, prefers to call the techniques that Bogwalker teaches “heritage skills,” explaining that the term “primitive” has too much of an antiquated meaning. Both Bogwalker and Lee are dedicated to bridging the modern, technological world with the wild, natural world to make sustainability accessible to a wider community.

That mentality seems to be growing among the classrooms at Isaac Dickson Elementary School, an Asheville City School in North Carolina. Its curriculum is inspired by the values of the Foxfire Teaching Method, using a list of core principles to empower students with increased choice and involvement in the



Above, Barry Stiles, curator of the Foxfire Museum, demonstrates blacksmithing skills in a traditional cabin maintained by the Foxfire Fund.



local community.

Principal Brad Johnson credits the success of the school to the experience-based learning and instruction drawn from the Foxfire method. During one project on the cycle of economy, students planted a garden, harvested seeds, designed seed containers, and sold seeds at the farmer’s market. According to Johnson, the value of an Isaac Dickson education is “not just reading or writing about it, but doing it, seeing it, feeling it.”

The school, which currently has a waiting list, serves as an example for other Asheville City Schools. “Eight years ago we were the only school with gardens,” Johnson says. “Now all the schools have gardens.”

The spirit of *Foxfire* lives on across Appalachia. Camps such as the National Youth Leadership Program for boy scouts in Hiwassee, Va. and classrooms like those of Appalachian Feet in Greenville, S.C. practice *Foxfire*’s ideals by passing on self-sustaining and traditional skills. *Foxfire* inspires and teaches, perpetuating Appalachian practices from generation to generation.

Stiles describes the familial cycle that keeps *Foxfire* relevant to communities worldwide: “I was raised that way — [if] you wanted something, you did it yourself. My dad was raised that way, his dad was raised that way, and, probably, his dad’s dad was raised that way.”



Appalachia's CONTESTED HISTORY

By Bill Kovarik

It has been 50 years since Harry Caudill wrote "Night Comes to the Cumberlands," a landmark history that rejected stereotypes of Appalachian people as backward hillbillies and described the ruthless exploitation they suffered. The book spoke with eloquence to the American conscience and set off a firestorm of controversy. Within a year, Lyndon Johnson would launch his "war on poverty" from the front porch of an Appalachian cabin.

Coming in the middle of the civil rights movement, Caudill's book also launched some serious soul-searching about poverty, national sacrifice zones and the worth of people who were in the way of corporations.

Since then, great books about Appalachian history and culture have filled library shelves with descriptions of the suffering poor, the arrogant rich, and the extraordinary cruelty of mining society in the early 20th century.

Not surprisingly, you also find people fighting back all throughout this history — from the Cabin Creek strike of 1912 to the Battle of Blair Mountain in 1921 to the wildcat 1969 black lung strike, and in the environmental protests of the past four decades against strip mining and then mountaintop removal coal mining. There is, in this, a complete and unbroken fabric of human spirit, fighting in support of mine safety, public health and environmental protection.

Why, then, do critics like Wess Harris say we have such poor public history in West Virginia's state museum, and why does the state of West Virginia refuse to help protect the Blair Mountain Battlefield?

Perhaps the encouraging part is that history does still matter — for all of us. It matters to educators and to the coal industry and its friends. But it also matters to people in labor and environmental movements. There may be several interpretations of history, but very few people would disagree that basic documents and battlegrounds should be preserved. State institutions nearly always approach this obligation with at least some degree of neutrality — except West Virginia.

What's different today is that the Rust Belt industries are no longer in a position to control their historical messages. The industry that once held the state of West Virginia tightly in its fist is now rapidly losing its grasp.

It's a moment when history is needed.



Labor historian Wess Harris, editor of "When Miner's March" — a book about the 1921 battle over labor rights on Blair Mountain — points out flaws in the West Virginia state exhibit on the early 20th century mine wars in central Appalachia during one of his "truth tours" of the museum. Photo by Linda Burton

APPALACHIA'S NEW HISTORIANS

Labor historian Wess Harris begins his "truth tours" on the steps of the West Virginia State Museum by telling students: "Welcome to our house." History belongs to the people, he says, not to the corporations. And he tells them to be wary — there are some squatters from the coal companies inside.

With this somewhat tongue-in-cheek approach, Harris has taken about a thousand students and scholars on his personalized truth tours through the museum in downtown Charleston, W.Va. Tours are free, and Harris has encouraged museum officials to

join him. So far, none have.

"You know the idea that if you control people's past, you can control their future? That's what this is all about," he says.

A labor historian and editor of two best-selling books about West Virginia — "When Miners March" and "Dead Ringers" — Harris has been particularly concerned about the company store and mine war exhibits.

The re-creation of the old coal company store involves a counter, a cash register and canned goods from the time, framed by a long description of the role of the company store in the center of a mine community's life. The stores used to pay miners in "scrip," which was money that could only be spent at the company store. A song about that by Tennessee Ernie Ford — "I owe my soul to the company store," — is still widely known. Historians are working out just how deeply and dangerously a miner could go into debt, thanks to the recovery of company store records in Whipple, W.Va.

But at the West Virginia museum, the store is easy to explain: "Like credit cards, scrip allowed some families to fall deeply into debt. Others, however, enjoyed the freedom to purchase expensive items, like washing machines..."

When he learned of the museum's altered history, Harris was outraged, and he wrote the head of the state museum, Randall Reid-Smith, in 2010. "The treatment of scrip as some sort of favor to the miners is an insult to the people of our state," Harris wrote.

When the state museum responded by saying his criticism was inaccurate, the head of the United Mine Workers of America, Cecil Roberts, joined Harris in demanding a reconsideration of the exhibit.

"Your presentation makes it seem as if the scrip system was little different from a credit card, where miners and their families could pay off expensive purchases over time," Roberts wrote. "Nowhere [in the exhibit] is it stated that miners had absolutely no choice as to whether they used scrip or not. Nowhere is it mentioned that going somewhere else instead of the company store to purchase goods and equipment

was an offense frequently punishable by a beating from the company's Baldwin-Felts thugs followed by dismissal from employment and eviction from the company house."

Roberts was also ignored until he wrote West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, who — in the middle of an election campaign in 2011 — ordered the state museum to review the exhibit. They did, and a few words were changed: "Company-issued scrip forced some families deep in debt and gave many companies strict economic control over the lives of their workers. In some communities, however, families were able to purchase expensive items, like washing machines..."

The changes in the exhibits did not pacify the UMWA. "They made some minor modifications to some of the exhibits," said spokesman Phil Smith in September 2013. "But we still have concerns."

Other critics also still have concerns. "I remember specific conversations about the need for [the West Virginia] museum to include more bottom-up history, more labor history, and more about the 1960s and the war on poverty," says Ron Eller of the University of Kentucky. "I remember specifically pointing out that the museum should not just reflect the usual pro-coal, pro-development history of the state but that it should also reflect the history of labor struggles, resistance to environmental destruction, and efforts to address economic challenges, especially poverty, in the state."

HISTORY WARS AND MINE WARS

It's easy to see why labor historians are unhappy with the West Virginia State Museum, with exhibits like "U.S. Army Stops Armed Insurrection in West Virginia" and "The Failure of Violence."

The first is presented in silent movie newsreel fashion in a small mock-up theater. Most of the visuals include miners with guns on one side and U.S. Army troops on the other.

