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June / July 2019



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Appalachian Voices works with small, nimble, entrepreneurial businesses with the technology and business models to deliver clean solar power at competitive rates. And we work with local citizens and leaders who want these businesses to create local clean energy jobs and generate wealth in their communities.

The problem we face is that the monopoly utilities want to hang on to that wealth for themselves. They fear a competitive market.

And so their lobbyists swarm our state

GET INVOLVED environmental & cultural events

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Through June 14: Sign up with the Piedmont Environmental Council for a free assessment to see if your home is suitable for rooftop solar. Email Bri West at bwest@pecva.org or visit tinyurl.com/SolarizePiedmont

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June 7-8: Annual festival of traditional mountain music and arts features live performances, dances, film screenings, art and more. Free. Whitesburg, Ky. Call (606) 633-0108 or visit seedtimefestival.org

About the Cover



When Lake Cumberland is low and the Rockcastle River level drops, the beauty of the Narrows section shines. Kayakers that know of this Kentucky gem rally when conditions are ideal, not batting an eye at hiking in their boats and gear close to a mile to the put-in. Paddling this Kentucky Wild River, tucked away in the national forest, is worth the hike in. Explore regional paddling destinations on page 12. Photo by Brandon Jett

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A note from our executive director

It's all too common for government to give corporations special privileges.

In theory, state and federal governments do this to harness the profit motive for the benefit of consumers, jobs and the social good.

Unfortunately, when we give utilities the special privilege of the government literally outlawing competition when it comes to selling electricity, we are doing just the opposite. This is true whether the utility is a giant corporation, a government-owned entity or an electric cooperative that is unresponsive to its local member-owners.

Appalachian Voices works with small, nimble, entrepreneurial businesses with the technology and business models to deliver clean solar power at competitive rates. And we work with local citizens and leaders who want these businesses to create local clean energy jobs and generate wealth in their communities.

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Tom Cormons speaks at the launch of the Virginia Energy Reform Coalition. Photo by Jimmy Davidson

capitals, pushing legislation to protect their monopolies and maximize their income.

The harm is felt far from these capital cities. It's felt by rural residents trying to bring locally generated solar to places where the economy used to be dominated by big outside coal companies. And it's felt by ratepayers like you and me who are being forced to pay for multi-billion dollar pipelines and power plants that ransack our land, pollute our air and water and disrupt our climate.

Why? Simply because our government guarantees utilities a hefty rate of return — *paid by us* — on all the billions of our dollars they spend building things.

So on May 7, we joined partners from

across the political spectrum in Richmond to announce the formation of the Virginia Energy Reform Coalition, a group that aims to dramatically reshape the state's electric utility policies to advance consumer choice and clean energy competition.

On May 14, we and fellow advocates called for an investigation into ratepayer dollars that the Tennessee Valley Authority paid to a lobbying firm connected to federal attempts to weaken clean air rules. And on May 21, we joined allies in Raleigh to urge North Carolina lawmakers to block Duke Energy's latest attempt to gouge ratepayers.

We are committed to disrupting a status quo designed to line the pockets of the government-protected utility monopolies who have been calling the shots. We are citizens demanding a system that puts people and the planet first.

And we need you to be part of this movement. Get involved at appvoices.org.

For our future,

Tom Cormons, Executive Director

See more at appvoices.org/calendar

Cass, W.Va. Call (304) 456-4300 or visit tinyurl.com/CassBats

Floyd Energy Festival

July 13, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.: SustainFloyd and Apple Ridge Farm host the third Floyd Energy Fest at Chantilly Farm, featuring energy-related activities, speakers and vendors. \$5, \$10 per family, on a sliding scale. Leicester, N.C. Call (828) 202-9469 or visit fireflygathering.org

Whippoorwill Festival

July 19-21: Learn about sustainable living practices in Appalachia through a weekend of workshops and activities. Ticket prices vary. Beattyville, Ky. Visit whippoorwillfest.com

Rhododendron Festival on Roan Mountain

June 22-23, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.: Celebrate the beauty of the world's largest natural rhododendron gardens. Free with donation. Roan Mountain, Tenn. Call (423) 772-3303 or visit roanmountain.com

Dragons and Damsels

June 29, 4:30-6 p.m.: Visit Ijams Nature Center to net and identify dragonflies and damselflies and upload them to a citizen science database. Before you go, read about these ostentatious odonates on page 6. \$8, registration ends June 27. Knoxville, Tenn. Call (865) 577-4717 or visit tinyurl.com/IjamsDragons

Bat & Caves Awareness Day

July 6, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.: Bring the whole family to Cass Scenic Railroad State Park to learn about bats and the caves they live in. Free. Visit getoffthegridfest.wordpress.com

Across Appalachia

Deadly Elk and Deer Disease Spreads

In December 2018, wildlife officials discovered chronic wasting disease in Tennessee. The neurological disease causes brain degeneration in white-tailed deer and elk and now plagues 24 states, including Virginia, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

The brain degeneration causes abnormal behaviors, loss of bodily functions and eventually death in the affected animals. Deer and elk spread the disease through saliva, urine and feces.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the disease is not known to harm humans, but scientists do not know if people can become infected through contaminated protein particles. The CDC suggests that hunters in areas where the illness is present check animals for chronic wasting disease prior to consumption.

Since Tennessee's outbreak, some states are taking precautions to avoid

the disease's spread. Kentucky is asking the public to remove the brain and spinal columns of any deer from Tennessee before bringing them across state borders. Virginia has decided to only import boned or quartered deer meat and clean antlers or skulls, and North Carolina banned the import of whole deer carcasses.

According to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the most effective way to prevent disease spread is to avoid moving live deer and elk into new regions or regions with disease-free herds.

Chronic wasting disease could affect the growth of elk populations in southern West Virginia. State guidelines require all new elk to come from disease-free herds, which are limited. Kentucky has a large, disease-free herd, but the state currently has an agreement to supply surplus elk to the state of Wisconsin. — *By Jamie Tews*

EPA Rejects Proposed Oak Ridge Landfill

A controversial proposed landfill at the Oak Ridge Reservation Superfund Site was rejected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on March 21 due to insufficient water pollution discharge standards. The proposed landfill would contain low-level radioactive and mixed waste from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Y-12 National Security Complex.

The site is operated and owned by the U.S. Department of Energy and was used during the Cold War to research, produce and store materials to study weapons and uranium. Today, it is a laboratory and security complex for the federal government.

Local citizens have spoken against the plans for the landfill and shared concerns about mercury, maintenance of the facility

and public perception of Oak Ridge. Many also expressed concerns with the Department of Energy's standards for the facility.

The EPA's report found that the site's nearly full existing landfill is discharging hazardous substances into the Bear Creek tributary and the proposed 2.2 million cubic-yard landfill would do the same. According to the EPA, contaminants from the landfill have affected 82 miles of the Clinch River in Tennessee and the Clinch River arm of the Watts Bar Reservoir, and are mostly located in lake- and river-bottom sediments.

The DOE has delayed a finalized plan for the proposed landfill until August 2, according to the Exchange Monitor. After August 2, regulators will have 60 days to comment on the draft. — *By Eric Halvarson*

Study Finds Red Wolves are a Distinct Species

Red wolves are a genetically distinct species, according to a study published in late March by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Congress ordered the genetic testing because of claims that red wolves were no longer a distinct species due to their interbreeding with coyotes. This study settles the debate that red wolves, considered critically endangered, are a unique species and can be listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

The only habitat for red wolves in the wild is on the Albemarle Peninsula in Eastern

North Carolina, home to less than 30 wolves. In 2018, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a plan to reduce the wolves' protected habitat by nearly 90 percent. This plan was blocked by a federal judge in November 2018, along with a proposal that would have allowed people to kill the wolves outside of their preserves.

Despite the small amount of wild wolves, there are over 200 red wolves in captivity around the country. A litter of six pups was born in Durham, N.C., on Earth Day. — *By Jen Kirby*

Fire Destroys Office at Highlander Center, White Supremacy Sign Found

A fire engulfed the main office building at the Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, Tenn., on March 29. A symbol associated with white supremacy was found spray-painted at the center's parking lot. State and county law enforcement is still investigating the cause of the fire with some federal assistance.

"While we do not know the names of the culprits, we know that the white power movement has been increasing and consolidating power across the South, across this nation, and globally," stated the center's April 2 press release.

The building was demolished but nobody was harmed in the blaze, which started in the early morning hours. The fire destroyed documents, memorabilia and other records, although many archives from Highlander's 87-year history are stored off-site in Wisconsin.

Formed in 1932 as the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tenn., the center has long been a hub for racial, social and economic justice organizing in the South. Highlander held its first racially integrated workshop in 1944 as

part of the fight to end segregation in labor unions, and served as a training ground and gathering place for civil rights organizers including Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr.

The state of Tennessee revoked Highlander's charter in 1961, but it was renamed and reopened the following day. The center has been located in New Market, Tenn., since 1972. Highlander's current social justice work includes connecting Appalachian, Deep South and immigrant communities, supporting LGBTQ+ rights and strengthening multi-racial and inter-generational organizing.

"What's next for Highlander is that we will continue to be that sacred place, that movement home, that place where strategy is developed, that place where principled struggle happens, that place that accompanies movement, that place that incubates radical work, and that place that demands transformative justice," stated the center's press release.

To learn more or make a donation, visit highlandercenter.org. — *By Molly Moore*

Clinch Coalition Draws Attention to ATV Impacts on Streams

Southwest Virginia environmental watchdog group The Clinch Coalition is expressing concerns about negative impacts to streams and wetlands from some off-road vehicle trails.

According to Wally Smith, a biologist and the group's vice-president, the coalition is primarily concerned about some locations where vehicle paths are routed directly through streams for about a half mile or where trail construction appears to have altered the natural stream flow.

Shawn Lindsey, executive director of the nearly 500-mile Spearhead Trails network, is aware of the group's concerns, though the two disagree about the nature of one site. Lindsey states that the trail network's goal is to improve the environment as resources allow. The Spearhead Trails system is managed by the state, and its trails are designed for ATVs as well as hiking, biking and horseback riding.

"A lot of these streams are really close to some threatened and endangered species populations," Smith says, including the endangered Big Sandy crayfish. He notes that aquatic wildlife can be crushed by vehicles and streams diverted from their natural route can lead to problems with

sedimentation and erosion downstream.

According to Lindsey, Spearhead has closed one trail section and recently secured grant funding to improve another area. He stresses that Spearhead cannot shut down many trail sections since they are on private land and also used by the landowner.

Smith acknowledges that Spearhead Trails has an important role to play in the area's economic transition, and that many of the trails make good use of existing logging or mining roads. Going forward, he would like to see environmental agencies involved "to make sure that the right people are being brought to the table and there's a good, inclusive conversation about how these trails are being built."

Lindsey appreciates that The Clinch Coalition is looking out for water quality. "We have the solutions but they take time, funding, grants, permits, lots of different things," he says. "It just can't happen overnight."

In the meantime, Lindsey says he wants to see people using the Spearhead Trails instead of illegal outlaw trails. "Even though we have problems, we're still a lot better than those outlaw trails that don't have anyone watching out for them or doing maintenance on them." — *By Molly Moore*

Tribal Governments Dispute Proposed Casino

Competition and land rights disputes surround the Catawba Indian Nation of South Carolina's proposal for a casino and gaming facility in Cleveland County, N.C.

After attempts to legalize gambling in South Carolina failed, the Catawba applied for property in Cleveland County, N.C., in 2018. U.S. Sen. Lindsay Graham introduced Senate Bill 790 on March 14 to authorize the Catawba to take the property into trust for a casino. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, which operates two casinos in Western North Carolina, objected to the bill.

"We encourage Senators to reject Senate Bill 790 – which is nothing more than a modern day land-grab by the federal government of Cherokee aboriginal lands," Principal Chief Richard Sneed of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians said in a statement.

The Catawba argue that they do have rights to land in North Carolina and that they have been prevented from exercising this right due to unclear language in a 1993 land claim settlement.

"The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians is simply trying to protect their own economic interests based on inaccurate historical information," the Catawba said in a statement. "It is sad that the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians is trying to enforce a state border on another tribe when, like us, they were here long before state borders existed."

The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs is reviewing the proposal for regulatory compliance. If approved, the application will go to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior for a final decision. — *By Eric Halvarson*

Cleaner Air in North Carolina and Virginia

The Blue Ridge Mountains are beautiful, and thanks to a decrease in air pollution, the view of the mountains is a little bit clearer.

At a March air quality conference, Mike Abraczynski, director of the North Carolina Division of Air Quality, stated that Western North Carolina's air quality has improved largely because of reductions in nitrogen oxide and volatile organic compounds, which are released from power plants and motor vehicles. The North Carolina Division

of Air Quality reports that 100 million pounds of toxic air emissions have been removed from the atmosphere over the past 18 years due to tighter regulations.

Virginia's air quality has improved as well, with the amount of chemicals in the air dropping 51 percent from 2004 to 2017, according to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

The National Parks Conservation Association, a nonprofit organization, released a report in May describing the extent of air pollution in the national parks. There are 417 national parks in the United States and, according to the report, 96 percent are damaged by at least one of the following results of air pollution: unhealthy air, pollution that harms sensitive species and habitats, haze that limits visibility, or climate change.

The Trump administration has proposed weakening multiple current federal air pollution standards. — *By Jamie Teas*

Tennessee Law Blocks Localities From Banning Plastic Bags

On April 12, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee signed a law banning local governments from enacting regulations on certain plastic bags and utensils. Nashville and Memphis have proposed taxes on single-use plastic bags to limit waste. Similar bans have passed in 11 other states and are under consideration in five others. — *By Jen Kirby*

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Plans for Development at Tennessee's Rocky Fork State Park Meet Opposition

Unicoi County, Tenn., is home to Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park, renamed in January to honor the Tennessee senator. But now, many of the conservation advocates involved in the wild and rustic park's 2015 creation are speaking out against the state's plans for development.

In November 2018, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation announced plans to build a two-lane access road to an overlook and campground, a bridge and a visitor's center with a parking lot. Critics argue that these projects would harm vulnerable wildlife and destroy the characteristics that make Rocky Fork unique.

Conservation advocates argue that building a visitor center and parking lot at the proposed site would destroy habitat for synchronous and blue ghost fireflies, as well as the star-nosed mole, a species of special concern in Tennessee. Construction of the steep, two-lane road and associated retainer walls would cause sediment pollution in Rocky Fork Creek, according to architect and rural

resources planner Taylor Barnhill.

In May, an engineering firm began clearing land to survey the proposed road site, a process that involves bulldozer work and cutting trees. In an email, local conservation proponent John Beudet wrote that he was alarmed to see these impacts occurring because staff at TDEC and Tennessee State Parks had recently told him and other advocates that there would be more meetings and public input opportunities before any work might begin.