Titles in the silent movie read:

"Over the last year, a near-constant state of war has existed between miners and coal companies. Armed troops have been dispatched repeatedly to quell the bloodshed. The recent flare-up has been sparked by the cold-blooded murder of Matewan police chief Smiling Sid Hatfield — a popular friend of the miner. They are stopped at Blair Mountain by Logan County sheriff Don Chafin and a small army of deputies. The miners and Chafin's army shoot it out for three days along a 10-mile front. Sixteen men are killed. President

Continued on page 16

TIMELINE

While there are arguably many "versions" of Appalachian history, the most publicized one largely aligns with negative stereotypes. Below, a two-sided timeline explores the contrast between this more mainstream narrative and the events that are often left out. While we cannot include all the critical milestones in Appalachia's long past in this timeline, we hope that it will provide a basic view of the region's history beyond the standard narrative. Compiled by Rachel Ellen Simon

STANDARD NARRATIVE

- Trail of Tears and the forced Cherokee removal
- Hatfield-McCoy feud rages along the West Virginia-Kentucky border
- United Mine Workers of America formed in 1890
- Chestnut blight first noticed in New York; kills virtually all American chestnut trees by 1950
- Peak timber production in Appalachia
- Doc Watson, the blind flatpicker who helped bring bluegrass to international and mainstream audiences, is born in Deep Gap, N.C.
- Tennessee Valley Authority Act signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt; establishes regional agency to promote electricity and economic development; thousands displaced by hydroelectric projects
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park formed
- Construction begins on the Blue Ridge Parkway, employing thousands across the region
- Appalachian Trail completed, extending 2,200 miles from Georgia to Maine
- NASCAR auto racing league founded
- "Beverly Hillbillies" show airs, reinforcing negative regional stereotypes
- President John F. Kennedy forms an economic development council that becomes the Appalachian Regional Commission
- President Lyndon B. Johnson launches the War on Poverty focusing on Appalachia
- Congress passes Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act, regulating dust levels in the mines and creating the Black Lung Disability Trust
- Mountaintop removal begins on a large scale in Appalachia
- Buffalo Creek coal slurry impoundment dam bursts in Logan County, W.Va., killing 125 and leaving 4,000 homeless
- "Deliverance" hits theaters, perpetuating negative stereotypes
- President Carter signs Surface Mining Control & Reclamation Act to regulate strip mining
- Blue Ridge Parkway completed after 52 years of construction
- "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" movie renews interest in regional music
- 1.1 billion gallons of coal ash spills from Kingston Fossil Plant into nearby rivers
- Upper Big Branch Mine disaster in Raleigh County, W.Va., kills 29 miners
- Coal's share of total U.S. electricity generation drops to 34 percent

1800

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

2000

2010

2015

"LESSER-KNOWN" NARRATIVE

- Kentucky's Hindman Settlement School, nation's first rural settlement school, founded by two women as an institution of social reform and cultural preservation
- Dressmaker and activist Mother Jones organizes and is arrested at the Paint Creek-Cabin coal miners' strike
- Battle of Blair Mountain, W.Va., erupts over miners' attempts to unionize; results in the largest civilian rebellion since the Civil War (see p. 16)
- Peak employment of bituminous and lignite coal miners, at 704,793 nationwide
- Florence Reese writes the famed union song, "Which Side are You On?" the day her husband is arrested for union activity in Harlan, Ky.
- The town of Oak Ridge, Tenn., forms as a secret government city where workers create the first atomic weapons (see pg. 10)
- Founding of Qualla Arts & Crafts, nation's oldest Native American arts cooperative, in Cherokee, N.C.
- Post-WWII decline of coal markets and mechanization leads to nearly 3 million Appalachians leaving the region for industrial cities by routes known as the "Hillbilly Highway"
- Ollie "Widow" Combs, 61, arrested for laying down in front of a bulldozer preparing to strip mine her Kentucky farm
- Farmington Mine Disaster kills 78 coal miners in West Virginia
- Chattanooga, Tenn., named "Dirtiest City in America," prompting clean-up efforts that transform the city into a model for sustainable development
- Appalachian Studies Association forms, focuses on regional scholarship and activism
- Broad form deed eliminated in Tennessee, requiring mining companies to seek property owners' approval before extracting underground minerals; Kentucky follows in 1987
- Appalachian Land Ownership Study reveals 43% of region is controlled by absentee owners
- Construction of a condo on Sugar Mountain, N.C., leads to the state's Mountain Ridge Protection Act designed to preserve scenic viewsheds
- Racial and ethnic minorities account for nearly half of the region's population growth
- Martin County, Ky., 300-million-gallon coal slurry spill deemed one of the worst environmental disasters in the southeastern U.S.
- First year with no underground coal mining fatalities in Kentucky since 1890
- Bush administration's change of the stream buffer zone rule effectively legalizes burial of streams with mining waste
- Facing bankruptcy, mining company Patriot Coal announces decision to phase out all strip mining

Photo credits: Doc Watson by Joe Giordano; AT sign by John Beatty; Buffalo Creek flood courtesy of West Virginia State Archives; Blue Ridge Parkway by Ken Thomas; Mother Jones courtesy of United States Library of Congress; Widow Combs courtesy of the Courier-Journal; Sugartop condominium by Ralph Mayer, Lexington, S.C.; Martin county spill courtesy of S. Webb, University of Kentucky.

An Era of Undoing

The State of Appalachia's Labor Unions

By Brian Sewell

"We are union," the marchers chanted. Blanketing the streets of downtown Charleston, W.Va., with bystanders shouting in support, the vocal crowd stretched for blocks behind a banner that read "Fighting for Fairness at Patriot."

Shortly after Patriot Coal declared bankruptcy in July 2012, the company announced plans to rescind its promise of healthcare benefits to 1,800 union miners and retirees. Cecil Roberts, president of the United Mine Workers of America, quickly declared that the union would do "whatever it takes" to protect the benefits of active miners, retirees and the families of Patriot Coal employees.

Since then, in courtrooms and cities across the region, the UMWA has rallied to represent its members' unified sense of injustice at the path taken by Patriot and its parent company, Peabody Energy.

Hard work, resilience and organized struggle are hallmarks of American history epitomized by the labor movement. But for decades membership in labor unions has been on a downward slope. Now, as they have in the past, economic challenges are forcing unions to reckon with the corporate strongholds they struggle to change.



In the wake of Patriot Coal's broken promises to union miners and retirees, the United Mine Workers of America have represented their members' sense of injustice in cities and courtrooms across the region. Photo by Ann Smith, special to the UMW Journal

A History of Hard-won Battles

When President Franklin Roosevelt ushered in the New Deal in 1933, pro-labor legislation came with it. Five years later, the president pushed Congress to pass the Fair Labor Standards Act, saying, "We are seeking, of course, only legislation to end starvation wages and intolerable hours."

In addition to establishing a national minimum wage, the bill prohibited "oppressive child labor," a practice associated with coal mining since the 18th century.

With these pro-labor laws, union membership around the nation grew — especially in manufacturing and mining

hubs such as Detroit, Pittsburgh and Appalachia, where the United Auto Workers, the United Steelworkers of America and the UMWA wielded wide influence. Gone were the days in Appalachia of bloody mine wars and the mass evictions of miners and their families from company-owned housing for sympathizing with the union.

In the '40s, some of the labor movement's most enigmatic figures emerged, including Philip Murray, the founder of the United Steelworkers of America, and John L. Lewis, a burly, brash former miner who came to personify the plight of the American coal miner as president of the UMWA.

In her book "Coal: A Human History," Barbara Freese writes that Lewis "filled stadiums with cheering supporters wherever he went." Under his leadership the UMWA became one of the nation's strongest unions.

During World War II, however, Lewis' popularity declined as he continued to compel miners to strike even in the midst of an all-hands-on-deck war effort. President Harry Truman's disdain for Lewis was no secret; in a 1949 letter responding to a request that Lewis be appointed ambassador to Russia, the president wrote he "wouldn't appoint John L. Lewis dogcatcher."

Despite his contempt for Lewis and other labor leaders, Truman vetoed the Taft-Hartley Act, legislation which would have substantially limited the power of unions. Siding with organized labor, Truman said Taft-Hartley "abused the right, which millions of our citizens now enjoy, to join together and bargain with their employers for fair wages and fair working conditions." The Senate, however, easily overrode Truman's veto by a vote of 68-25 in June 1947.

In the journal, *Democracy*, Rich Yeselson recently wrote that Taft-Hartley forced unions "to weigh the economic and political costs of doing anything too aggressive in their efforts to grow," and required them to begin fighting to protect the gains they had already made.

Coal as a Case Study

Throughout the 20th century, perhaps nowhere have the political struggles and uprisings of the labor movement been more evident than in Central Appalachian coal-mining communities. From the mine wars to violent labor drama in Logan and Mingo counties in West Virginia, several decades of

Continued on next page

An Era of Undoing

Continued from previous page

discord have led to alliances between prominent politicians and the UMWA.

If pro-labor politicians standing up for mine safety are revered, it is the tactics of mine managers and coal companies that unions most revile. Former Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship was infamous for his anti-union views, referring to strikes as "union terrorism."

Long after the days of union-busting brigades and hired thugs, more recent labor battles have been fought with wages and benefits rather than weapons. In the late '80s, Pittston Coal Company terminated contracts with the union in an effort to protect profits after coal prices declined. Today, Peabody Energy is accused by the UMWA of willingly packaging up and shedding its union mines by creating Patriot Coal, a company the union claims was made to fail — a message that is resonating widely now that Patriot is in bankruptcy.

Cecil Roberts, president of the UMWA and the heir to John L. Lewis' rallying rhetoric, has called Patriot a "house of cards" created by Peabody to "get out of its obligation to pay for the pensions and health care of thousands of people." Over the past year, Roberts, union members and supporters have sat with clasped arms in the streets of St. Louis, Mo., where Peabody is located, Charleston, W.Va., and other cities until being led away in handcuffs.

In mid-August, after a year of protests and pronouncements, the UMWA ratified a new contract with Patriot Coal that undoes most of the wage cuts and health benefit reductions planned by Patriot. While the new contract is a step forward, Roberts says it does not guarantee lifetime health benefits for retirees, an obligation he contends is owed by Peabody Energy.

On Sept. 27, a federal judge threw out a class action lawsuit filed by the UMWA to require Peabody to pay for Patriot retiree benefits. The same day, Roberts announced the union will appeal that decision.

An Open-Door Policy

Falling from nearly 30 percent in 1950, today less than seven percent of private sector employees are members

of unions, a level not seen since the early 20th century. After an era of undoing, the largest federation of unions in the country is taking steps to ensure the years ahead will see a renaissance in the ways unions organize and operate.

In September, the atmosphere at the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations' annual convention in Los Angeles reflected that approach.

By the end of the convention, delegates had started down a progressive path in a movement that, after more than a century, continues to evolve. Among other outcomes, the AFL-CIO committed to creating a road map for immigrants and aspiring Americans, and passed a resolution calling for improvement in international trade.

Perhaps most significantly, the federation announced plans to develop an organizing strategy for the southern U.S. states, where they say corporations' efforts to divide the white working class and minorities have broken communities and negatively influenced U.S. labor and social policies.

The announcement has led some onlookers to recall Operation Dixie, a campaign in the mid-20th century that fell far short of its ambitions to organize the racially segregated South. Others contend that it will be difficult to organize in states with right-to-work laws — a statute of the Taft-Hartley Act allowing states to prohibit "union shop" agreements that require an employee to join the union associated with their trade. Currently, right-to-work laws exist in every state in the Southeast.

"We're trying a lot of things, and some of them will work and some of them won't," Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO and a former president of the UMWA, said of the labor federation's expanded vision. "We'll try to amplify those that work, and we'll jettison what doesn't work."

Finding ways around right-to-work statutes will likely require new approaches, but there are examples for organizers to follow.

In North Carolina, Working America, a non-union partner organization of the AFL-CIO, organized 25,000 workers over the last year to promote an agenda including tax reform and retirement



The shuttered union hall is a symbol of the decline of unions in Appalachian coal-mining communities. At the turn of the 21st century, membership in the United Mine Workers of America had declined to nearly half what it was in 1950. Photo by Earl Dotter (earldotter.com)

security. The North Carolina AFL-CIO believes that amount of interest, even from non-union employees, could be a boon for labor's interests in the state.

In Chattanooga, Tenn., Volkswagen is working with the United Automobile Workers to create a German-style works council, bringing factory floor workers and management together on issues such as workplace safety and sustain-

able business practices.

But as organized labor looks ahead, the cloud of uncertainty over even the most established unions is unavoidable. Accordingly, marchers at UMWA rallies hold signs high with a question that could be posed to members of all labor unions, private and public, nationwide: "Are You Next?"

Appalachia's Contested History

Continued from page 13

Harding dispatches U.S. Army infantry The miners, many of them veterans of the Great War, surrender rather than confront their former comrades in arms. Some union leaders are placed under arrest for treason and murder. Most miners are allowed to board trains and return to their families. Thus ends the Battle of Blair Mountain, the largest insurrection since the Civil War."

According to Harris, the entire basis of the exhibit is inaccurate. The union actually tried to call off the march on Blair Mountain in 1921. The Army was called in to separate the miners from the mine guards. Nor does the exhibit present any context for the march, other than the cold-blooded murder by some unnamed individual. No one would know that the murderers were coal mine guards whose co-workers and bosses were on the other side at Blair Mountain. And if the museum is going to say that the union leaders were charged with treason, it ought to add that they were acquitted, Harris says.

There's another panel about the Battle of Blair Mountain called: "The Failure of Violence." The exhibit claimed — falsely — that in 1921, union organizers turned to violence so that they could get more union members.

"Ten thousand citizens take up arms (in 1921) to end the slave labor camps ... and they call it a failure?" Harris says. "It was a serious challenge to the old system. It was no failure."

But at the very least, the exhibit notes that the Battle of Blair Mountain was the "largest insurrection since the U.S. Civil War." Given that, it's hard to understand the role of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History in challenging historical protection for the Blair Mountain battlefield.

THE BATTLE OVER THE BATTLE OF BLAIR MOUNTAIN

Blair Mountain is the labor movement's equivalent of the Gettysburg battlefield. The idea of preserving



At the Whipple Company Store & Appalachian Heritage Museum, Joy Lynn gathers stories from families with personal connections to the region's coal history. At right she is pictured with a display case of "scrip," a form of money paid to miners which could only be used in the store. Top photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, photo at right by Linda Burton

Blair Mountain has been around for decades, but an on-the-ground history of the battlefield in the 1990s and 2000s helped make the case.

Over the last 15 years, Harvard Ayers (one of the founders of Appalachian Voices), along with historian Barbara Rasmussen and Blair, W.Va., resident Kenny King, performed formal archaeological surveys of the battlefield and found tens of thousands of bullets and other artifacts. Through the pattern of discoveries, they were able to trace shifting battle lines and show where both mine guards and miners were located.