"Should the state realize their mistake and re-design or abandon the project to build the road (which has not been able to acquire permits yet) this damage would be all for nothing," he wrote.

Beudet and other conservation advocates want to see a comprehensive planning process for the park — with plenty of public input — that would allow for a conversation about alternatives. Learn more at rockyforkjournal.com — *By Molly Moore*

Agency Says Hellbenders Not Endangered

The Eastern hellbender, a large salamander found across Appalachia, was one of eight species that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided not to protect under the Endangered Species Act in April. The agency stated that the hellbender, with the exception of the Ozark subspecies in Missouri, is not endangered.

The law defines an endangered species as one that is "in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range." After analyzing the hellbender's primary stressors, which include sedimentation, water quality degradation, habitat destruction and modification and diseases, the federal wildlife agency stated the species is not in danger of extinction anytime soon. Despite the hellbender's current population decline, the agency expects population sizes to return to stable levels in 10 to 25 years.

The Center for Biological Diversity, a conservation organization, formally petitioned the Fish and Wildlife to protect the hellbender through the En-

dangered Species Act in 2010. The group raised concerns about the hellbender's vulnerability, stating that 78 percent of known hellbender populations have disappeared or are in decline.

In a press statement, CBD Attorney Elise Bennett said the lack of protection "flagrantly ignores the reality of the hellbender's dire situation and gives these imperiled animals a big shove towards extinction."

The species' decline is mainly due to chemical and sediment pollution in the water, deforestation and dams, according to the group. Tiny blood vessels in their skin allow the salamanders to breathe by absorbing oxygen from water. They thrive in cold, fast-moving streams, but water contamination disrupts these conditions.

In April, Pennsylvania legislators designated the Eastern hellbender the official state amphibian. Students from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Student Leadership Council of Pennsylvania wrote the bill. — *By Jamie Teas*





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Dragonflies and Damselflies

Meet the Marvelous World of Odonata

By Hannah McAlister

Flashy and colorful, dragonflies and damselflies are named not for their beauty but for their ferocity. Both types of winged bugs are members of an order of carnivorous insects called Odonata, derived from the Greek term for tooth, which the insects have on their mandibles. In North America, there are nearly 500 species of Odonata and 241 of those species reside in the Southeast.

These two Odonata species have several physical differences. The eyes of dragonflies take up most of the head and wrap around the side, while damselfly eyes always have a space between them. Dragonfly bodies are bulkier, shorter and thicker than those of damselflies, and dragonflies' hind wings are larger than their front set of wings. Dragonflies at rest also hold their wings out to the side, unlike damselflies, which hold their wings behind them.

When it comes to identifying Odonata species, there is a learning curve, says Tennessee State Parks Biologist Emeritus Richard Connors. There are various markings on adults that aid in identification,

Dragonfly Day: Join the 10th annual Dragonfly Day on June 8 at Warriors Path State Park in Kingsport, Tenn. From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., focus on studying, identifying and photographing dragonflies with guest speakers Larry Everett and Richard Connors. Admission is \$5. **For details and registration, visit tinyurl.com/10th-annual-dragonfly-day.**

including head size and coloring of markings on the wings and abdomen.

"That's where field guides come in handy," says Connors. "You can identify by process of elimination going through keys, visually matching and then reading the details; it's fun."

For help identifying species, Connors suggests posting photographs to websites like the Southeastern Odes Facebook group or Odonata Central, the record-keeping site of the Dragonfly Society of the Americas.

"There are people out there who are really into this, like myself, and would be happy to help people identify what they're seeing," he adds.

Odonates spend most of their lives in water during their larval or nymph stage. Unlike butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies do not have a resting stage during their metamorphosis. After the eggs are laid, they typically hatch in two to five weeks. The nymphs spend around a year in the water, using gills to breathe. Starting in April, odonates begin to emerge and crawl out of the water and shed their skin to become adult dragonflies and damselflies.

The adult stage only lasts for a few weeks in some species. During the short time that odonates are "on the wing," as Connors says, they must mate and lay eggs. They mate in a unique wheel position, and cross-breeding between different species is prevented by species-specific body shapes. While she lays hundreds of eggs, the male will



Stream Cruiser, *Didymops transversa* (left) **Range:** Eastern U.S. and Canada **Description:** Body is dull brown, whitish hairs, single pale yellow stripe. Wings have a small brown spot. **Length:** 56-60 mm **Habitat:** Medium to large streams and rivers **Flight Season:** Early spring

Eastern Pondhawk, *Erythemis simplicicollis* (top) **Range:** Central and Eastern U.S. **Description:** Green face, abdomen and front of thorax is bright green in younger specimens and powder blue in older males. Wings are clear. The abdomen is black with green spots except for older males. **Length:** 36-48 mm **Habitat:** Ponds, lakes, ditches, and slow moving creeks, streams and rivers **Flight Season:** Late spring through summer

hold onto the female, both to protect her and to keep other males away.

Odonates play a valuable role in the food chain as both predator and prey. Adult and larval dragonflies eat insects and help control the mosquito population. According to the Smithsonian Institution, an adult dragonfly eats up to 30 mosquitos a day. Both damselflies and dragonflies have a spoon-shaped, hinged jaw that can shoot out in an instant and catch their prey.

In wetlands without fish, dragonfly nymphs are the top predator. In turn, nymphs are essential prey for fish and amphibians, while adults are consumed by birds, bats, lizards and spiders. To avoid predators, adult dragonflies utilize camouflage and rapid maneuvers enhanced by their bullet-shaped body and flapping wings.

Beyond that, these species can indicate the biological health of their aquatic habitats. Dragonflies and damselflies have been heavily impacted by the loss and pollution of wetlands for human development.

"Some of the most common indicators of water quality are sediment, pathogens and nutrients," says Larry Everett, environmental consultant for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. Typical sources of water contamination that damage odonate habitats include construction

sites, malfunctioning wastewater treatment systems and the cattle industry.

According to the Xerces Society, an international nonprofit dedicated to invertebrate conservation, dragonflies may also help assess the effects of global climate change.

"There have definitely been species that are expanding their ranges, which may be an indication of climate change," says Everett. "Some species that just 15 to 20 years ago were known to be from Tennessee, now they're widespread and have gone further north, which indicates that they might be expanding due to warmer temperatures. But that could be from other things as well."

At least 20 percent of all known described odonate species in North America are considered to be at risk, but creation of pond habitats, protection of streamside habitat and water quality management can aid the continued survival of these species. ♦



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Pipeline Legal Disputes Escalate

By Kevin Ridder

Construction is underway along most of the Mountain Valley Pipeline's route, but legal challenges currently prevent work at water crossings and national forests. Work on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline remains stalled due to numerous similar lawsuits. As time stretches on, unlined sections of pipe sit exposed to the elements — which can degrade a special coating on the outside of the pipe meant to reduce the risk of corrosion and explosions.

Bill Limpert, a retired Maryland environmental regulator, argues that the pipe's exposure to sun has damaged the coating. Limpert lives in the path of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in Bath County, Va.

"The ACP admits that the pipes have been stored longer than the manufacturer's recommendation," wrote Limpert in an April op-ed published in multiple news outlets. "Experts advise me the pipes may be safe for up to two years, but their safety is questionable thereafter. The ACP pipes have already been stored outside for three years and counting, since the ACP is now on hold. The MVP has testified in court that they are concerned about [fusion-bonded epoxy coating] loss as well."

Aboveground storage of coated pipe for more than six months without extra sun protection is "not recommended," according to the National Association of Pipe Coating Applicators, an industry trade group.

The coating also contains benzene and other hazardous chemicals. In a March 21 letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Virginia State Health commissioner and the director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality expressed concern about the chemicals in this coating leaching into groundwater after the pipe's prolonged exposure to sunlight.

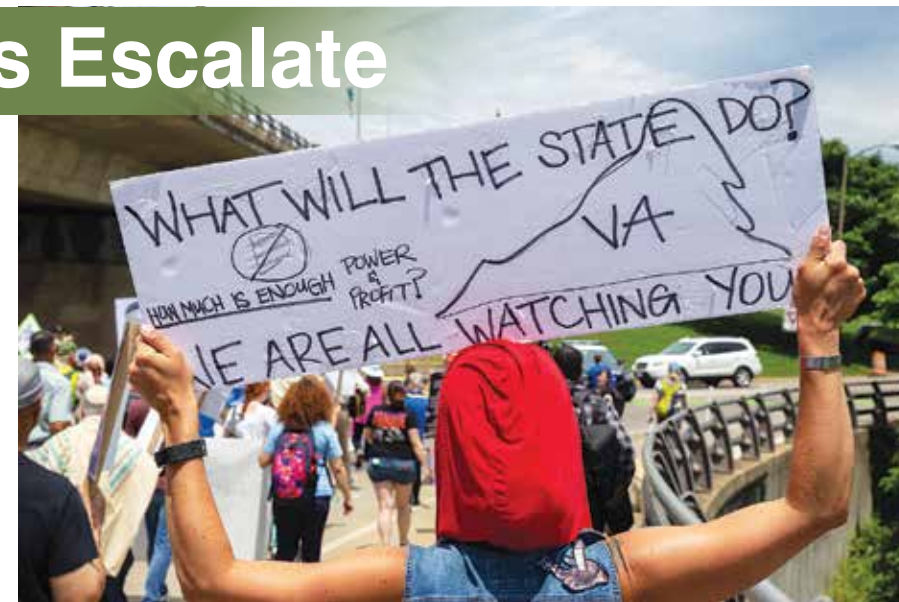
The two agencies stated that they had received numerous notes of concern from residents, and informed FERC that they would like to investigate the coating's safety and any environmental risks it may pose as the agencies have not identified any so far.

Loosening Regulations

President Donald Trump aims to clear the way for oil and gas pipeline approvals with two executive orders signed on April 10.

One attempt to make it more difficult for states to use the Clean Water Act to halt pipelines — just this May, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration denied a permit for a 24-mile natural gas pipeline. The other would give Trump the authority to approve international pipelines, instead of the secretary of state, for transnational projects such as the Keystone XL oil pipeline.

"Today's executive orders are just another attempt by Donald Trump to give corporate polluters a free pass to pollute our water and put our health at



On May 17, activists in Richmond, Va., marched against fracked-gas pipelines in the state and an Atlantic Coast Pipeline compressor station in Union Hill, Va. Photo by Parker Michels-Boyce

risk," said Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune in an April 10 press release vowing to fight the orders. "This attempt strips communities of their ability to act in the public's interest and address the pollution of their waterways."

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Frank Pallone told InsideClimate News that he vows to "fight this tooth and nail."

On the state level, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection is attempting to modify around 50 regulations that have impeded the Mountain Valley Pipeline. One change would remove a 72-hour time restriction for pipeline construction through waterways, which environmental groups including Appalachian Voices — the publisher of this newspaper — have used to halt Mountain Valley construction at water bodies.

"In other words, when the WVDEP was 'called out' in 2018 for having approved a pipeline construction plan that violated their own regulations regarding river crossings, their response was to rewrite the rules to allow construction to continue," said pipeline



Labeling on this Mountain Valley Pipeline section shows that protective coating was applied in July 2017, 15 months before this photo was taken. Photo: NRDC

resistance group Appalachians Against Pipelines in a statement.

On April 19, the Virginia DEP fined Mountain Valley developers \$266,000 for multiple environmental violations committed during construction since April 2018. Pipeline developer EQM Midstream Partners reported that regulatory challenges make it unlikely for Mountain Valley construction to be finished by the end of 2019.

Mountain Valley utilized slipshod construction practices throughout 2018, Virginia Tech Director of Appalachian Studies Emily Satterwhite alleges in an April 2019 Virginia Mercury op-ed. She states that pipeline developers admitted to FERC in May 2018 that its plans for stream crossings were insufficient, according to a Freedom of Information Act inquiry requested by the grassroots group Indian Creek Watershed Association.

"FERC Senior Consultant Lavinia DiSanto directed MVP to provide a 'site specific scenario ... for each location that would receive mitigation,'" wrote Satterwhite in the op-ed. "MVP Design Engineer Ricky Myers dismissed DiSanto's directive as 'excessive' and insisted that MVP would abide by its own newly revised rule: they would build as they saw fit and then consult with a monitor after construction."

In September 2018, FERC granted Mountain Valley a variance allowing developers to bury pipe more shallowly in streambanks. Satterwhite writes that FOIA documents indicated that neither pipe-

Continued on next page

Pipeline Protesters Charged with Threats of Terrorism

By Kevin Ridder

In West Virginia, two non-violent Mountain Valley Pipeline protesters have been arrested and charged with felony threats of terrorist acts and other crimes as of late May. The two are Holden Dometrius, who chained himself to construction equipment in Monroe County on April 30, and Jeremy Edwards, who blockaded himself inside a section of the 42-inch fracked-gas pipeline in Summers County on May 6. Edwards was charged with an additional felony for threat of property destruction. Both he and Dometrius met bail.

Previously, Mountain Valley protesters have been charged with misdemeanors. A spokesperson for Appalachians Against Pipelines, a group that represents protesters and raises funds to help with legal fees, stated that the felony charges are being used as intimidation.

"The state and MVP have seen how the misdemeanor charges and sentences police and prosecutors had been imposing failed to stop pipeline

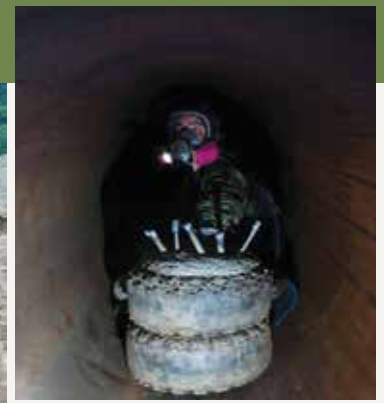
fighters from putting their bodies in the way of construction," wrote the spokesperson in an email.

The Appalachians Against Pipelines spokesperson states that the felony charges have not affected their resolve.

"The range of tactics the state is using against us has shifted; the urgency of fighting back against the expansion of fracked gas infrastructure has only intensified," they wrote.

According to Emily Satterwhite, director of Appalachian studies at Virginia Tech, it is not new for state and federal governments to use the law to put corporations before people in the region, citing conflicts between coal companies and unionizing miners in the early 20th century. Satterwhite chained herself to Mountain Valley construction equipment in Montgomery County, Va., in June 2018, and was sentenced to 200 hours of community service.

"In Virginia, I didn't face felony charges and Red and Minor Terry didn't face felony charges. In West Vir-



Jeremy Edwards, above, was charged with threats of terrorist acts, a felony, for blockading the inside of a pipeline section in May. Left, a pipeline protester hung banners from and locked themselves to equipment before being forced down by weather. Photos courtesy of Appalachians Against Pipelines

ginia, Becky Crabtree didn't face felony charges," says Satterwhite, referring to other protesters. "These young people who are putting their bodies on the line for us who live along the route are facing much stiffer charges. In my mind, that makes it even more important for long-time residents along the route to step up and say, 'No, these people are speaking up for us.'"

In Elliston, Va., protesters have occupied trees in the path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline for more than eight months. On May 18, Southwest Virginia grandmother Crystal Mello ascended a tree to join the tree-sit, which was

ongoing as of press time in late May. On May 13, pipeline developers asked a federal judge to forcibly extract the protesters before the end of the month. Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC, stated in the court document that they would have to bring another tree-cutting crew back in August if they are unable to fell the trees by June, which would cost the company approximately \$22,000.

Pipeline Legal Disputes

Continued from previous page

line developers nor FERC informed state regulatory agencies about the variance before it was granted. She calls for the state to issue a stop-work order until the effects of the variance can be assessed through a supplemental environmental impact statement that includes a stream-by-stream analysis.

On May 1, several environmental groups including Appalachian Voices and the Sierra Club alerted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of new information regarding endangered species that may be affected by Mountain Valley construction, the Roanoke Times reports.

The organizations cite heavy sediment pollution resulting from construction so far, and asked the agency to revisit its 2017 determination that an insignificant amount of endangered species would be harmed. A Sierra Club spokesperson told the publication that they may pursue a lawsuit if the agency does not.

On May 18, crowds of activists gathered in Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring's hometown of Leesburg, Va., to urge him to pursue a work stoppage

on the Mountain Valley Pipeline while an environmental enforcement case he filed in December against developers for hundreds of violations is under review. They also called on Herring to affirm the State Water Control Board's authority to revoke a Clean Water Act certification. At a public hearing in March, the board had made vague claims that they lacked the ability to rescind the certificate.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Facing mounting delays on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, lead developer Dominion Energy is pressuring Congress to consider legislation to expedite permits for the pipeline to cross the Appalachian Trail, two national forests and the Blue Ridge Parkway. In response, 52 environmental organizations including Appalachian Voices and the nonprofit law firm Southern Environmental Law Center sent a letter to Virginia's U.S. senators imploring them to oppose any such legislation.

"Dominion's permitting problems for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline are entirely self-inflicted—it never made sense to force this project through a national park, two national forests, and some of the steepest mountains in Virginia," wrote Southern Environmental Law

Center Senior Attorney Greg Buppert.

In February, the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals denied Dominion's request for a rehearing on the December denial of a U.S. Forest Service permit that would have allowed the pipeline to cross the George Washington and Monongahela National Forests.

Dominion now hopes to take its argument to the U.S. Supreme Court. If the court grants review, it likely would hear the case in 2020, Seeking Alpha reports.

On May 22, the U.S. Solicitor General asked the Supreme Court to extend a deadline to June 25 for the government to appeal the circuit court decision, Reuters reports. U.S. Attorney General William Barr, a Dominion board member for 10 years, held \$2.8 million in the company's stock as of December 2018, according to nonprofit organization Clean Virginia.

On May 4, the Southern Environmental Law Center appealed a reissued permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline that would allow developers to cut through endangered species' habitat. Representing several environmental groups, the nonprofit law firm argued to the Fourth Circuit that the permit did not fully ac-

count for the pipeline's effects on the endangered rusty-patched bumblebee and other species. A decision on the case is expected by August.

On April 12, the City of Staunton, Va., and Nelson County, Va., filed a joint friend-of-the-court brief to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia opposing the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Staunton raised concerns about the pipeline polluting the city's water supply, and Nelson County officials stated that construction could cause flooding, landslides and disrupt viewsheds.

On May 8, tech companies including Apple, Microsoft and Adobe released an open letter stating concern about Dominion's continued planned implementation of "expensive fossil fuel projects."

Referring to the monopoly utility's 15-year plan, the group states that Dominion fails to fully consider the data center industry's preference for green energy over large fossil fuel infrastructure projects.

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline, originally projected to cost up to \$5 billion and be finished by 2018, is now estimated to cost \$7.5 billion. Developers say they expect the project to be complete by early 2021. ♦

The Appalachian African-American Cultural Center

Preserving community history in Southwest Virginia

By Kevin Ridder

Surrounded by the scenic mountain vistas of Southwest Virginia, an unassuming building sits atop a hill in the town of Pennington Gap. While not obvious from afar, the former one-room schoolhouse that now houses the Appalachian African-American Cultural Center is filled to the brim with memories and relics from the past.

For 25 years, the building was the only school for local African-Americans up to 8th grade until Lee County integrated its public schools in 1965. Ron Carson, who obtained the building and founded the cultural center in 1987 with his wife Jill, has deep ties to the former schoolhouse.

“My mother was in the first group in this building in 1940, and I was the last group before integration in 1965,” says Ron Carson. “My great-great-grandmother, Rachel Scott, built this building in 1939 with \$16,500.”

The walls of the Appalachian African-American Cultural Center are lined with old photos, historical documents and more. Prominently displayed is a black-and-white photograph of Rachel Scott in a thick, black frame above various class photos of schoolhouse alumni. Ron Carson states that it’s common for locals to visit the center and spot a photo of their parents or grandparents on the wall.

The Carsons have spent decades building their collection with the community, and say they are happy to give anyone a personal tour with an appointment. They have conducted black history programs for local schools in the past, and Ron Carson says student

groups often visit during Black History Month in February. The center also hosts workshops on dismantling racism.

“What we thought we’d do is try to pull some of those decision-making people, bring them all together in a safe place and talk about, once again, ‘How can we heal this world?’” says Ron Carson. “We’re trying to heal the world, to get people to talk about it. Because if you don’t reveal, you can’t heal.”

Federal judges, lawyers, doctors, teachers, principals, religious leaders and more have attended these workshops. Sue Ella Kobak, a retired lawyer who was once the Lee County attorney, has participated in several.

“I’ve attended five [workshops], and every time a part of me — kind of the inherent racism — is revealed to me,” says Kobak. “It’s like peeling away an onion. I recognize something else I’m doing or saying or thinking that needs to be challenged.”

Kobak, whose father was a coal miner in Eastern Kentucky, helped the Carsons save the schoolhouse from demolition before it became the cultural center. She states that the center has greatly increased her awareness of black history in the region.

“I’ve learned so much, just with my association with the cultural center in the last 30-plus years,” Kobak says. “I think [the center] helps the community because it provides a broader picture of who and what Pennington Gap is. The fact that the center exists is a powerful symbol. I think it makes it impossible for the community to ignore the presence of people of color in this region.”

A History

Prior to 1940, local African-American children were taught in a dilapidated nearby church.

“They had church on Sunday, and Monday through Friday it was a school for the black kids,” says Ron Carson. “Just recently, we found documents from the Library of Congress where the principal of



Jill and Ron Carson, above, sit in front of a few historical artifacts collected over the years. Prominently displayed is an old photograph of Ron’s great-great-grandmother Rachel Scott, right, who built the building in 1939 as a school for African-Americans. Photos by Kevin Ridder

the school wrote Thurgood Marshall, who was working for the NAACP in Richmond, Va.,” he says, referring to the future U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

“There were holes in the roof, the windows were falling out and it was cold in the wintertime, so they asked if they could have assistance to renovate the building,” Ron Carson continues. “Well, obviously it didn’t happen, and as a result my great-great-grandmother built this building so the kids would have some type of a school.”

Even with the new building, however, the school was sorely lacking comforts.

“It didn’t have a bathroom, we had outdoor toilets,” says Ron Carson. “All of this was cowpastures. We didn’t have any playground equipment; parents took old socks, rolled them up and sewed them into a ball and we played sockball right out there on the lawn with broom and mop handles.”

On their way to school each morning, Ron Carson and his classmates would pass three large buildings that comprised the town’s white school. One of the structures, a prominent building with four white columns, has since been converted into a local bank on Pennington Gap’s main street.

“We always wondered why the white kids had playground equipment,” says Ron Carson. “You really didn’t know any better. This is what we had.”



Integration

On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously declared that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. However, it took 11 years for Lee County, Va., to integrate — not uncommon for school systems in the South. It might have taken even longer for the schools to integrate without the proactiveness of local doctor Eddie Beaty, according to Ron Carson

“We all met at the church, and he pretty much led the integration and said, ‘It’s time for you kids to go to the white school,’” he says. “So all the parents, all the kids, we met in downtown Pennington Gap and we all walked out to the school and integrated it.”

“They knew we were coming that Monday morning in August of 1965,” he continues. “The principal was standing there at the front door. As we walked in, he said, ‘I’m wondering what took you so long to get here.’ I thought, ‘Well, you

Continued on page 11

Cultural Center

Continued from page 10

didn’t invite us.”

To Ron Carson, walking into Pennington Gap High School after receiving most of his education in a one-room schoolhouse “was like walking onto the campus of Yale University or Harvard.”

Saving the Schoolhouse

After graduation, Ron moved to Boston, where he met his wife Jill. Ron Carson, now retired, began the black lung treatment program at Stone Mountain Health Services in Southwest Virginia and has been recognized by Congress for his work. Jill Carson is currently in her second term as a Pennington Gap councilwoman — the first African-American woman to hold the office.

“When we decided to move back here in 1986, the schools were being consolidated, and this little one-room school was still being used by the Lee County school system,” says Ron Carson. “But by consolidating schools, that meant they had no further use for this building and they were going to tear it down and send [the land] off to auction. I just knew that it was special to me.”

“Every year when we would come home for the summer to visit our parents, we’d come here and look in the window just to reminisce a little bit,” he adds. “I knew, and I convinced my wife, that we had to do something to preserve this building.”

Obtaining the building was challenging. Jill Carson states that although Ron’s great-great-grandmother built the schoolhouse, the deed did not include a clause about returning the building to the family.

“We tried to get the county to save the building, to not auction it off, to think about giving it back to the community,” Jill Carson says. “It wasn’t easy, we really had to go to battle for that. At the time that we moved back here, there were less than 100 blacks in a county of some 25,000.”

Jill Carson knew they would need outside help. So, she reached out to the NAACP in Bristol, Va., for legal assistance. The story was picked up by local media, and the county eventually handed over the property under the condition that it could still be used as a polling location.

Filling the Walls

Once they had the building, the Carsons sought help from the nonprofit

grassroots organizing collective Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, Tenn., to figure out how to best use it. (Read about the recent fire at the Highlander Center on page 3).

“We were part of the SALT program, the Southern Appalachian Leadership Training program,” says Jill Carson. “We’d go there every weekend and sit with people from everywhere, and we found out that little if anything had been written about African-American people in the Appalachian region.”

Ron and Jill Carson knew that they had to act quickly to preserve the experiences of the county’s African-American population.

“We knew that the African-American community here was an aging community, and it was small to begin with,” says Jill Carson. “We were on a mission.”

Once the Carsons decided to turn the building into a cultural center, they held a community meeting at Ron’s parents’ house. Jill Carson states that black and white community members were very receptive to the idea.

“We decided from that point that we’d have memorabilia nights,” she says. “We’d have it right here and ask people to come and bring something, anything that they had.”

Slowly, the Carsons began to amass a collection of photos, documents, handwritten stories and more, some of which they hung on the walls after opening the center in 1987. Then, after an election in the early ‘90s, the county board of supervisors informed the Carsons that someone had complained that there were political materials on display — specifically a photo of Doug Wilder, a former Virginia governor and the first African-American governor elected in the history of the country.

“We tried to explain to them that we weren’t making a political statement, just that we felt he’d earned a place in this building,” says Jill Carson. “After that, what we decided to do was to take everything down when there was an election.”

The Carsons would store all the center’s memorabilia in a small room with a window. But in October of 1994, there was a fire in that room.

“We lost everything, because everything was in one place,” says Jill Carson. “Something came through that window and just engulfed that whole area back there and spread out here. The whole inside burned.”

Investigators determined that the



The Carsons outside the Appalachian African-American Cultural Center. Photo by Kevin Ridder

fire was an electrical fire, and not arson — but Ron Carson says that there was nothing electrical back there.

“Something came through the window,” he says.

The only item that survived the fire was a program from Rachel Scott’s funeral.

“We felt that was her telling us, ‘Ok, I’m leaving this here for you, God left it here for you. Move forward,’” says Ron Carson.

Onward

After the fire, the Carsons requested other materials from the community to try and reclaim some of the history that had been lost — and the memories flooded in and filled the building’s walls again. The county also stopped using the center as a polling location.

Working with the grassroots multimedia cultural center Appalshop, based in Whitesburg, Ky., the Carsons started hosting regular story swaps in the mid-‘90s. The couple also started recording oral histories with the elderly

black community, collecting more than 50 video and audio recordings that they have started to digitize. Ron Carson states that these people, some of whom were born in

1899 and 1900, are all gone now.

“The father of black history once said, ‘Perhaps the most important element to any given people is the documentation and preservation of their own history. If its race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition and it stands to be lost in the eyes of society forever,’” says Ron Carson, quoting Dr. Carter G. Woodson.


“Everything we do, we do with that [idea] as a foundation,” Jill Carson adds. “We started out with one specific goal, but it has branched out because we think it’s important for everybody to know who they are and to have a strong foundation.”

This article is the first in a series of stories exploring the experience of African-Americans in Appalachia. Upcoming articles will feature efforts to preserve black cemeteries and the story of the Eastern Kentucky Social Club. If you would like to share information regarding these or other articles in the paper, please email voice@appvoices.org ♦

Appalachian African-American Cultural Center
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To schedule a tour, call (276) 346-5144




One of the last student groups to be taught in the schoolhouse before Lee County, Va., integrated in 1965.



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Contending with Contamination in Minden, W.Va.

By Kevin Ridder

Annetta Coffman has lived in the town of Minden, W.Va., for 44 years. Once a booming coal town of 1,200, the population shrank during the industry's decline to just 251 people by the beginning of 2018. Before 2018 ended, another 15 current and former Minden residents — including Coffman's father — died from cancer. Her mother passed away from cancer in 2007.

A registry compiled by Minden residents with help from local doctors shows that hundreds of former Minden residents have passed away from cancer. According to the citizen count, around 400 died from cancer prior to 2014, and 147 have died since. Ten more have been diagnosed since 2014.

"This year, we've had two since January pass away," says Coffman.

She states that these numbers are unofficial because the West Virginia Bureau of Public Health only includes statistics for people who contracted or died of cancer while they lived in the town.

"Tomorrow, if I decided to leave Minden and next month I was diagnosed with cancer, if I were living outside of Minden, then my cancer would not be [officially] related to Minden," she says.

Earlier in 2019, a state bill that would have required West Virginia to track cancer deaths more closely was abandoned by legislators after a state public health official claimed it would be too difficult.

Coffman and many other Minden residents suspect that the cancer spike is caused by oil containing polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs — a carcinogenic remnant of the Shaffer Equipment Company's presence in town. The substance can stick around for years in soil, and a creek that flows through many residents' yards spreads it further, especially after heavy rains that cause frequent flooding.