This evidence helped make the case for a National Historic Landmark designation that, they hoped, would preserve the mountain from mountaintop removal coal mining. Their evidence was impressive enough that the U.S. National Park Service granted the site historic register status in March 2009, a move supported by the UMWA and a variety of environmental and historical preservation groups.

But the listing immediately led to an unprecedented controversy. According to law, a state has to want the designation, and a few months after it was granted, the West Virginia Division of Culture and History wrote to the Park Service asking that the battlefield be de-listed. The state office said it found minor problems with the listing, such as a handful of

landowners who had not voted for or against the listing.

Park Service officials then agreed to de-list the site in January of 2010, taking a step that is usually reserved for situations when historic buildings have burned down. No other de-listing has ever taken place for such political reasons, and no explanation was ever forthcoming from the Park Service, which has maintained a stony silence about the incident.

A lawsuit challenging the de-listing was filed by a coalition of environmental and preservation groups in 2010. A court ruled against the coalition in 2012 on a technicality having to do with questions of standing. In the summer of 2013, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced it would review mining permit applications.

This could mean that the coal industry will be allowed to destroy Blair Mountain. Or, since the Corps of Engineers is supposed to consider the historic value of land to be mined, it could mean more time for Blair Mountain and preservationists who are seeking a reprieve.

Online Feature: Appalachian History Podcasts

Mountain history is alive and well, thanks to historians like Dave Tabler. His blog — AppalachianHistory.net — hosts more than 1,300 entries and hundreds of podcasts on topics ranging from mountain music to labor history to personal experiences. "I want to share with my readers and listeners the idea that history is a living thing, a deep reservoir from which to nourish today's culture, a tool to shape our current notions of what our heritage is and therefore what to do next to preserve and extend it," Tabler says. Read the full story at appvoices.org/thevoice/podcasts/

FINDING CLOSURE AT THE COMPANY STORE

One of West Virginia's innovative new historians is Joy Lynn, who grew up near the town of Whipple, W.Va. As a child, she was fascinated by an enormous, rambling old wood frame building that seemed to glow with history. "I'm going to own that someday," she told her father back in the 1950s.

The dream came true in 2006, when she and husband Chuck bought the Whipple Company Store and prepared to open an antique shop. As neighbors dropped by and the word got out, people began touring the old company store, and they started telling stories. Lynn was hooked.

One of the most interesting people to show up at the company store was the former bookkeeper who explained, in detail, how the system of company money — called scrip — and indebtedness actually worked.

Over the years, dozens of others showed up with very human and often harrowing stories to tell. It was not possible to leave town, or to retrieve items from the mail, if you owed the coal company any money, Lynn learned from her visitors. On the other hand, if a husband died, it was not possible for the family to stay unless the mother remarried. She had four weeks, and then the mine guards would evict her and the children.

The people who experienced this, or sometimes their children, show up almost every day. "Sometimes they just unglue," Lynn says. One told her: "I realize what you're doing. You're letting people find closure in their life."

Lynn will insist that she's just a tour guide. But her visitors say something else. "When I came up on this porch you were just a tour guide," said one. "Now I just want to know if I can hug you."

Naturalist's Notebook

Peregrine Falcons: Diving Back into Appalachia

By Nolen Nychay

High atop the cityscape, yellow-ringed eyes squinting in morning sun, the dark silhouette of a peregrine falcon lies in wait of the perfect ambush. As a low-flying pigeon approaches, the peregrine leaps into a dive, closing the 100-foot gap within seconds. In a flurry of feathers, she plucks the unsuspecting pigeon out of the air with her long curved beak — the peregrine's military precision kills on impact, allowing for a calm flight back to the nest to share breakfast with her young.

Adorned with a dark cowl and cape, peregrine falcons have become urban crusaders in major metropolitan cities from New York City to Knoxville. Substituting the outcroppings of skyscrapers for their usual niches along cliff faces, these threatened birds of prey have been forced to adapt to expanding human habitats in the Appalachian region. But, for a species that was believed to be extinct in the eastern mountains, their perseverance in the face of human encroachment is nothing short of admirable.

During winter months, peregrines migrate as far south as Peru and Argentina. Creatures of habit, falcons are known to migrate between the same series of nests every year. Not all peregrines in the Appalachians are migratory, however, especially those with established urban territories. Since large cities produce heat and absorb a

great deal of solar heat during the cold season, city climates often remain suitable for peregrines year-round.

According to Appalachian State University graduate researcher Angela Langevin, the biggest threat ever posed to peregrine falcons in the Eastern United States was the widespread use of chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides such as DDT in the mid-1900s. These pesticides contain chemical compounds that bioaccumulate through the food chain, resulting in reproductive issues for contaminated females. Affected falcon eggs were notably thinner and more brittle, leading to an increased mortality rate during incubation. By 1970, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the species as endangered. But within two years, the newly formed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had issued a cancellation order on DDT, classifying the pesticide as an environmental risk and probable human carcinogen.

The first peregrine recovery efforts began at Cornell University, whose ornithological lab bred the falcons in captivity for release once they reached maturity. The reintroduction program in the Appalachians started in 1973, and within 20 years nearly 250 captive-bred falcons were returned to their historical habitats on cliff faces and along river valleys. Breeding success in the natural environments is statistically much better than mated pairs nesting in urban areas.



Peregrine falcons like nesting up high to survey their surroundings, preferably along cliff face and mountain ridges, but they also take to bridges, radio towers and skyscrapers in cities like Columbus, Ohio, above. Photo courtesy of Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Peregrine falcons prefer to breed in the late spring and early summer, with females ultimately picking their ideal suitor after weeks of aerial acrobatic displays by competing males. Once mated, peregrines unite in a lifelong

monogamous relationship that is rekindled annually during breeding season. The peregrine population in the Appalachians has increased by about ten percent annually since being removed from the endangered species list in 1999.

Falcon Facts

- Peregrine falcons are approximately 15 to 21 inches long with a wingspan of about 40 inches.
- Both males and females showcase a proud chest of white and black-speckled plumage, which helps them remain undetected while circling above prey.
- Peregrines, the fastest animal in the world, can exceed 200 miles per hour in a vertical dive.

- Adult females are often as much as a third larger than their male counterparts.
- Peregrines have one of the longest migrations of any North American bird, extending from northern Canada to the southern tip of South America.
- A group of falcons has a variety of names, including: a bazaar, a cast, a tower, and an eyrie.
- Peregrine falcons feed primarily on other birds, such as songbirds, shorebirds, ducks and, in urban areas, starlings and pigeons.

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Gateway to Sustainability

By Kimber Ray

For Patrick Ironwood, the point where the Sweet Gum Gateway home ends and the wild lands of the Cumberland Plateau begin is blurred, with the sweeping porch and edible landscape of Sweet Gum elegantly blending with the natural environment.

Sweet Gum is just one of many such exemplary homes at the Sequatchie Valley Institute, a learning center for sustainable living in southeast Tennessee where members can pay to take on residential internships. Within the institute's 300 acres of steep bluffs and verdant forests, members are participating in research and workshops on ecology, agriculture and architectural design.

Ironwood is the institute's director of landscape and design. As a lifelong resident of the center, he has developed an earnest enthusiasm for the ecological design system known as permaculture. In order to promote living in harmony with nature, permaculture methods aim to balance the needs of humans, plants, animals and the Earth. Ironwood applied these concepts when he began work on the Sweet Gum home in 1998, using a blueprint from the sustainable living magazine, *Mother Earth News*.

"A lot of times a house may take away from a beautiful, natural place," Ironwood comments. "This house has really allowed us to live here in this natural place and become a part of it even more."

At Sweet Gum, large windows were placed on the south-facing side of the house to receive the maximum amount of sunlight during the winter. This abundance of natural light bathing the house throughout the day is used to nourish an attached greenhouse, allowing garden plants to be started in the late winter. The walls of the greenhouse are made of cob, a mixture of clay, soil, sand and straw. Earth materials such as soil have a high thermal mass, meaning that they are dense enough to resist rapid temperature change and can efficiently store and release solar heat.



Recycled blue jean scraps provide safe and effective insulation for the Sweet Gum Gateway, left. Above, a window into energy efficiency: the south-facing greenhouse soaks up the sun while the earthen side-walls provide insulation. Photos by Patrick Ironwood.

In fact, even the wood used to build Sweet Gum is sourced directly from the surrounding land. After a southern pine beetle outbreak in the 1990s, thousands of trees were killed. The wood from trees that had fallen or died was then salvaged and used in constructing the house.

In addition to locally sourced timber, Sweet Gum makes use of the landscape through passive solar design — an architectural approach used to efficiently distribute solar energy throughout the house. The techniques are considered passive, rather than active, because this is done without the use of mechanical or electrical devices. Different elements of construction — such as the orientation of the house to the sun and the type of building materials — work together to keep the house warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

At Sweet Gum, large windows



keeping the rays of summer sun out. On the north side of the house, a technique called earth berming uses the high thermal mass of earth materials as insulation. Piles of soil are packed against the fortified outside wall to form an insulating cocoon that shields the house from outdoor temperatures.

Environmentally friendly insulation was also used for the interior of the house. Denim insulation, made from recycled blue jeans, provides a safe and efficient alternative to fiberglass. Although the research required for choosing the best design and materials for a home can be very time consuming, Ironwood says, "it's well worth it in the end."

"Anyone that builds using these materials will learn a lot more about the house that they're living in, and suddenly you aren't living in a house that someone else built, you're really a part of it," he says. "That gives the sense that you actually have a relationship with the system that you're living in."

Ironwood advises that even those who aren't building their homes from the bottom-up can make important strides towards sustainability. Taking simple steps, such as recycling and monitoring energy use, can pave the way for a healthier relationship between humans and the natural environment.

To learn more about the Sequatchie Valley Institute, visit svonline.org.

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Major Energy Efficiency Bill Stalled in the Senate

By Brian Sewell

Since being introduced to the Senate in July, the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act, also known as Shaheen-Portman (S. 1392), promised to be the first major energy bill passed by the Senate in more than six years. Hours after debate began on the bill, however, that possibility diminished with the addition of each unrelated amendment.

Shaheen-Portman is a bipartisan bill sponsored by Sens. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and Rob Portman (R-Ohio) that focuses on improving energy efficiency throughout the industrial sector and the federal government.

On Sept. 18, Senate Majority Leader

Harry Reid said that the bill would not move forward if lawmakers were unable to agree on narrowing down the dozens of amendments, some related, others not, that were added to the bill.

The most controversial amendments, sought by Sen. David Vitter (R-La.), Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and other Republican senators were attempts to delay provisions of Obamacare. Others would prevent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency from regulating carbon emissions or declare the Keystone XL pipeline to be in America's national interest.

Of the more than 100 amendments proposed to Shaheen-Portman after it passed in the Senate Energy and Natural

Resources Committee, several dozen were completely unrelated to energy or environmental or agricultural issues.

"No one was in opposition to the bill," Rob Mosher, director of government relations at the Alliance to Save Energy, told *Greentech Media*. "It had broad political and stakeholder support, and there wasn't any objection to the underlying bill."

At press time, Reid had all but pulled the bill, saying "We'll work on matters to craft a way forward on this bill, perhaps, or we may have to take the bill down."

The bill's supporters say that several proposed amendments could have increased its benefits by extending incentives to nonprofits who own their buildings, and allowing states and other entities to receive Department of Energy grants for energy efficiency upgrades in residential buildings.

"I'm disappointed that a small

group of senators have delayed action on a bipartisan effort to create jobs, lower pollution, and save taxpayers money," Sen. Shaheen said in a statement. "Shaheen-Portman is a bipartisan bill with an unprecedented amount of support because people from across the political spectrum agree that it is good for our economy and our environment."

The bill has received support from a broad range of groups including environmental organizations, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers — the largest industrial trade association in the country. The most outspoken detractors of the bill are The Heritage Foundation and Americans for Prosperity.

While it's possible that Shaheen-Portman could come back up for consideration after yet another budget battle between Congress and President Obama, the chances of it passing this session have decreased substantially.

Green Tea With a Splash of Bipartisanship

By Nolen Nychay

A new bipartisan coalition called Green Tea has emerged in Georgia, united by a mutual objective to revise the state's environmental and economic legislation. The new alliance includes Libertarians, environmentalists, Tea Partiers and other conservative interest groups. The coalition aims to "educate and empower American consumers, advocate for common-sense energy policy and unlock the full potential of America's energy future."

The Green Tea Coalition is currently confronting the state's energy monopoly, Georgia Power, which is owned by Southern Company, the nation's fourth-largest utility. Since 1973, Georgia Power has generated all of the state's electric power and depended on a grid supplied primarily by coal, natural gas and nuclear energy.

Green Tea conservative groups have supported increasing solar energy production to promote market diversity, spur competition and create new jobs. Advocacy efforts by early Green Tea affiliates contributed to a new energy mandate on Southern Co. that requires an added 525 gigawatts of solar energy to be produced by 2016.

Increasingly affordable, small photovoltaic projects in communities hold potential for significantly less dependence upon big utilities like Georgia Power. The Green Tea's conservative groups support the possibility of energy self-sufficiency, especially since the only current option is a regulated monopoly.

Debbie Dooley, co-founder of the Atlanta Tea Party Patriots and current Green Tea advocate, says that partisan divisions are irrelevant when it comes to public access to electricity, and that grassroots activists have the power in numbers to topple the state's current energy structure.

Conservative lobbyists for Georgia's dominant energy interests have dubbed Green Tea "an unholy alliance." Green Tea conservatives, however, contend that having environmental concerns is not indicative of liberal agenda, and that the way government manages natural resources should be scrutinized by all political interests.

The bipartisan efforts of the Green Tea coalition bode well for clean energy proponents, such as Diversified Energy Supply who seek to expand energy options in Georgia. Advocates hope the coalition can set precedents for what grassroots political groups can accomplish.

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New Research and Lawsuits Keep Mountaintop Removal in the Spotlight

By Brian Sewell

While battles over mountaintop removal permits reach their boiling point and lawsuits are filed and settled, new research revealing the environmental costs continues to pile up.

In September, a study by Duke University, Kent State University and the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies compared the environmental toll of mountaintop removal to the economic benefits of coal as an energy source.

Considering the impacts of mountaintop removal on the health of Appalachian ecosystems, the study concludes that tremendous environmental capital is being spent to achieve what are only modest energy gains.

"While the scientific community has adequately demonstrated the severity of surface mining impacts," writes Brian D. Lutz, the study's lead author, "considerably less attention has been placed on understanding the extent of these environmental impacts and in providing the metrics necessary to compare these environmental costs to the obvious economic benefits of coal."

To meet current U.S. coal demand through surface mining, the study found that an area the size of Washington, D.C., would need to be mined in Central Appalachia every 81 days.