The Minden-based Shaffer Equipment Company built electrical equipment for the coal industry from 1970 to 1984 and used the oil in transformers and other hardware, which was common at the time. The United States banned the manufacture

of products containing PCBs in 1979, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency classifies the group of chemicals as a "probable human carcinogen."

Multiple studies have shown that PCBs can cause cancer or damage the immune, reproductive, nervous and endocrine systems, to name a few. Although no official studies have been conducted to link PCBs to a cancer cluster in Minden, Coffman says, "I don't see how it can't be."

On May 13, the EPA announced that they would add Minden to the National Priorities List as a Superfund site — meaning federal funding can now be used for cleanup. The agency stated they will investigate whether previous remediation attempts were effective. Multiple state and federal officials have declared their support for cleanup.

Residents like Coffman say they were disappointed by the government's past attempts. The EPA removed soil from the site twice between 1984 and 1991, and the agency cleaned up after an arson on the Shaffer site in 1997. In 2002, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers placed an earthen cap over the site.

Coffman states that Minden's relationship with the EPA is strained.

"They didn't come back for years, so it's really like they were nonexistent," says Coffman. "When they did come back two or three years ago, nobody trusted



A yard display raises awareness of PCB contamination in Minden. Photo courtesy of Headwaters Defense



Minden resident Percy Fruit, right, stands with environmental activist Lois Gibbs, left. Gibbs visited Minden in 2017 to share how she helped to relocate her town of Love Canal, N.Y., away from a toxic waste dump. Photo courtesy of Headwaters Defense

them. I think that's still the issue today."

Now, most residents want the EPA to relocate willing townspeople. When Coffman and others went door-to-door to every Minden home in 2017, roughly 85 percent of the people surveyed stated they would move out of the town if they could be relocated. With Minden's inclusion on the National Priorities List, Coffman says she has hope.

"I'm excited about it, I'm glad that after almost 40 years that it actually happened," she says. "I just hope that they actually do something this time."

However, EPA spokesperson Terri White states that the agency rarely relocates residents.

"Permanent relocation is only considered in cases where, for example, contamination poses an immediate threat that cannot be mitigated or remediated, implementation of remedial measures would require the destruction of homes, or the cleanup requires residents to be temporarily relocated for over one year," wrote White in an email.

On June 8, the community plans to recreate the 1989 March for Minden. Like they did 30 years ago, residents aim to raise awareness of the community's plight and advocate for their relocation.

Brandon Richardson, founder of environmental and health justice organization Headwaters Defense, lives just outside of Minden and helped to organize the march.

"We want to show the agencies and the community that 30 years have passed, and Minden is actually hurting

just as much as they were in 1989 — worse, in fact," says Richardson. "The EPA has tried to clean this up three different times, and they've failed miserably. People are sick and dying from cancer left and right. We need relocation."

Minden's Past

Lifelong Minden resident Percy Fruit recalls when Shaffer was still operating in the town. He and other local kids would play on the field where the company dumped the oil.

"We used that site as a playground; we didn't know any better," says Fruit. "We would play on that site and nobody instructed us to keep away from it."

Fruit states that Shaffer employees would let the kids use the toxic oil on their bicycle chains.

"We would dip our hands in, take an old soup can, get in there and get some oil and put it on our chains on our bikes, and lubricated our chains like that," he says. "And they dumped it all over the place."

Fruit's mother, father and grandmother died from cancer, and all three of his brothers have fought the disease at some point in their lives.

"Any day now I know I'll probably end up with cancer," he says. "But I'm putting it in God's hands."

Susie Worley-Jenkins has fought cancer six times throughout her 64 years in Minden. She explains that after Shaffer employees spent years dumping PCB oils into old mine shafts, the site

Minden, W.Va.

Continued from page 12

somehow caught on fire and burned underground for around 20 years.

"When you would ride the bus to school and we'd get close to there, everybody was rolling up the windows and locking them because we knew it was going to stink so bad and you didn't want that smell on you," says Worley-Jenkins. "I lived by that all my life."

"I'm not even going to leave my land to my grandkids like I'd originally planned, because I don't want to fill them with cancer," she adds. "It's really sad because it belonged to my grandfather, my dad and myself."

While Worley-Jenkins is confident that something will be done now that Minden is on the National Priorities List, she has her reservations.

"Am I 100 percent sure that this is going to be better than the last time?" she asks. "No, I'm not. They're going to have to prove it to me."

In the early 1980s, the late Dr. Hassan Amjad, a local physician, began looking into links between PCBs and cancer in Minden. He passed away from a heart

attack in August 2017.

"My analysis, at that time, was that PCB is a carcinogen, and it causes cancer," Hassan Amjad told the Beckley Register Herald in May 2017. "It was based on a very small amount of information at the time. Very small."

Hassan Amjad told the Register Herald that EPA toxicologists told Minden residents in the 1980s that PCBs posed no danger.

"They had a toxicologist that told all these people that, 'Oh, this PCB is not dangerous, and, even if you eat a little bit, it will take care of your cancer,'" he said in an interview with the Register Herald.

Hassan Amjad spent years talking to current and former Minden residents to develop the community's registry of people who had been diagnosed with or died from cancer. Today, his daughter Dr. Ayne Amjad is carrying on his work.

"It only made sense for me to continue," says Ayne Amjad, noting that working on the cancer registry has been a slow process.

"A lot of the information we have is someone telling us their family's health

March for Minden

June 8, 3 p.m.
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A motorcade will follow marchers for those who are unable to walk the whole route.

For more information, visit tinyurl.com/MindenMarch19



Each cross in this display that community members erected just before a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency visit in early 2018 represented one cancer case since the EPA's previous visit in 2017. Photo courtesy of Headwaters Defense

history," she says. "I need actual hard evidence, paper documentation. We need help with that. I need grant money, research students; I can't do this by myself."

Ayne Amjad hopes the Superfund listing will lead to more resources so the community can relocate.

"I'm hoping the generation that's worked this hard can see something come out of it," she says. "It took them 30 years to get to this stage, so they might not — but maybe the next generation would."

Failed Cleanups

Soon after Shaffer left town in the fall of 1984, West Virginia regulators discovered that the company had left several hundred old transformers and

capacitors behind. Soil samples revealed high PCB levels. Over the next seven years, the EPA excavated contaminated soil at the site under the eyes of former EPA employee Robert Caron.

Afterwards, the agency sued Shaffer Equipment Company and two other entities to pay for the \$5 million cleanup — but the case fell apart when attorneys uncovered that Caron had lied about having master's and bachelor's degrees. Caron was fined \$2,000 and sentenced to house arrest and probation in October 1992, according to The Baltimore Sun.

When PCBs were banned in 1979,

Continued on page 24

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Paddling Treasures

Nothing says summer like a day on the water, whether you prefer drifting through a mountain gorge, rushing over a waterfall or floating on a picturesque lake. Below is a sampling of the region's boating gems — some well-known in the paddling community, others waiting to be explored. *By Sam Kepple*



Erin Savage of Appalachian Voices runs the Horsepasture River in North Carolina. Photo by Toby MacDermott

NORTH CAROLINA

GREEN RIVER GORGE

LOCATION: The Green is located near Saluda, N.C., in Polk and Henderson counties.

HOW TO ACCESS: The gorge has three sections — the Lower Green, the Upper Green and the Narrows. There are specific put-in and take-out spots for each section, and visitors should be aware of which section they are entering, as they differ drastically in difficulty. Some of the take-outs involve a hike and require visitors to gain permission to access specific parking lots. For directions and guidelines, search Green River, N.C., on the American Whitewater website.

DIFFICULTY: The Lower Green is the easiest and is popular for tubing, ranging from Class I to II, while the Upper Green contains more adventurous whitewater ranging from Class II to IV. The Narrows is for experienced whitewater kayakers at Class IV to V, and two drops at V+.

FUN FACTS: The Green River Narrows hosts the iconic annual Green Race on the first Saturday of November. The race is going on its 24th year and attracts more than 100 racers and thousands of spectators annually.

LOCAL CHAMPION: The Green Riverkeeper is the protector and watchdog of the Green River Basin. This role is filled by Gray Jernigan, who is also the Southern Regional Director of the nonprofit environmental group MountainTrue. His work includes identifying sources of pollution, upholding environmental laws and facilitating restoration projects. To learn more or get involved, visit mountaintrue.org/green-riverkeeper

MORE INFO: H2o Dreams is an outfitter that provides instruction for all three sections so visitors of any skill level can experience the Green. Visit their webpage at h2odreams.com. For directions and other resources on the Green, visit romanticasheville.com/green-river-gorge. — S.K.



Spectators watch as a kayaker plummets through the Green River Narrows during the annual Green Race. Photo by Serge Skiba

SOUTH FORK OF THE NEW RIVER

LOCATION: The New River flows north from North Carolina and passes through Virginia before joining the Gauley River in West Virginia to form the Kanawha River. In North Carolina, the New has two forks: the North Fork and the South Fork.

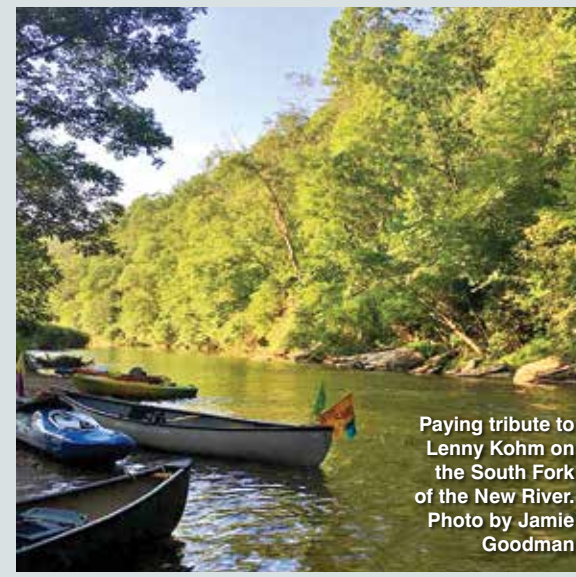
HOW TO ACCESS: North Carolina's New River State Park has three major access points on the South Fork in Ashe and Alleghany counties: Wagoner Access, U.S. 221 Access and King's Creek Access. There are other public access points beyond the state park boundaries, and several outfitters offer shuttle services to take boaters to more remote, private access points.

DIFFICULTY: The South Fork is considered a family-friendly river, and is also suitable for tubing. There are a few sets of rapids that are relatively easy to navigate, ranked as Class I or Class II depending on water levels. For a shorter trip that avoids rapids altogether, outfitters can help with planning or provide tube or boat rentals for a flatwater trip.

FUN FACTS: While it is unknown just how old the New River is, many scientists believe it to be one of the oldest rivers in the world due to the way it formed and how it contorts around mountains. In some places, the river has exposed rocks that are more than a billion years old.

LOCAL CHAMPION: The New River Conservancy is a nonprofit organization based in West Jefferson, N.C., that aims to protect the waters, woodlands and wildlife of the New River watershed. To learn more or participate in projects such as river cleanups, visit newriverconservancy.org

MORE INFO: Staff at the New River State Park can provide maps and directions to access points or recommend a rental outfitter that best meets your needs. Maps are also available at ncparks.gov/new-river-state-park. — S.K.



Paying tribute to Lenny Kohm on the South Fork of the New River. Photo by Jamie Goodman

The Whitewater Spirit WOMEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Although kayaking is often seen as a male-dominated sport, women have always been a part of the whitewater world. The accomplished paddlers featured on the following pages are making a positive impact on the region's rivers and paddlers — leading river cleanups or helping to shape environmental policy, mentoring the next generation of boaters, sharing the joys of the river with veterans, and fostering a thriving paddling community.

At Appalachian Voices, the nonprofit advocacy organization that publishes *The Appalachian Voice*, Central Appalachian Program Manager Erin Savage

belongs in the ranks of these women. Savage leads the organization's work to fight the impacts of coal mining and push for tighter regulations, helping to protect communities, land and water from mining pollution. Outside of work, Savage explores challenging whitewater, organizes and competes in kayak races and serves on the board of the nonprofit group American Whitewater.

"I'm lucky to be able to involve my love of rivers both within and beyond my work life," Savage says. "I'm grateful to use my career skills and river experience to benefit multiple nonprofit organizations."

See other profiles on pages 17 and 19.

More than a decade ago, Bethany Overfield saw a flyer for a kayaking clinic on the Nolichucky River. She had just lost her mother, had a long-term relationship end and was feeling lost. In her first year of kayaking, she racked up 150 days on the water.

"The thing that hooked me was the release I felt when I was on the water," says Overfield. "I didn't have time to think about anything that was going on in my life; I could only think about eddy hopping and making my way down the river, and that came as an immense relief to me."

"I also loved navigating through the world in a boat," she continues. "I am completely amazed by rivers and by the geologic time it takes rivers to cut through a landform. I'm just in awe of it; and I think being in awe is a good place to be."

The unique geology of Kentucky draws Overfield to creeks and rivers that are less traveled. Among her favorites in Appalachia are the Little River in the Smoky Mountains and the Big South Fork of the Cumberland.

In December 2018, Overfield decided to leave her career as a research geologist and become the membership director of American Whitewater, a nonprofit organization dedicated to river conservation.

Working to benefit the boating community is familiar territory. For the past 10 years, Bethany has volunteered in almost every role for the National Paddling Film Festival, which raises money for river conservation and access.

Overfield has also volunteered for



BETHANY OVERFIELD

Photo by Ali Blair

the past seven years with the Kentucky River Watershed Watch, a citizen-science water monitoring effort. Now she serves on the group's board of directors and teaches volunteers how to measure water quality and how to take samples for lab analysis.

"The goal is to get people engaged in their waterways — we have so many waterways in Kentucky," says Overfield. "The best way to keep tabs on them is to have folks on the ground looking out for them."

"Kayaking has never been about the adrenaline for me — sure, it's fun to tackle hard rapids and it's fun to drop over waterfalls, but the thing I love the most about it is the ability to use the river as a superhighway to see the natural world," she says.

"People are only willing to conserve and protect the things that they find of value," she continues. "We desperately need the next generation to find value in wild places. We need wild places — we need places where we can disconnect from screens and where we can learn about each other and where we can learn about our surroundings." — *By Hannah McAlister*

GEORGIA

TOCCOA RIVER

LOCATION: The Toccoa River's primary paddling routes are near the town of Blue Ridge in northwest Georgia.

DIFFICULTY: The Toccoa is a Class I and II river — with one II+ rapid — and provides training opportunities for beginning whitewater paddlers. It is best suited for canoes or long kayaks because of its flatwater stretches. Flowing through expanses of national forest, the river can be remote and travelers should be well-prepared.

HOW TO ACCESS: The 13.8-mile Toccoa River Canoe Trail begins at Deep Hole Recreation Area in Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, which has a \$5 launch and parking fee, and ends at Sandy Bottoms, an access point maintained by the U.S. Forest Service with a \$3 parking charge. From Sandy Bottoms, paddlers can travel another seven miles to the tailwaters of Lake Blue Ridge at Tilley Bend.

FUN FACTS: The Toccoa and the Ocoee are the same north-flowing river — the waterway just changes names at the state line. In Tennessee, the Ocoee is known for its rapids and was the site of the whitewater slalom events in the 1996 Olympics.

LOCAL CHAMPION: Georgia River Network is a statewide nonprofit organization that advocates for clean water policies and helps create and promote paddle trails like the one on the Toccoa.

MORE INFO: To plan a trip on the Toccoa, search for the river on the American Whitewater website or visit garivers.org/toccoa-river-canoes-trail. — M.M.



Photo by Jon Ron Toccoa River Outfitters



Guided raft trip on the Russell Fork. Photo courtesy of Kentucky Whitewater

KENTUCKY

ROCKCASTLE RIVER

LOCATION: The Rockcastle River (pictured on the cover of this publication) flows through portions of Jackson, Rockcastle, Laurel and Pulaski counties in Kentucky.

HOW TO ACCESS: The put-ins and take-outs for different sections are located along roads and bridges, with the access points visible from the roads. Visit tinyurl.com/rockcastle-river.

DIFFICULTY: This river is divided into Upper and Lower Rockcastle, each nearly 17 miles long. Upper Rockcastle is Class I+ and okay for beginners, while Lower Rockcastle has Class III to IV rapids and is only recommended for the experienced and well-equipped.

FUN FACTS: Rockcastle River gets its name from the 100-foot-tall cliffs that tower above it, especially through the Narrows, a gorge running through the lower section. The state has designated the Narrows as a Kentucky Wild River, which means 2,000 feet on either side is protected from certain activities like clearcutting.

LOCAL CHAMPION: The Kentucky Waterways Alliance is a statewide organization committed to protecting, restoring and celebrating the state's waterways. The group's Rockcastle River Conservation Program aims to conserve the land and species surrounding the river. To learn more, visit kwalliance.org.

MORE INFO: The U.S. Forest Service, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, and American Whitewater have detailed webpages on the Rockcastle River that provide directions, descriptions of rapids, outfitter recommendations and more. — S.K.

RUSSELL FORK RIVER

LOCATION: Russell Fork is part of the Big Sandy River basin and flows from Dickenson County, Va., to Pike County, Ky.

DIFFICULTY: The Russell Fork is best suited for advanced paddlers, who flock to the area during dam releases. The top section is Class II to IV, the gorge is Class IV and V, and the lower section contains several Class III rapids. Guided rafting trips offer another way to explore the river.

HOW TO ACCESS: American Whitewater offers detailed directions to put-ins and take-outs.

FUN FACTS: In Breaks Interstate Park, the Russell Fork forms the deepest gorge east of the Mississippi River.

LOCAL CHAMPION: For years, local paddlers have advocated for more frequent releases from Flannagan Dam. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers traditionally allowed recreational dam releases during October weekends only, but in 2018, the Corps extended the fall dam release season by two weekends. Jason Foley of Kentucky Whitewater, an Elkhorn City outfitter that runs trips on the Russell Fork, expects the Corps to decide this summer whether to extend the October release weekends to include more days.

Ultimately, Foley and others want to see Congress and the Army Corps expand the Flanagan Dam's official project purpose to include downstream recreation, and he encourages paddlers to contact the Corps' Huntington District office.

MORE INFO: For the latest paddling conditions and updates on dam releases, search the Russell Fork on the American Whitewater website, or visit russellfork.info. — M.M.

MARYLAND

YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER

LOCATION: The Youghiogheny is a 132-mile tributary of the Monongahela River. It begins in West Virginia, flowing through Maryland's Garrett County and the town of Oakland before entering Pennsylvania.

HOW TO ACCESS: The Youghiogheny has several public access points maintained by volunteers that include places to make donations, which help volunteers run the access points. Learn more on the Youghiogheny page on the American Whitewater website.

DIFFICULTY: The upper sections, the Top Yough and the Upper Yough, hold between Class III to V rapids, with most leaning towards the IV classification. The Middle Yough is calmer, with Class I to II water, and is followed by the Lower Yough, a Class III gorge.

FUN FACTS: The river is typically called the "Yough." Despite the deceptive spelling, "Yough" is pronounced like "yok" — think "rock," but with a "y." The Yough is also near the Cheat River in West Virginia.

LOCAL CHAMPION: The Yough Riverkeeper is a program of the Mountain Watershed Association and the international Waterkeeper Alliance. Currently, the Riverkeeper program is implementing a comprehensive monitoring plan in the Yough basin. Learn more at mtwatershed.com/yough-riverkeeper.

MORE INFO: In addition to the Riverkeeper program, the Mountain Watershed Association provides information on the river, including maps and directions. The association also tracks the safety of the water for swimming. Visit mtwatershed.com. — S.K.



Photo by Jeff Macklin



The Licking River in Blackhand Gorge. Photo by Denise Natoli Brooks

OHIO

LICKING RIVER MAIN BRANCH

LOCATION: The Licking River is a part of the Mississippi River watershed and is located in central Ohio near Newark.

HOW TO ACCESS: The Riverview Reserve, a 110-acre nature preserve, has an accessible boat launch. From here, paddlers can access the easier section that goes through Blackhand Gorge. The whitewater section runs from Ridgely Tract Road to Dillon Falls.

DIFFICULTY: The Licking River section that runs through Blackhand Gorge is primarily flatwater, with at most a Class I designation. The river's whitewater section is considered easily navigable and is usually Class I to II,

though Dillon Falls can be Class III with heavy rain.

FUN FACTS: Jonathan Chapman, better known as Johnny Applesseed, planted some of his first apple seeds and orchards in Licking County near the Licking River, according to an 1867 account.

LOCAL CHAMPION: The Licking County River Roundup is an annual river cleanup event started in 1988. The event temporarily ended in 2003, but was brought back in 2011 by city and county agencies and involves hundreds of volunteers. Visit their Facebook page to learn more about the upcoming cleanup in September!

MORE INFO: The Ohio Department of Natural Resources provides maps, directions and details at tinyurl.com/licking-river-ohio. Paddlers can also learn more at riverfacts.com. — S.K.

SOUTH CAROLINA

PACOLET RIVER

LOCATION: The Pacolet River runs through northwestern South Carolina near the towns of Spartanburg and Lockhart.

HOW TO ACCESS: There are several access points to the river, and the river flows close to major roads and highways that make it highly accessible. The first access point is located on River Street in Clifton, but many paddlers prefer to put in about a half mile further downstream at Clifton Park.

DIFFICULTY: The Pacolet has both slow-moving water and whitewater, making it a good location for paddlers interested in a range of difficulty. The 3.5-mile whitewater section begins in Clifton and is Class I to II, with some small play waves along the way.

FUN FACTS: Near Lawson's Fork, a stone marked with the date 1567 is believed to

have been left by Spanish explorer Captain Juan Pardo's expedition. This expedition was one of the first encounters between European settlers and Native Americans in the Pacolet area. The stone now resides in the Spartanburg Regional History Museum. **LOCAL CHAMPION:** Upstate Forever is a Greenville-based nonprofit organization committed to protecting the land and waterways of upstate South Carolina, including the Pacolet River. The Clean Water team at Upstate Forever partners with utility providers, municipalities and landowners to preserve critical watershed lands and promote best practices for clean water.

MORE INFO: Upstate Forever has developed a series of free waterproof blueway maps that highlight river access locations, recommended skill levels, river rapids, recommended flow levels and other useful information. Visit upstateforever.org to access these maps. — S.K.

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TENNESSEE

Laura Dillon, featured on the next page, runs Baby Falls. Photo by Ruthie Norton

TELICO RIVER

LOCATION: The Tellico River is approximately 60 miles from Knoxville and 90 miles from Chattanooga. The river primarily runs through Monroe County near Tellico Plains.

HOW TO ACCESS: The aptly named River Road provides several access points. All the rapids on this river are within view of the road, which makes it easier for future paddlers to watch and see which routes through the rapids they should take — or whether they should portage their gear around the rapid instead.

DIFFICULTY: Rapids on the Tellico range from Class II to IV. Although often described as friendly to beginner and intermediate paddlers, the river has waterfalls that present high risk if paddlers do not know how to navigate such features. It is highly recommended to be accompanied by an experienced river guide. Search the river on the American Whitewater website for specifics.

FUN FACTS: An approximately 13-foot-tall waterfall on the river called "Baby Falls" often serves as a training site for paddlers learning to tackle waterfalls.

LOCAL CHAMPION: The Tellico River is a part of the Bald River watershed. To protect the area, a coalition of elected officials, business owners and outdoor enthusiasts pushed for the passing of the Tennessee Wilderness



Photo by Steve Masters

Act. In 2018, Congress passed the act as part of the Farm Bill, protecting more than 20,000 acres within the Cherokee National Forest including the Bald River watershed.

MORE INFO: The U.S. Forest Service offers maps and area guides for the Tellico River. Visit tinyurl.com/tellico-river — S.K.

NORRIS LAKE

LOCATION: Norris Lake spans portions of Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne, Grainger and Union Counties in Northeast Tennessee.

HOW TO ACCESS: The lake is a part of Norris Dam State Park, which offers many access points, trails and other recreational areas. The lake also has several docks, marinas and resorts.

DIFFICULTY: Norris Lake is a flatwater location, but caution is still needed as the lake can be very deep. Swimmers should also be aware of motorboats.

FUN FACTS: Norris Lake was the first lake constructed by the Tennessee Valley Authority, created in 1934. The waters of Norris Lake reach over 800 miles of shoreline including dozens of islands.

LOCAL CHAMPION: Through their Go Green With Us program, Tennessee State Parks works to preserve parks through sustainable operations, resource conservation and recycling. Norris Dam State Park has achieved the program's silver recognition level, meaning the park has met multiple environmental goals including education and outreach, water conservation, energy efficiency and sustainable waste and recycling. To learn more, visit tnstateparks.com/about/go-green-with-us

MORE INFO: For details visit tnstateparks.com/parks/norris-dam. — S.K.

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Laura Dillon began whitewater kayaking in 2010 after moving to Atlanta, Ga.

"My former life was with horses," Dillon says. "And when I gave that up, I was kind of left with a void, because horses were my job, my passion, my hobby, my social life."

She went on a whitewater rafting trip with a coworker on the Ocoee River and noticed how much fun the kayakers seemed to be having. The next weekend, she signed up for lessons.

"Most sensible people will go to a pool first so they can get used to how the boat feels and they can practice being upside down and getting out of the boat," Dillon says with a laugh. "My first time ever in a boat was on a river."

After that first time, her passion for kayaking was born and she hasn't looked back. In 2013, Dillon set up the Atlanta chapter of Team River Runner, an organization that provides paddling opportunities to veterans to help them recover and assimilate back into society after returning from overseas.

Dillon was motivated to do more for veterans in a society that she says doesn't do enough to repay their service and sacrifice. She also recognized that learning



Laura Dillon on the river with a U.S. Army veteran. Photo by Dennis Walters

paddling could be very therapeutic for veterans, as it could provide a sense of community and a way to express physical and emotional energy in a healthy way.

"You've got the adrenaline, you've got the camaraderie, you've got the fact that you've got to look out for one another," Dillon says. "And there's that intensity of having to live in the moment. Cause when you're paddling whitewater, it's you and your boat, the water you're on, and the people on the right and left of you. The rest of the world ceases to exist."

Dillon now lives in Chattanooga, Tenn., where she volunteers with Team River Runner's Chattanooga chapter as a Southeast coordinator. She is also still involved with the Atlanta and Fort Benning, Ga., chapters. — *By Sam Kepple*

Paddling 101

Tips for fun and safe river adventures

A paddling trip is one of the best ways to get outside, but paddling does include some inherent risks. The danger is greater on more challenging rapids, but even on flat water, unexpected obstacles like downed trees can put boaters in precarious situations. Proper knowledge and safety precautions will help to minimize these risks. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Always wear a personal floatation device, also known as a PFD, when you are on the water. Many drownings occur in relatively easy water, so don't assume a life jacket isn't necessary for calmer trips. Many PFD options exist, from inflatable belts for stand up paddle boarding on easier water to high-float rescue vests for harder whitewater. Choose a PFD appropriate for your activity and skill, and don't use a rescue vest unless you have received proper training.
- Take a swiftwater rescue course. These courses aren't just for rescue professionals. Anyone who paddles on rivers can benefit from the knowledge and skills taught in these courses. Once you have taken a course, always take a throw bag on river trips. Throw bags are self-contained ropes specifically designed for use on the river while rescuing swimmers or recovering a lost boat.

Chrissy Zeltner didn't start kayaking until she moved to West Virginia after college in 1993, but in the past 26 years living in the Mountain State, kayaking has become a passion and is the reason she stays in the area. The Cheat River watershed, the Tygart watershed, and the Gauley watershed are some of her favorite places to paddle.

"West Virginia has just got some of the prime, most spectacular whitewater in the world," Zeltner says. "The rivers and the scenery here in West Virginia parallel some of the most beautiful places I've seen in the world." Zeltner has recorded over 200 days of overnight kayaking across five countries, including kayaking the entire Grand Canyon portion of the Colorado River five times, the challenging Green River in Colorado and Romaine River in Canada among many others. In addition to her kayaking resume, she also has an impressive role as an advocate for the rivers she loves.

In 2006, a fellow kayaker asked Zeltner to join the board of directors for the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, an organization founded by paddlers and whitewater enthusiasts to advocate for clean water for drinking and recreation. She has been an active member of the board for the past 13 years and is now chair of the board of directors.

According to Zeltner, her recreation interests originally brought her to the



Photo by Michael Sawyer

CHRISSE ZELTNER

group, but her experience on the board opened her eyes to other water issues.

"I realized how clean water is a human right and how we need to fight for it," she says.

Currently, West Virginia Rivers Coalition is involved in efforts to update the state's water quality standards to follow federal recommendations for acceptable levels of pollutants that harm human health. After industry groups argued that complying with these stronger water quality standards would be too costly, the state legislature passed a bill that delayed the timetable for any changes.

"We're doing a lot of action alerts and trying to get people calling their representatives," Zeltner says.

The bill requires the state environmental agency to accept public input until October 2019 and to submit a new proposal for public review before April 2020.

"We can't stop now," Zeltner says.

"We have too much momentum and there's too much of a need to stop." — *By Eric Halvarson*

Class IV rapids are difficult and powerful, often with unavoidable hydraulics. Class V is extremely difficult, with long stretches of violent rapids, large obstructions and steep gradient.

• Be prepared. Make sure you have proper equipment. At a minimum, this means non-slip shoes or booties, a PFD, synthetic or wool clothing and drinking water. Purchase your equipment from a reputable manufacturer or retailer; this will ensure that your equipment fits properly and is well-designed for its intended use. A helmet is never a bad idea on any moving water, and is a must for anyone in a decked kayak or anyone running harder or shallower whitewater.