Earlier this year, a report by re-



Referred to as an "island in the sky," the Jarrell Family plot is surrounded by Alpha Natural Resources' Twilight surface mine complex. Descendants of those buried there are suing Alpha to prevent further damage to the cemetery and gain less restricted access to the gravesite. Photo by Ami Vitale, www.amivitale.com.

searchers from the University of Kentucky and the University of California found that mountaintop removal could turn Appalachia from a carbon sink, absorbing CO2 from the atmosphere, to a carbon source in the next 12 to 20 years.

The new study further considers mountaintop removal's contribution to an increasingly unstable climate. Based on the carbon sequestration potential of Appalachian ecosystems, researchers found it could take 5,000 years for 100 acres of reclaimed mines to sequester

the carbon released from combustion of the coal removed from the same area.

Lutz's study did not focus on the increased health risks faced by communities closest to mountaintop removal mines documented by more than two dozen studies. Despite the coal industry's attempts to discredit the research, environmental advocates have used the conclusions to make their case in court.

Taking Coal to Court

Across Appalachia, environmental advocates and residents are challenging

mountaintop removal coal mining companies in court. The variety of outcomes and legal actions reflect widespread opposition to the consequences of the practice.

► Protecting a Family Cemetery

In Boone County, W.Va., residents are suing Appalachian coal mining giant Alpha Natural Resources to repair and protect the Jarrell Family Cemetery from being further damaged by the Twilight Surface Mine complex that surrounds the plot.

"I don't know why anybody would want to be buried here now," plaintiff Dustin White said to *The State Journal*. "You're being buried in the middle of a construction zone basically with heavy explosives going off around you. I don't know how anybody can rest in peace anymore."

Jarrell family members hope to win a permanent entrance to the cemetery, and the right to visit their ancestors when they choose without an escort from Alpha or the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection.

► An Appeal for Community Health

Kentuckians For The Commonwealth and the Sierra Club are appealing an Aug. 23 court decision that said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the agency which issues permits for mountaintop removal, is not required to weigh the cumulative health impact of an entire mining operation.

In their arguments before the court, KFTC and the Sierra Club cited the growing research that has found a relationship between surface mines and health problems among nearby residents. Attorneys for Leeco Inc., a subsidiary of James River Coal, argued that the studies have not proven that mining is a direct cause of health problems.

Two weeks after the initial decision in the case, U.S. District Judge Thomas B. Russell directed the Corps of Engineers to temporarily suspend a permit for the contested 756-acre Stacy Branch mine in Knott and Perry counties.

Continued on next page

New Mountaintop Removal Mines Proposed

In September, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers granted Paramount Coal, a subsidiary of Alpha Natural Resources, a permit for an 860-acre mountaintop removal mine in Dickenson County, Va. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is concerned that the Doe Branch mine will discharge waste into streams already impaired by an existing 245-acre mine. The Doe Branch mine is slated to be part of the controversial Coalfields Expressway, a project that would subsidize mountaintop removal to build a highway in southwestern Virginia.

In East Tennessee, Appolo Fuels has submitted a permit application for an 804-acre mountaintop removal project in a heavily mined area of Claiborne County. Residents worry that expanding operations along the Cumberland Plateau will irreversibly damage streams and possibly lead to the local extinction of blackside dace — a ray-finned fish currently on the threatened species list — in streams surrounding the mines, which eventually feed the Cumberland River.



First Utility-Scale Solar Projects Proposed in West Virginia

By Brian Sewell

Solar Thin Films Inc., a New York-based company, recently announced a contract to develop up to 35 megawatts of solar capacity in West Virginia. Through an agreement with property owner Tri-State Solar, the solar developer plans to install three sites in Alderson, Crawley and Fayetteville.

Tri-State Solar, a West Virginia company formed by a former coal operator, is in the process of obtaining financing for the projects, and is preparing each property for the installation of the solar panels.

According to a Solar Thin press release, the company is assisting Tri-State in finding a local utility to buy the electricity generated by the solar fields.

Solar Thin Films expects all three solar projects to be completed by fall 2014, with plans to begin installation before the end of 2013.

While solar power currently accounts for just one percent of electricity in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Energy, installed solar capacity nationwide is projected to grow by 81 percent this year.

Dominion Power Wins Major Offshore Wind Auction

By Nolen Nychay

Dominion Virginia Power won a September auction for a tract that experts estimate has 2,000-plus megawatts of wind-energy potential. The \$1.6 million bid purchased 112,800 acres along Virginia's coastline that, if developed, could power over 700,000 homes.

Dominion's winning bid, however, may not be a victory for the wind industry, according to Mike Tidwell, director

of Chesapeake Climate Action Network. "For a cheap price, they're able to bask in the glow of perceived greenness and prevent another company from grabbing the mantle of offshore wind," Tidwell told *The Washington Post*.

Filed on August 30, a week before the utility won the auction, Dominion's 15-year plan states that a two-turbine "demonstration project" is the only offshore wind installation currently in-

tended for the newly acquired tract. "Actual construction of larger facilities must await technological advances that would reduce costs," the utility's plan states.

According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, despite more than four million megawatts of total offshore wind potential, the United States currently has installed only one 20-kilowatt turbine to date, enough to power just a few homes, off the coast of Maine.

Research and Lawsuits Keep Mountaintop Removal in the Spotlight

Continued from previous page

Members of KFTC celebrated the decision to temporarily stop the Stacy Branch mine, saying a possible appeals victory would be fruitless if the court had allowed mining to proceed.

► Closures on the Cumberland Plateau

In Tennessee, one of the state's most prominent and unpopular mountaintop removal mines is being forced to close after a two-year legal action filed by the Sierra Club, Statewide Organizing for Community Empowerment and the Tennessee Clean Water Network. The lawsuit alleged that National Coal repeatedly violated the Clean Water Act at the Zeb Mountain mine.

The agreement does not automatically prevent another coal company from attempting to mine Zeb Mountain in the future. "But if they do," Tennessee

Clean Water Network attorney Stephanie Metheny said, "we'll sue them up one side and down the other."

State-Level Policies Provide Vital Support to Wind and Solar Industries

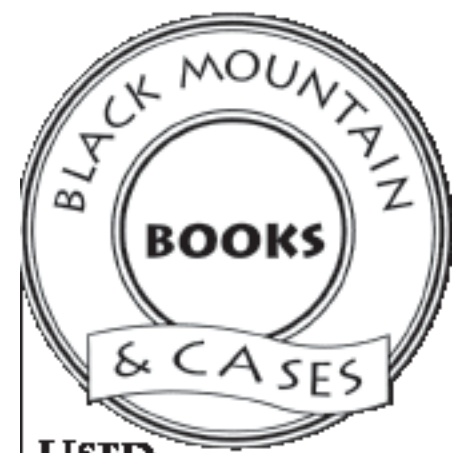
By Kimber Ray

A report released in July by the U.S. Department of Agriculture highlights the role of state-level policies in supporting renewable energy. By examining the factors that influence whether or not a farm adopts wind or solar energy, the report aims to help states form effective renewable energy policies.

State characteristics related to using more renewable energy included an abundance of organic farmland, high rates of Internet connection, and expensive conventional electricity. Farmers located far away from the electric grid also favor renewable energy due to its

convenience. Financial incentives such as rebates, grants and tax credits did not seem to lead to more renewable energy use.

The strongest predictor of whether or not a farm would have renewable energy was the existence of state "renewable energy targets." These are mandatory goals established by the state government which require utility companies to generate a portion of their electricity from sources like wind or solar. Farmers have been especially vocal advocates of renewable energy targets because of the profit potential from leasing their rural land to renewable energy projects.