• Get instruction and find a mentor. The Southeast is full of reputable outfitters and instructors who can provide anything from basic safety instruction to advanced whitewater instructions. Even if you only plan to paddle flatwater, you can still benefit from instruction. If you plan to paddle regularly and want to advance, find a paddling mentor. Paddling is a group activity and you can learn a lot from your fellow boaters. — *By Erin Savage*

VIRGINIA

CLINCH RIVER

LOCATION: The Clinch River forms in Tazewell County, Va., flowing unfettered through Southwest Virginia on its way to Tennessee, where it encounters two dams before joining the Tennessee River.

HOW TO ACCESS: The Virginia section of the Clinch hosts numerous launch and take-out sites. Review a map and mileage information at clinchriverva.com.

DIFFICULTY: The river is mostly gently flowing and Class I, welcoming to beginners, anglers and families. But boaters should be aware of the location of several Class II and III rapids. Paddlers can opt to portage around these rapids or choose calmer sections.

FUN FACTS: The Clinch is a widely acclaimed biodiversity hotspot, partially due to a lack of dams on the Virginia portion. Its waters are home to roughly 50 species of mussels — including many that are at-risk or endangered — along with a range of darters, minnows and sport fish.

LOCAL CHAMPION: The Clinch River Valley Initiative, a network of local community advocates, promotes tourism by highlighting recreational opportunities along the river and in nearby towns.



The Maury River, at left. Photo by Flickr user [tcpix](#). Below, Adam Wells of Appalachian Voices runs a rapid on the Clinch River. Photo by Chelsea Barnes



MORE INFO: Plan your Clinch adventure — and your off-river explorations — at clinchriverva.com and visitclinchriver.com. Both sites include contact information for Clinch River guide and boat rental services. — M.M.

MAURY RIVER

LOCATION: The Maury River is near Buena Vista, Va., approximately an hour's drive northeast of Roanoke, Va.

HOW TO ACCESS: A large parking area serves the first and most difficult stretch, Goshen Pass. Less experienced paddlers can put in further down the river. Detailed directions are on the American Whitewater website.

DIFFICULTY: The first five miles of the river, known as Goshen Pass, are only recommended to more experienced paddlers. This stretch is tricky to navigate safely and its rapids rank between Class III to IV. Below Goshen Pass, the water varies from Class I to III and is considered a good run for those training to paddle whitewater.

FUN FACTS: The river was named after Matthew Fontaine Maury, a professor at the Virginia Military Institute who fell in love with the river. Following Maury's death, his remains were carried through Goshen Pass and on to Richmond for burial. The river also parallels the Chessie Nature Trail.

LOCAL CHAMPION: The Atlantic Coast Pipeline would disturb the headwaters of the Maury River (read more on page 8). Grassroots group Preserve Rockbridge is working to prevent the construction of the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines, as is the Rockbridge Conservation Council, which also monitors water quality on the Maury.

MORE INFO: The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries works on stream restoration and other conservation projects, and is working to remove a damaged dam on the Maury that blocks fish movements. The department offers an extensive river description as well as biology reports and current regulations. Check it out at dgif.virginia.gov/waterbody/maury-river. — S.K.



WEST VIRGINIA

CHEAT RIVER

LOCATION: The Cheat River flows north through northeastern West Virginia, near the towns of Rowlesburg and Albright.

DIFFICULTY: The Upper Cheat north of Parsons is a Class I river with excellent camping and fishing opportunities. The river's Narrows section is characterized by Class II and III rapids, though it can be more advanced during high water levels. This section is also home to Fascination Alley, a world-class squirt boating destination. The Cheat Canyon section is a 10-mile wilderness run with Class III and IV rapids, and is also the location of an annual May race that coincides with the Cheat River Festival, an environmental and music event. Many of the Cheat's tributaries, like Red Creek, the Blackwater and Big Sandy Creek, are also whitewater destinations.

HOW TO ACCESS: Find detailed access information for the beginner-friendly Upper Cheat at cheatriverwatertrail.org. For information on the advanced Narrows and Cheat Canyon sections, visit the American Whitewater website.

FUN FACTS: The Cheat is clean and safe for paddlers today, but that wasn't always the case. Acid mine drainage from upstream coal mining began noticeably damaging the river in the 1970s. In 1994, a mine blowout on Muddy Creek contaminated the river, dyeing the rockbed bright orange. But the crisis also led to the formation of Friends of the Cheat, a local advocacy organization that spearheaded efforts to restore the river and its tributaries.

LOCAL CHAMPION: Friends of the Cheat has been a key part of the successful effort to remove the Cheat from the state's list of impaired waterways. The organization installed and maintains 15 treatment sites for acid mine drainage in the surrounding area, and helped the state maintain another 30 sites. In 2018, the group received a \$3.2 million Abandoned Mine Lands Pilot Program grant to develop a trail system along the Narrows section and transform a former coal prep plant into a riverside park.

MORE INFO: Visit the Friends of the Cheat website to learn about the organization's work, or contact them for river-related questions. For whitewater adventures, contact Cheat River Outfitters. — M.M.



Paddlers enjoy the Cheat River, at top. Thanks to the cleanup of abandoned mines and related acid mine drainage, the river has made a remarkable recovery. Photo by Garrett Thompson. Visitors to Summersville Lake, above, are greeted by beautiful cliffs. Photo by Michelle Klisish

SUMMERSVILLE LAKE

LOCATION: Located in Nicholas County, W.Va., Summersville Lake is situated near the Gauley and New rivers, two of the state's best-known whitewater rivers. The lake is formed by a rock-fill dam on the Gauley.

HOW TO ACCESS: The lake connects to the Gauley River National Recreation Area and is highly accessible to the public. The lake's proximity to the Gauley and New Rivers makes it a great spot for those looking to enjoy alternative water recreation after whitewater rafting.

DIFFICULTY: The lake allows many recreational activities beyond paddling, including stand-up paddleboarding and scuba diving, which vary in difficulty.

FUN FACTS: On the cliffs surrounding the lake is West Virginia's only working lighthouse, the Summersville Lake Lighthouse.

LOCAL CHAMPIONS: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Huntington District manages the lake and coordinates volunteers who serve as beach and campground hosts or help with service projects. Nicholas County High School students are also involved in lake clean-ups.

MORE INFO: Active Southern West Virginia, a group that promotes physical activity, occasionally holds free stand-up paddleboarding days on the lake. Check activeswv.org/events for details. To learn about the lake and its regulations, visit summersvillewv.org/summersville-lake.

EMILY SHANBLATT

Emily Shanblatt began whitewater kayaking as a Warren Wilson College student in 2007 on a trip down the Class II Tuckasegee River.

"The feeling of maneuvering amongst the chaos of the waves and the current, learning how to read the water, and the exhilaration of just a few unexpected splashes in the face had me hooked," says Shanblatt.

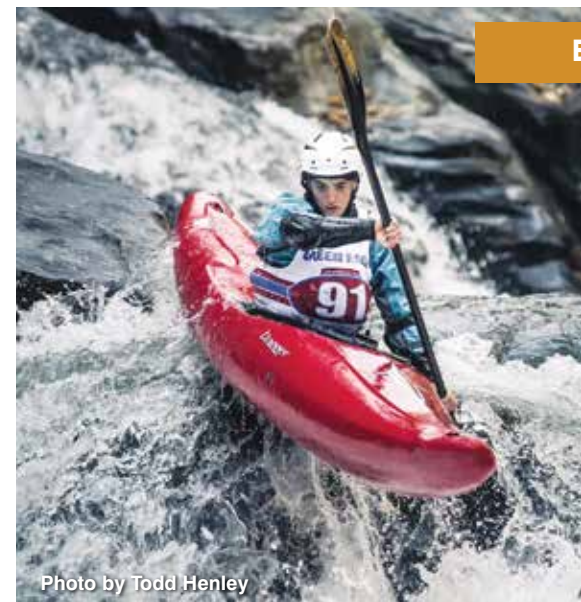


Photo by Todd Henley

CYNTHIA AND EMILY GRIMES

Cynthia Grimes canoed during the 11 summers she spent at an Arkansas summer camp, where she also began teaching paddling in 1970. She later taught in Colorado and Switzerland.

In 1982, Cynthia Grimes and her husband were seeking more whitewater kayaking experiences and joined the Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Inc., a Kentucky organization that supports river recreation and wilderness waterways.

She continued to paddle when she was pregnant with her daughter, Emily Grimes, who says she "grew up in parking lots at the Ocoee and Gauley."

The Grimeses used to brave Class V rapids but have moved to more intermediate whitewater due to Cynthia Grimes' two major shoulder injuries and Emily's changing preferences.

"I spent a lot of time in my early 20's 'charging' Class V," says Emily Grimes. "The rush was great and so were the social media posts, but it was never fun for me; and what's the point of kayaking if it's not fun? These days I prefer to kick it sans fear."

Following in her mother's footsteps, Emily Grimes has taught kayaking for 10 years, working in Canada, China, Washington and Kentucky. "The joy people experience while kayaking transcends political borders and is felt in all cultures," she says.

The pair have many favorite pad-



Photo by Emily Grimes

dling spots in Kentucky including the Russell Fork, the Big South Fork of the Cumberland and Elkhorn Creek.

"I enjoy the beautiful surroundings, bonding with fellow paddlers and the magic of rivers," says Cynthia Grimes. "They're always moving, always taking you to new adventure and expanding your personal feeling of accomplishment."

For 21 years, Cynthia Grimes has also taught the kids' clinic at the Bluegrass Wildwater Association.

"We don't lecture the kids much about strokes and technique," says Cynthia Grimes. "We get them on the water and coach them about what they feel and experience, and how to use their powers to dance with the river currents and go where they want to go."

"Over the years I have been fortunate to teach many students with various disabilities," she says. "It is great to see people flourish when they see themselves accomplishing things most of their friends can not even begin to imagine." — By Hannah McAlister

In 2012, she started leading paddling trips for the French Broad River Academy for Boys, a private middle school in Asheville, N.C., that specializes in adventure education in addition to traditional academics. In 2015, she joined three other staff members in opening the FBRA for Girls.

"We're doing incredible things with using the outdoors to teach character development and leadership," says Shanblatt. "These girls are going to totally shape the future, and so many of the valuable skills they'll use later in life are ones they're learning while canoeing with each other every week."

As the school's outdoor programs director, she organizes outdoor activities and trips and finds new ways to push the students in their technical, leadership and communication skills as well as social and emotional relations.

"We're always asking ourselves, 'What skills are these girls going to need in high school, college and the world beyond?' And then we try to use the outdoors to reach those skills," says Shanblatt.

The Southeast is known for creek-ing, a type of whitewater paddling with low-volume boulder gardens, waterfalls

and slides. Shanblatt says she loves this style because it puts an emphasis on skill development and working with the river. Some of her favorite spots include the Green River in Saluda, N.C., and the steep creeks of the Smoky Mountains. When it comes to teaching Class I to III whitewater, Shanblatt says it is hard to beat the French Broad.

"From my home in Asheville, I can access close to 100 whitewater sections within an hour or two. Many of these sections are Class II and III, which make them excellent spots to build skill, gain confidence and mess up without big consequences," she says. "When it comes to Class IV and V, we also have some of the world's best and easiest access to challenging whitewater."

In addition to directing the academy's outdoor program, Shanblatt also teaches 6th grade math.

"Both roles are incredibly rewarding because we get to see the students in so many different situations, venues and lights," says Shanblatt. "We believe the outdoors is like a hack, or a shortcut, for developing competent and confident young women, and we're seeing that firsthand with our students everyday."

— By Hannah McAlister

'TIS THE SEASON



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Keeping the Nolichucky “Wild and Scenic”

By Lorelei Goff

The Nolichucky River spans 115 miles in two states, winding through forested mountains in Hunteale, N.C., to Douglas Lake in Tennessee. The name is derived from the Cherokee word Na’na-tlu gun’yi, meaning Spruce-Tree Place, according to Western Carolina University professor Brett Riggs in the documentary “Secrets of the Nolichucky.”

A grassroots effort to secure a Wild and Scenic designation from Congress for an approximately seven-mile section of the Nolichucky River kicked off in 2017 with an online petition created by Curtis England, a guide for Nantahala Outdoor Center.

The Wild and Scenic Act, established by Congress in 1968, states that rivers having “remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.” Less than one quarter of 1 percent of United States rivers are protected under the act.

A Wild and Scenic designation would create a quarter-mile corridor of protection on either side of the designated stretch of the Nolichucky where no commercial development would be allowed. That’s good news for the kayakers, whitewater rafters and anglers who enjoy its solitude, beauty and the varying character of its waters.

“It’s really one of the first sections of river that most any whitewater paddler does in a true remote, wild, scenic area,” says Wesley Bradley, the Tri-Cities ambassador for World Kayaks, an organization that aims to develop whitewater kayaking across the globe. “You’re in a wilderness setting instead of a rural setting. It’s a special section of the river.”

Running through U.S. Forest Service land, most of the seven-mile stretch beginning in Poplar, N.C., has Class III rapids with some Class IV about a mile and a half down the gorge. Nearing the Nolichucky Gorge Campground in Erwin, Tenn., the river mellows to Class I and II for about 15.5 miles. Bradley describes it as the crown jewel of intermediate whitewater paddling.

Bradley, along with Chris Lennon of Legacy Anglers of Tennessee and Kevin Colburn, president of the river conservation nonprofit American Whitewater, embody much of the driving effort behind the Nolichucky Wild and Scenic effort. The 2017 petition, directed at other outdoor enthusiasts and businesses and communities along the river, quickly garnered more than 10,000 signatures, and now has more than 20,000.

Approximately 20 businesses and outdoor recreation organizations have endorsed the proposal. Among the individuals are Tennessee District 4 Rep. John Holsclaw Jr., and mayors from the Town of Erwin and Unicoi County in Tennessee.

Although Lennon states that the U.S. Forest Service has generally managed the river well since it took charge in 1994, those management practices aren’t mandated by Congress and could change at any time.

“It’s our belief and hope that many communities, the region and the river claim the ultimate benefits,” Lennon said. “We want ... the Nolichucky management, the way it has been for the last 25-plus years, to continue.”

Benefits to Wildlife

Lennon explains that the benefits of Wild and Scenic designation include opportunities for recreation, economic development and ecological and cultural education through the growth of tourism.

The designation will also help to protect the watershed by prohibiting damming and other activities that would impede or disrupt its flow and alter the surrounding land. That’s also good news for wildlife that relies on the river, such as the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel, which can only thrive in clean, free-flowing water, and a flowering plant named Virginia spiraea that is threatened by habitat changes.

“This is one of the Southeast’s last true mountain rivers that supports life the way it’s supposed to,” says Chris Lennon of the fishing guide service Legacy Anglers of Tennessee. “From frogs to herons, trout to eagles, small-



Securing a National Wild and Scenic River designation for a seven-mile section of the Nolichucky River would help protect the gorge, above. Photo by Kevin Colburn. At left, a paddler works through the Nolichucky’s rapids, a popular destination for rafters, kayakers and whitewater canoeists. Photo by Matt Jackson

mouth bass to endangered or threatened species like the elktoe mussel or the hellbender, it can all be found here. The corridor around the gorge will also help protect isolated populations of the southern brook trout in the feeder creeks and streams.”

It will also benefit the human populations downstream that use the river as a source of drinking water. Sections of the Nolichucky have been listed as impaired over the years due to sedimentation and levels of E. coli that exceed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s limits. Both can be attributed to human activities such as farming and construction.

Several water quality concerns exist downstream from the potential Wild and Scenic section. Dr. Michael Ketterer, a research scientist hired by activists in Greene, Washington and Unicoi counties in Tennessee, announced in October of 2018 that he found enriched uranium downstream of Erwin Nuclear Fuels. October water quality monitoring tests detected thallium, a potentially deadly heavy metal, at the U.S. Nitrogen effluent discharge site in Greene County. The company doesn’t use the chemical and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation wasn’t able to locate a source after further testing. TDEC extended a fish consumption ad-

visory for a downstream section of the Nolichucky that was originally issued in the summer of 2018 due to levels of mercury that exceeded acceptable EPA limits.

Swaying Lawmakers

According to Colburn, support for the designation has been diverse and homegrown, without any apparent opposition. The only obstacle, he says, is garnering enough public support to sway lawmakers since the designation requires an act of Congress.

“We feel like there is critical mass to get a bill moving,” Colburn says. Bradley agrees.

“We do not have a plan to introduce a bill anytime soon,” Bradley says. “We want to make sure we have enough support for a bill to be successful. One of our current goals is to continue growing local support for the designation at all levels within the surrounding communities.”

Bradley hopes more interested residents from both states sign the petition and send letters to local, state and federal officials asking them to support the effort.

“Our main goal is to keep the Nolichucky Gorge the way it is now, so future generations can enjoy it the way we do,” Bradley says. “The Wild and Scenic designation is the best way to preserve the river in that manner.”

Visit noliwildandscenic.org. ♦



Pass the RECLAIM Act

Opinion

Politicians like to talk about helping rural Appalachia. The RECLAIM Act is a chance for them to show that they mean it.

By Thom Kay, Appalachian Voices Senior Legislative Representative

On May 1, the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee passed the RECLAIM Act, H.R. 2156, on a bipartisan vote. The day before, a group of Senate Democrats introduced a similar bill. The RECLAIM Act is intended to accelerate the clean-up of abandoned coal mines while creating jobs in areas hard-hit by the decline of the coal industry.

To do this, the RECLAIM Act would fast-track the spending of money that is already allocated for cleaning up abandoned coal mines, prioritizing projects that boost local economies and have local support.

Ever since the federal surface mining law went into effect in 1977, coal companies have paid a tax on coal production to pay for the reclamation of the millions of acres damaged by mines that were abandoned before the 1977 law. The fund currently has an unappropriated balance of \$2.4 billion, \$1 billion of which isn’t scheduled to be spent until after 2023. Starting in fiscal year 2020, the RECLAIM Act would accelerate spending of that \$1 billion, distributing it to states and tribes over five years.

Across the coal-bearing mountains of Central Appalachia, communities

that long depended on mining are still hurting economically from the industry’s decline. Despite President Trump’s stated optimism that coal jobs will rebound, any slight gains are likely to be short-lived — the industry’s downward slide is due to irreversible trends like the mechanization of jobs and coal’s losing competition with cheaper renewable energy and natural gas.

The RECLAIM Act provides a clear way for lawmakers to bring new jobs to these communities. It prioritizes the reclamation of sites that are connected to long-term economic projects supported by local communities, such as agriculture, renewable energy, wildlife habitat or recreational tourism projects. These endeavors would put laid-off miners — who possess the skills necessary for mine reclamation — and others to work. Government estimates show the funds could create at least 4,600 direct reclamation jobs across the country.

The bill would also give a much-needed boost to cleanup efforts at abandoned mines across the country — addressing dangerous open mine portals, water contamination from acid mine drainage, unstable slopes and other pervasive problems that have threatened communities and caused environmental damage for decades. In

West Virginia alone, more than 4,000 abandoned mine land problems lack reclamation funding.

Lawmakers first introduced the RECLAIM Act in 2016, and it has gained substantial bipartisan support. Dozens of municipalities and economic development authorities across the region have also passed resolutions of support for the concept. Despite this, it has not yet become law.

Instead, Congress began appropriating funding in 2016 for a project called the AML Pilot Program, which was intended to demonstrate what could be accomplished on a wider scale with passage of the RECLAIM Act.

But the pilot program is much less detailed. As a result, the implementation of the pilot program has not always reflected the design of the RECLAIM Act, and the quality of projects funded by the pilot program varies significantly.

Under the pilot program, the allocation of funding does not require community input, while the RECLAIM Act would mandate a process for public engagement before funds are released. And while projects under the pilot program frequently include environmental remediation, they are not required to do so, whereas remediation is always required under the RECLAIM Act.

What people are saying:

“The RECLAIM Act provides a transformative opportunity for coal-producing states to fast-track available funding to restore our land and revive our economy in the coalfields.” — U.S. Rep Hal Rogers (R-KY)

“This bill brings much-needed funding to struggling coal communities, while also helping them eliminate blight and pollution.” — U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright (D-PA)

“It is critical that as our nation moves toward a clean energy economy, we make sure that no worker or community is left behind.” — BlueGreen Alliance Interim Co-Executive Director Michael Williams

The AML Pilot Program’s shortcomings relative to the RECLAIM Act provide yet another reason to pass H.R. 2156 as soon as possible.

Politicians on both sides of the aisle often say they want to help revive working communities in rural America; the RECLAIM Act is an opportunity to do just that.

Communities across Central Appalachia have waited too long for real action from Washington. Tell your legislators to make passing the RECLAIM Act a priority this summer. ♦

Appalachia’s Environmental Votetracker

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

	Kentucky			Tennessee			North Carolina			Virginia			West Virginia			
	T. Massie (R) KY-04	H. Rogers (R) KY-05	A. Barr (R) KY-06	P. Roe (R) TN-01	T. Burchett (R) TN-02	Fleischman (R) TN-03	S. Desjarlais (R) TN-04	V. Foxx (R) NC-05	P. McHenry (R) NC-10	M. Meadows (R) NC-11	D. Riggleman (R) VA-05	B. Cline (R) VA-06	M. Griffith (R) VA-09	D. McKinley (R) WV-01	A. Mooney (R) WV-02	C. Miller (R) WV-03
HOUSE																
H.R. 9, the Climate Action Now Act , would reaffirm America’s commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement and lay the groundwork for future climate action. AYES 231 NOES 190 NV 11 ... PASSED	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
H.R. 1331, the Local Water Protection Act , would increase a grant fund for state programs meant to reduce water pollution from snowmelt and stormwater runoff. AYES 329 NOES 56 NV 46 ... PASSED	✗	○	○	●	✗	●	○	✗	●	●	●	✗	●	●	●	●
SENATE	M. McConnell (R)	R. Paul (R)		M. Blackburn (R)	L. Alexander (R)		R. Burr (R)	T. Tillis (R)		T. Kaine (D)	M. Warner (D)	J. Manchin (D)	S. M. Capito (R)			
S. Roll Call 77, Confirmation of David Bernhardt as U.S. Dept. of the Interior Secretary , confirmed President Trump’s nomination of the former oil and gas industry lobbyist, who was also a DOI employee under President George W. Bush. AYES 56 NOES 41 NV 3 ... PASSED	✗	✗		✗	✗		✗	✗		●	●			✗		✗
S. Roll Call 33, Confirmation of Andrew Wheeler as U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator , approved the president’s nomination of the former Deputy EPA Administrator who was also a coal industry lobbyist. AYES 52 NOES 47 NV 1 ... PASSED	✗	✗		✗	✗		✗	✗		●	●			●		✗

North Carolina Orders Coal Ash Cleanup, Duke Appeals

By Tyler Owensby

On April 1, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality announced that Duke Energy must fully excavate millions of tons of coal ash from six sites across the state. This was a victory for communities near the ash impoundments and environmental groups including Appalachian Voices, the publisher of this newspaper, who had advocated for coal ash excavation for years.

Like other power companies, Duke has typically dumped coal ash mixed with water into unlined, earthen pits. Pollutants have leached into groundwater at all of the utility's North Carolina sites and have been a suspected cause of drinking water pollution in communities near six of Duke's power plants.

After a Duke coal ash pit near Eden, N.C., burst in February 2014, more than 39,000 tons of the toxic substance spilled into the Dan River. This prompted the state legislature to pass the Coal Ash Management Act later that year to monitor

the cleanup and closure of Duke's 33 ash impoundments at 14 sites across the state.

The legislation resulted in the state ordering full excavation of coal ash from four sites. In 2016, lawsuits filed by nearby communities resulted in excavation orders for four more sites. DEQ's April excavation order applies to the remaining six sites.

"DEQ rigorously reviewed the proposals, and the science points us clearly to excavation as the only way to protect public health and the environment," DEQ Secretary Michael Regan said in an April 1 press release.

On April 26, the monopoly utility appealed the state's decision, claiming that excavation would "drastically increase" ratepayer costs. Duke has opposed moving coal ash to lined landfills due to its comparatively higher cost, instead favoring capping the open pits in place. But the cap-in-place method does not stop pollutants' ability to seep into groundwater, especially for many of Duke's coal ash ponds where the ash sits



Members of the A.C.T. Against Coal Ash coalition, including Appalachian Voices staff, gathered in early April near Belevs Creek, N.C., to celebrate the state's decision to order coal ash cleanup. Front row, l-r: Jillian Riley, Amy Adams, Lib Hutchby, Deborah Graham, Kim Porter, Tracey Edwards and Caroline Armijo. Back row, l-r: Brian Fannon, Ridge Graham and Xavier Boatright. Photo courtesy of Caroline Armijo

at or below groundwater level.

On May 3, the Southern Environmental Law Center moved to intervene in Duke's appeal. The nonprofit law firm represents several environmental groups, including Appalachian Voices, in the case against Duke.

Duke claims that full excavation could cost as much as \$10.6 billion. But Appalachian Voices' North Carolina Field Coordinator Ridge Graham states that these numbers are grossly inflated.

"If you look at the numbers from the closure option analyses that Duke submitted to the DEQ back in January, the total cost for excavation to on-site lined landfills is \$3.6 billion — and that's with the inflated contingency of up to 25 percent tacked on, at most sites," says Graham. "This is classic fearmongering from Duke to turn ratepayers against the communities living near coal ash."

Regardless of the total cleanup cost, Duke could attempt to pass some or all of it on to its customers. In 2018, the state utilities commission allowed Duke to charge ratepayers \$546 million to close coal ash pits, a decision that state Attorney General Josh Stein and the Sierra Club both appealed.

"This decision does not come down to a matter of cost," says Caroline Armijo with Residents for Coal Ash Cleanup, a grassroots group near the utility's Belevs Creek waste impoundment. "It comes down to compassion and respect for the lives of the people who love this state and their homes."

Over the years, thousands of North Carolina citizens have shared their stories, experiences and concerns about

Duke's unlined coal ash pits. There have been numerous rallies and press conferences outside of courthouses, DEQ headquarters and inside the General Assembly. These community members have also written thousands of comments, spoken at dozens of hearings and been heard on national platforms such as CNN and in the New Yorker.

Belmont, N.C., resident Amy Brown lives next to Duke's Allen Steam Station and relied on bottled water for drinking and cooking for three years due to polluted well water. The utility paid for new water lines for Brown and other residents within a half-mile of the coal ash pit.

"Duke was never promised or guaranteed to receive a cap-in-place decision, they assumed they would get what they wanted," Brown wrote in an email.

In 2016, Duke pushed for a bill to downgrade the risk classification of coal ash ponds from intermediate to low, as long as the monopoly utility provided a permanent clean water source to people within a half-mile of the ponds' outer boundaries. After the bill passed, Duke connected 960 homeowners and businesses to municipal water lines while the communities near the Belevs Creek, Mayo and Roxboro power plants instead received filtration systems.

Duke still denies responsibility for contaminated well water systems despite independent water testing displaying high levels of contaminants typically found in coal ash.

If DEQ compels Duke to excavate its coal ash, North Carolina would join Virginia and South Carolina in ending the storage of coal ash in unlined pits. ♦

Kevin Ridder contributed reporting.

TVA Faces Criticism Over Coal Ash, Transparency

By Kevin Ridder

The Tennessee Valley Authority, the federally owned utility that serves most of the state and parts of six others, is facing a litany of lawsuits and problems. On May 8, three East Tennessee municipalities filed a lawsuit against TVA and its contractor Jacobs Engineering. The local governments accuse TVA of misleading the public on the dangers of coal ash in the aftermath of the 7.3 million-ton Kingston coal ash spill in 2008.

Roane County and the cities of Kingston and Harriman accuse TVA and Jacobs Engineering of concealing a coal ash ingredient list, destroying and tampering with evidence during cleanup, and covering up these transgressions for more than a decade. TVA denies any wrongdoing.

"The defendants conspired to keep secret from the public, their neighbors, the constituents of the fly ash and that the fly ash contained radioactive material, all of which is harmful to human health and the plaintiffs and their citizenry," reads the lawsuit.

"Jacobs colluded and conspired with the TVA to commit the same transgressions to conceal documentary and video evidence," the lawsuit continues. "Defendants have spent large quantities of ratepayer monies attempting to hide the truth regarding the 'safety' of fly ash, both in public relations campaigns and attorneys' fees defending their unlawful behavior."

This is the latest in a string of lawsuits against TVA and Jacobs for their handling of the 2008 environmental disaster. According to an ongoing USA TODAY Network-Tennessee investigation, of the roughly 900 workers who helped clean up the spill, at least 40 have died and more than 400 reportedly became sick. On Nov. 7, 2018, a federal judge ruled in favor of 73 of the workers or their survivors against Jacobs, allowing them to seek financial compensation for medical expenses. In late April, a judge denied Jacobs' appeal.

Whistleblowers at two TVA power plants in East Tennessee told USA TODAY in early 2019 that they are often exposed to toxic coal ash and flue gas without masks, respirators or bodysuits. Photos and videos that workers submitted to the news organization between February and April reveal thick coatings

of coal ash on surfaces in the Kingston and Bull Run plants, and workers stated that they are not provided with decontamination stations.

In late April, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that TVA does not have governmental immunity to prevent injury lawsuits related to power production. The ruling stems from a 2013 incident in which a fisherman was killed and nearly decapitated by a power line TVA crews were attempting to raise out of the water.