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Shay and Kim Clanton

Nature-Inspired Artists Defend their Land

By Nolen Nychay

In a hollow of Marble Valley, Va., surrounded by a sprawling forest of old hardwoods and conifers, the Clanton farmhouse sits proudly on a small acreage of open meadow. For over 12 years, Shay and Kim Clanton have lived here simply and sustainably, treasuring every inch of the 40 acres of natural prairie and woodland they own in the shade of Shenandoah Mountain.

Shay, originally from northern Alabama, is a professional artist and art teacher at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Va. Her husband Kim, from the piedmont of North Carolina, is also an artist at heart, working as a glassblower and landscaper.

The couple lived on Hatteras Island, N.C., for 10 years before moving to the Appalachians. During that time they became deeply involved in saving a maritime forest at risk of being

destroyed for the construction of a golf course. For nearly six years, Shay and Kim advocated for protecting the unique marine ecosystem until victory arrived in the form of a federally established coastal reserve at Buxton Woods.

"Your home is more than the building you live in," Shay says. "A home includes the surrounding land and the community of people you share it with."

When the Clantons became aware of mountaintop removal near their new Virginia homestead, in neighboring Wise County, they discovered Appalachian Voices through their online research on the matter. Since their home is alongside a trout-filled stream, fed by natural aquifers and meltwater that flows down from the mountaintops, what they read about stream contamination and ecosystem destruction inspired them to pursue supporting Appalachian Voices any way they could.

For nearly 10 years the couple has been distributing issues of *The Appalachian Voice* in the nearby metropolitan area of Staunton. Filling the newsstands at coffee shops, bakeries, local vendors and the public library, Shay and Kim have been incredibly helpful in spreading local environmental news to their friends and neighbors.

Living on the outskirts of George Washington National Forest, the Clantons also work with Wild Virginia, a grassroots nonprofit dedicated to protecting Virginia ecosystems. Shay and Kim are currently involved in the ongoing crusade against intrusive logging in their area. Using the Forest Service's public appeal system to protest clear-cut logging that happens on federal public lands, the Clantons remain dedicated to protecting the natural lands they call home.

"We love where we live — the trees, the animals, the quiet peace and fresh



Photo courtesy of Kim Clanton

air of the valley," Shay says. "We've developed such a close relationship with these lands that inaction was not even a question when threats to the surrounding mountains and forests emerged."

Whether it be tending to their garden of fruits and vegetables, gathering Appalachian flora for holistic home remedies, or simply admiring the beauty of the mountainscape, Shay and Kim have found true tranquility in their valley.

Community Meetings in Virginia Confront Water and Mine Blasting Problems

Over the summer, the Appalachian Water Watch program partnered with Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards to host community meetings around southwest Virginia. Meetings were held once a month, moving between Wise, Dickenson and Buchanan counties, with each meeting tailored to address specific concerns within that community. Now, we are help-

ing individuals who attended these meetings to address problems with water contamination and blasting from nearby surface mines. We were able to connect the impacted citizens with our water monitoring program and our Appalachian Water Watch Alert System to help report and monitor contamination issues in their areas. To learn more, visit appvoices.org/waterwatch.

Photo Exhibit to Benefit Appalachian Voices

Photographer Rachael Bliss will present her experience of life on a sustainable Appalachian farm in a special exhibit titled, "Down on the Farm," on display at the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Asheville until the end of October. The collection of images documents a period of time she spent on her daughter's sustainable farm in Knoxville, Tenn. For the second consecutive year, Bliss has offered to donate a portion of profits from her exhibition to Appalachian Voices. We consider ourselves exceedingly fortunate to have the continued support of such a talented photographer.

To view Bliss's work, visit her Blissingstoyou Facebook page, or her website at bliss-ingstoyou.blogspot.com. Bliss can be contacted at 828-505-9425, or through the church at 828-252-8729. The church is located at 20 Oak Street in Asheville and is open 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Fridays.

Outreach and Education Efforts in the Region

Our campaign teams are working hard this year to provide education and assistance on a variety of topics.

In Tennessee and Virginia, we're opposing proposed new mountaintop removal mines (see p. 20) at public meetings, through formal comments and by working with our partners to mobilize citizen voices to save our mountains. To learn more and take action, visit us at appvoices.org.

Our Energy Savings for Appalachia program is reaching out to electric

cooperatives in the Southeast, garnering support for statewide pilot programs that can finance energy efficiency improvements for homeowners. Stay tuned for the fall launch of our online Energy Savings Action Center!

And in North Carolina, our Red, White & Water crew has been meeting with people living near coal ash ponds, assisting residents who are seeking protection from water contamination. Learn more on p. 5.



New Campaign to Bring Clean Energy to Virginia

On Aug. 27, Appalachian Voices and our partners in the Wise Energy for Virginia Coalition launched "New Power for the Old Dominion," a statewide campaign to bring smart energy choices to Virginia. The campaign will organize citizens to urge electric providers, energy policy officials and state lawmakers to increase investment in cleaner energy generation, ultimately creating jobs and protecting the natural resources of the state.



Sign the New Power Pledge
Visit: appvoices.org/take-action

The campaign kickoff included the release of a report offering an alternative to Dominion Virginia Power's 15-year plan, which relies on new fossil fuel generation while ignoring the vast potential for energy efficiency and renewable energy in Virginia.

"Dominion is heavily dependent on fossil fuels, and with its preferred resource plan, will continue to remain so for the indefinite future," says David Schlüssel, the lead author of the report.

The case for new power in Virginia could not be clearer. As coal companies that use mountaintop removal mining practices and utility companies that burn coal pass the costs of their pollution on to nearby communities, they also lobby against proposed improve-

ments to the state's outdated energy policy. Due in part to air pollution from coal-fired power plants, Richmond was named the asthma capital of America by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America in 2010, 2011 and 2013.

The New Power report shows that there is significant potential for clean energy in Virginia. Among other findings is that opting for a plan that adds almost 4,000 megawatts of renewable energy and conserves nearly 3,000 megawatts through energy efficiency would cost between \$633 million and \$1.78 billion less than Dominion's current plan to build two natural gas plants.

To educate citizens about the benefits of clean energy, the campaign includes a series of presentations given

around the state and a petition to state lawmakers and the state corporation commission, which sets Virginia's energy policy. (Check the back page calendar in this issue or visit newpower4va.org to find events near you)

"All the pieces are in place except the political will," says Kate Rooth, Appalachian Voices' campaign director. "That's where the New Power for the Old Dominion campaign will make a difference, in growing a statewide citizen movement to press our leaders to make this a reality."

New Power for the Old Dominion is the next chapter of years of successful organizing in Virginia. Member groups of the Wise Energy Coalition have defeated a 1,500-megawatt coal plant in Hampton Roads that would have consumed massive amounts of mountaintop-removal-mined coal in 2012, and prevented a 1,200-acre mountaintop removal mine atop Ison Rock Ridge in Wise County.

Read the New Power report and learn how to organize a presentation in your community at newpower4va.org.

Hello and Goodbyes

Appalachian Voices is excited to welcome several new staff to the team. Jonathan Harvey joins us from Charleston, W. Va., to serve as our new director of development. Kara Dodson, a former intern with our Appalachian Water Watch team and a recent graduate of Virginia Tech, will be serving as our new field coordinator, collaborating with volunteers and recruiting new members to further our work in the Appalachian region.

We also would like to welcome our 2013-14 Project Conserve Americorps members, both of whom will serve an eleven-month term through July of next year. Kimber Ray is serving as our communications associate and the associate editor of *The Appalachian Voice*, while Sarah Kellogg will act as the outreach associate for the Red, White & Water and Energy Savings programs.



New faces (l-r): Jonathan Harvey, Kara Dodson, Kimber Ray and Sarah Kellogg

And lastly, we would like to bid a fond farewell to Sandra Diaz, who has served in many capacities at Appalachian Voices for the past seven years, most recently as the coordinator of our Red, White & Water and North Carolina campaigns. Her extensive knowledge, phenomenal volunteer organizing skills, and irreplaceable "green fire" will be greatly missed. We wish her the best of luck in her new ventures.

Learn more about these folks and the rest of our staff at appvoices.org/about/team/

Saying farewell: Sandra Diaz, passionate crusader, tireless advocate, loyal teammate, and ebullient friend



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CONTROLLER SUSAN CONGELOSI
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Photographer Carl Galie took “Scheduled for Demolition” at a proposed mountaintop removal mine site in Floyd County, Ky. This fall, Galie’s latest exhibit, “Lost on the Road to Oblivion: The Vanishing Beauty of Coal Country” will show at the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts in Boone, N.C. The collection of striking images exposing the issue of mountaintop removal coal mining will be accompanied by poems from North Carolina Poet Laureate Joseph Bathanti. The exhibit runs from Nov. 1 to Feb. 8 and includes a presentation by Bathanti on Nov. 6 as well as a gallery talk with Galie on Nov. 20. Both events start at 6:30 p.m. To learn more visit turchincenter.org.

GET INVOLVED environmental & cultural events in the region

NewPower4VA Road Tour

Oct. 16, 7-8 p.m. | Sandy Bottom Nature Center, Hampton, Va. ... **Oct. 29, 7-8 p.m.** | Catoctin Creek Distillery, Purcellville, Va.

Join the movement to bring clean energy to Virginia with the New Power for the Old Dominion campaign! Hear an engaging presentation on renewable energy followed by a panel of local clean energy pioneers. Presented by the Wise Energy for Virginia Coalition. Free. Visit: wiseenergyforvirginia.org

Streambank Repair Workshop

Oct. 16: Learn how to prevent streambank erosion using grading, matting, plants and other natural materials. Workshops include hands-on activities at Cove Creek. \$25, includes lunch. Watauga County Community Center, Sugar Grove, N.C. Call Cooperative Extension at 828-264-3061

Laying the Groundwork Lecture

Oct. 17, 8-9:30 a.m.: Learn about building techniques, proper water management, energy efficiency and lessening environmental impact. Free. Richmond, Va. Visit: earthcraftvirginia.org/events

Full Moon Suspension Bridge Hikes

Oct. 18-20, Nov. 15-18 & Dec. 15-16.: Visit Tallulah Gorge and hike under the full moon, reaching a suspension bridge that sways 80 feet above the gorge with spectacular views of the river and waterfalls. Times vary by date. Cost: \$5/parking, \$5/hike. Tallulah, Ga. Visit: gastateparks.org/event/205135

Black Pot Cooking

Oct. 20, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.: Explore old-fashioned cooking at a historical farm. Listen to bluegrass

music, enjoy a plate of southern food, and check out farm products on sale. Cost: \$10/children, \$15/adults. Shields Ethridge Heritage Farm, Jefferson, Ga. Visit: shieldsethridgefarminc.com

Your Gut and the Environment

Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m.: Dr. Chris Magryta of Salisbury Pediatrics will speak about microorganisms and how they influence health. Learn how food, stress and chemicals affect our bodies everyday. Free. The Center for the Environment, Salisbury, N.C. Visit: centerfortheenvironment.org

Mountain Justice Fall Summit

Oct. 25-27: A weekend of workshops and trainings concerning Appalachia’s long history of resisting strip mining and mountaintop removal. You will see mountaintop removal from the top of Kayford Mountain. \$25-\$75, includes all food and activities for the weekend - lodging is tent camping. Naoma, W.Va. Visit: mountainjustice.org/events

Hemlock Fest

Nov. 1-3: An unparalleled musical experience to help prevent the spread of the invasive HWA beetle and preserve Appalachian forests. This all-ages, eco-friendly event features three days of live music, primitive camping, educational exhibits, arts and crafts vendors, and more. \$10-\$50. Murrayville, Ga. Visit: hemlockfest.org/blog/

Colonial Thanksgiving Festival

Nov. 3, 12-4 p.m.: Celebrate America’s first Thanksgiving with food, fun and history. Tour the 1726 manor, play colonial games, see musicians, dancers, crafts, a living history program and more. \$5/car.

Berkeley Plantation, Charles City, Va. Visit: virginia-thanksgivingfestival.com

Tanner Station Rifle Frolic

Nov. 2-3: Join state park officials for an off hand championship, night shooting event and three-man team shooting competition with a variety of prizes. Blue Licks Battlefield State Resort Park, Carlisle, Ky. Contact: (859) 289-5507 or parks.ky.gov/calendar/

Fee Free Days at National Parks

Nov. 9-11: Come enjoy your local national park, free of charge! Fee waiver includes entrance fees, commercial tour fees and transportation fees at all U.S. national parks.

Artisans Studio Tour

Nov. 9-10: See craft professionals at work in their studios. Over 30 artisans in 19 studios will be opening their doors to demonstrate their work in pottery, jewelry, textiles, furniture, and more. Charlottesville, Va. Visit: artisanstudiotour.com

Grow Appalachia Mushroom Workshop

Nov. 12, 4:30 p.m.: Learn the secrets to cultivating and utilizing some of Appalachia’s most pragmatic flora. Free. Pine Mountain Settlement School, Pine Mountain, Ky. Contact Maggie or Kathleen at (606) 558-3416.

Sustainable Agriculture Conference

Nov. 15-17: Attend the 28th annual CFSA conference for sustainable, local agriculture. The 3-day event will include speakers, workshops, and tours of local agricultural endeavors. Cost: \$65-\$309+. Durham, N.C. Visit: carolinafarmstewards.org/sac/

James River Natural History Tours

Nov. 2 & Dec. 7, 1-4 p.m.: Ride the James River in a historical pontoon boat while learning about local wildlife and 17th-century history and folklore. \$25/person. Henricus Historical Park, Chesterfield, Va. Call 804-318-8728

Winter Wilderness Wonderland

Every Saturday Nov. 30-Dec. 21, 6-9 p.m.: Join Christmas at Karlan, featuring an open house, Santa Claus, live music and a hayride through the wilderness adorned with lights, lasers and holiday decorations. \$3/car. \$1 Hayrides. Wilderness Road State Park, Ewing, Va. Park Office: (276) 445-3065

Apple Hill Farm Tour

Every Saturday through Dec. 14, 2-3:30 p.m.: Take a guided tour of Apple Hill Farm and learn about the specific species and personalities of animals living on the farm including a mini pig. Banner Elk, NC. Visit: highcountry365.com/events

Feast of the Seven Fishes Festival

Dec. 14, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.: Explore heritage and tradition at the 7th annual Feast of the Seven Fishes Festival in historic downtown Fairmont. Vendors, arts and holiday cheer will accompany live music and entertainment all day. Monroe Street, Fairmont, WV. Visit: mainstreetfairmont.org

Mornings in the Mountains

Saturdays through Dec. 28, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.: Join an interpretive hike exploring Wintergreen, Ky.’s natural environment. \$3/members, \$6/non-members. Register by 9:30am. All hikes leave from the Trillium House unless otherwise noted. Visit: twmf.org