TVA Transparency

Tennessee state and federal lawmakers are seeking more transparency from the Tennessee Valley Authority. The TVA Transparency Act of 2019, introduced by U.S. Rep. Tim Burchett (R-TN) in January, would require the monopoly utility to open board committee meetings to the public, provide notice of the meetings beforehand and make meeting minutes publicly available. The bill awaited decision in committee as of May 23.

On April 30, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee signed a resolution in support of the bill, which also received near-unanimous support in the state House and Senate.

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

According to the Chattanooga Times Free Press, TVA donated nearly half a million in 2017 to the Utility Air Regulatory Group, a lobbying firm that has pushed to ease emission standards from coal-fired power plants. TVA has donated more than \$7 million in ratepayer dollars to the firm since 2001.

In April, House Democrats announced that they were looking into ties between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the UARG. They suspect the EPA breached ethics rules when regulators attempted to roll back the Clean Air Act. The rollback would benefit EPA officials' former clients, including TVA. Shortly after the investigation was announced, seven utilities including Duke Energy and Dominion Energy divested from the UARG, and the lobbying firm dissolved in May.

On May 14, ratepayer advocacy groups including Appalachian Voices, the publisher of this newspaper, called



In May, Anderson County, Tenn., residents discuss TVA's upcoming closure of the Bull Run Fossil Plant. Photo: John Todd Waterman

not disclosed the nature of the items found, local residents suspect the rock formations may be Native American gravesites. TVA has begun to fell trees and place markers along the planned routes. ♦

on the TVA Office of the Inspector General to investigate whether TVA's investments into UARG were a violation of the utility's policy. The groups claim that TVA unjustly used ratepayer dollars to help the lobbying firm fight the Clean Air Act.

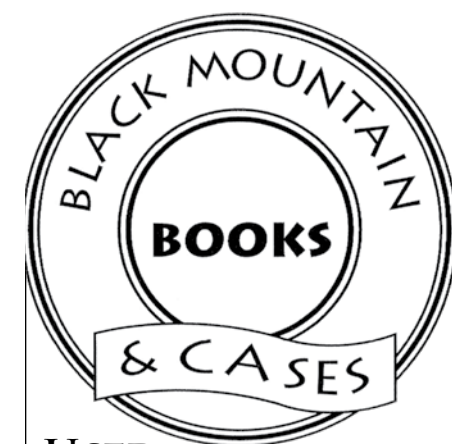
A press release from the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce states that the EPA's agenda regarding the Clean Air Act appears "remarkably similar" to the agenda advanced by the firm, leading the committee to suspect that EPA officials were "changing Agency policies and programs to benefit former clients."

TVA responded that they do not participate in litigation performed by the lobbying firm, and that they only use the firm to help themselves understand and comply with technical Clean Air Act regulations.

Municipal utility Memphis Light, Gas and Water could be looking to end its agreement to purchase power from TVA. A recent study showed that the Memphis utility — TVA's largest customer — could save up to \$333 million per year and have cleaner energy by developing its own power supply. If the utility gives TVA the required five-year notice in 2019, it will have until 2024 to create its own supply.

In Meigs County, Tenn., TVA is dealing with controversy from its planned "Project Viper" systems control facility. The 167-acre facility would replace an older building in Chattanooga. Although county officials have endorsed the project, local landowners have filed lawsuits attempting to block TVA's use of eminent domain to gain access to their property for surveys, according to the Cleveland Daily Banner.

Through one of the surveys, archeologists with TVA discovered "potential cultural" resources, the Banner reports, and the utility moved the planned route for transmissions lines. While TVA has

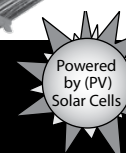


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Neighbors of Mountaintop Removal Testify Before Congress

On April 9, residents of Central Appalachia impacted by coal traveled to Washington, D.C., and testified before members of Congress about how mountaintop removal coal mining has affected their communities. The House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held the hearing to determine this form of mining's impact on public health and the environment.

Earlier in April, Rep. John Yarmuth (D-Ky.) introduced a bill to place a moratorium on mountaintop removal permitting until the government conducted health studies. Industry advocates labeled the bill as over-regulation. At the hearing, Rep. Yarmuth stated that no federal health study has examined mountaintop removal mining's effect on nearby communities. He noted that the Trump administration halted one such study in 2017.

Donna Branham, a lifetime resident of Mingo County, W.Va, lives roughly 1,500 feet from a 1,300-acre strip mine.



West Virginia resident Donna Branham told members of Congress about her experience living near a surface coal mine. "The dust created by blasting was so intense sometimes you could hardly see to drive," she said. "Dust got into our houses and cars. When you blew your nose, coal soot would be on the tissue."

"During my job as a nurse, I would see the adverse health effects caused by irresponsible mining," she told the committee. "Retired miners gasping for every breath, painful joints, increased cancer rates."

Carl Shoupe, a former coal miner and a member of nonprofit grassroots community organization Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, lives in Benham, Ky. Shoupe and three other area residents are petitioning to the state to

declare 10,000 acres surrounding the Kentucky towns of Benham and Lynch as unsuitable for mining.

"As we speak, a coal company is seeking a permit to strip mine the ridge behind my home," Shoupe said during his testimony. "They plan to go up the entire valley. If that happens, it will endanger our health, safety, peace of mind, property, tourism economy, drinking water, and hope for the future." — *By Kevin Ridder*

S.C. Passes Electric Co-op Transparency Bill

In May, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster signed a bill requiring the state's 20 electric cooperatives to make board member salaries and benefits public and outlawing trustees from profiting off business dealings between their businesses and the co-op.

W.Va. Issues Pipeline Permit Without Public Input

In March, the West Virginia Dept. of Environmental Protection issued a permit for a 4.85-mile natural gas pipeline in Jefferson County without rescheduling a public hearing that was cancelled in February due to logistical concerns.

Murray Energy Loses Labor Rights Appeal

In May, a federal appeals court ruled that Murray Energy CEO Bob Murray violated labor rights at five of his West Virginia coal mines in 2013 by telling miners they made too many complaints to federal safety regulators.

Minden, W.Va.

Continued from page 13

the company dumped barrels of the substance into an abandoned mine shaft. Then, in 2001, a flood caused a mine shaft with leaking barrels of the PCB oils to burst.

"I think that's when the PCBs actually got down into the residential area in 2001, because that's when you really started seeing people being diagnosed with cancer more," says Minden resident Annetta Coffman.

Following the mine shaft blowout, the EPA came to clean it up without telling residents about PCBs in the flood water, according to Coffman.

"We accidentally found it out," says Coffman. "They were there for something like 14 or 16 months in hazmat

suits repairing that site, but they never came into the residential area and told the people that it washed down into their homes. We had no idea. We were cleaning our homes out that were completely flooded in just regular clothes. We didn't have gloves, we didn't have masks, we didn't have anything."

Terri White with the EPA stated in an email that the agency is aware of those allegations but does not yet have any data to back them up.

Afterwards, an earthen cap was installed over the Shaffer site by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2002 in an attempt to prevent further contamination. But many in Minden feel that the EPA did not properly clean it up or warn residents about the danger of PCBs; Coffman says the cap "breaks all the time."

White wrote that sampling conducted in 2017 showed that the agency

had successfully mitigated the release of PCBs from the site and that there was no immediate threat to residents.

"EPA also confirmed that historic PCB contamination exists throughout the town at low levels and that a small section of the cap was found to need repair, likely because of flooding impacts," wrote White. "While repair is necessary, the contents under the cap are not exposed."

She adds that the agency can do a more in-depth study of the area as a whole now that it is on the National Priorities List.

In April, local high school students tested the water in the creek that runs through the town as part of an ongoing school project and found levels of PCBs above 50 parts per million. The EPA states that anything above 1 part per million is unsafe for soil and that they

EPA Expected to Change Health Calculations for Air Pollution

In June, EPA is expected to release the Affordable Clean Energy rule, the Trump administration's replacement for the Clean Power Plan. The EPA initially estimated that the Trump administration rule would result in an additional 1,400 premature deaths annually. According to The New York Times, the rule is expected to include a new method for calculating human health risks associated with air pollution. This method is expected to lower the agency's estimate of the health damage from increased particulate matter in the atmosphere.

EPA Decides Not to Update Oil and Gas Waste Rules

In April, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency declined to update regulations on oil and gas waste in response to a 2016 petition from environmental groups.

Aaron Mintzes of Earthworks, one of the groups that pushed EPA to update its regulations, stated that a legal loophole allows substances such as benzene that are usually considered hazardous, such as benzene, to be declared non-hazardous when they are found in oil or gas industry waste. Some states allow companies to inject fracking wastewater underground, spread it on roads or sell it for other uses. "Unfortunately states follow EPA's lead, to the detriment of communities around the country hosting oil and gas operations," Mintzes said in a statement.

strive to keep PCB levels in groundwater as close to zero as possible.

"Most people won't let their kids play in the yard there because it's contaminated, so when the kids do play they're playing in the middle of the road," says Coffman. "I never would allow my kids to play in the creek, to even get near the creek."

Now that Minden is on the National Priorities List, local advocates like Susie Worley-Jenkins are looking to finally move past their community's toxic legacy. At June's March for Minden, she says the community will again call on the EPA to buy out the homes of residents who want to relocate.

"They need to get it done, because we're going to stay right on them," says Worley-Jenkins. "It's about relocation; a lot of the [deceased] people's children and grandchildren will be walking." ♦

Bill Supported by Duke Energy Could Lead to Rate Hikes

By Kevin Ridder

A North Carolina bill backed by Duke Energy, S.B. 559, could allow the monopoly utility to raise rates with reduced transparency, according to the Energy Justice NC Coalition. The coalition consists of 14 community and environmental justice organizations including NC WARN and Boone-based Appalachian Voices.

Despite a wall of opposition from multiple groups including Walmart, Google, AARP and consumer and environmental advocates, the state Senate passed the bill and it awaits a vote in the House.

The bill could lead to Duke passing \$10 billion in coal ash cleanup to ratepayers, and another \$13 billion in what Duke calls "grid improvement," a catch-all term for projects such as burying power lines underground. This set-up is attractive to investor-owned utilities because it offers shareholders a guaranteed rate-of-return on projects

that critics argue should be seen as standard operations and maintenance, which does not include a guaranteed profit for the company. Duke's previous attempts to pass the \$13 billion plan were twice rejected by the state.

According to Appalachian Voices' Senior Energy Analyst Rory McIlmoil, the bill could also allow Duke to make more profit than currently authorized and pass it along to shareholders rather than refunding ratepayers. If the bill becomes law, utilities could gain advance approval for future investments and rate hikes even if time and technology render them unnecessary.

Duke Energy targeted its campaign contributions in 2018 to gain political favor with 11 North Carolina lawmakers, according to a report released on April 26 by the Energy Justice NC Coalition.

Out of 170 members in both legislative chambers, 46 percent of Duke's 2018 campaign contributions went to

five senators and six house representatives — all Republican save for Senate Minority Leader Dan Blue. Senate Majority Leader Philip Berger received the most from Duke at \$68,950. Each of the 11 representatives are key to proposing or reviewing S.B. 559.

"The evidence shows that Duke is targeting its campaign contributions in order to game the system by bribing the referees," said McIlmoil, who authored the report.

On May 8, Jim Warren with NC WARN filed an ethics complaint against state Sen. Dan Blue alleging a conflict of interest between Blue's sponsorship of S.B. 559 and his law firm's work for Duke and Dominion Energy's Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

"The ethics issue is clear-cut: Sen. Blue can't serve the public interest when he's heavily paid to serve the diverging interests of Duke Energy," said Warren in a press release.

Justice Coal Companies and Federal Agencies Enter Legal Battles

Attorneys for West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice's son Jay Justice and 12 of the family's Virginia coal companies filed suit against the U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement on May 17. The Justice companies charge that the agency reneged on a settlement agreement regarding fines and fees related to mine reclamation.

Two weeks before, the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration sued 23 Justice-family coal companies in five states for \$4.7 million in unpaid penalties for mine safety violations.

"As alleged in the complaint, the defendants racked up over 2,000 safety violations over a five-year period and have, to date, refused to comply with their legal obligations to pay the resulting financial penalties," U.S. Attorney Thomas Cullen said in a press statement.

Federal investigators have also issued subpoenas for the governor's tax records from two state agencies, MetroNews reported in May. — *By Molly Moore*

Virginia Budget Excludes Participation in Carbon Cap and Trade Program

On May 2, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam signed a state budget that impedes the state's ability to take part in a carbon "cap and trade" program. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative sets independent regulations that limit emissions from fossil fuel-fired power plants in nine participating states.

Although the State Air Pollution Control Board voted in April to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Virginia Republicans inserted language in the budget that blocks the state's participation in the program. Environmental groups urged the gov-

ernor to utilize a line-item veto to remove the text before signing the budget, but he did not, reportedly out of concern that he did not have the legal authority to do so.

Gov. Northam called the provisions "disappointing and out-of-touch" in a news release, and vetoed a bill earlier this year that would have blocked the state from entering the initiative.

"This was a disastrous and cowardly retreat by Northam," Walton Shepherd with the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council told The Washington Post. — K.R.

Court Orders EPA to Revisit Wastewater Rule

On April 12, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider parts of a 2015 rule governing wastewater from power plants. The case was brought by representatives of several environmental groups

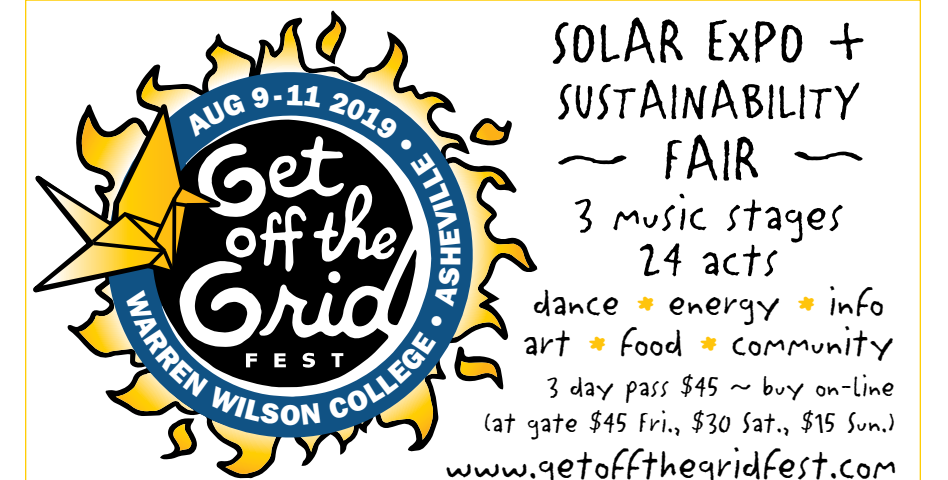
who argued that the 2015 rule did not set any new treatment standards for coal plant wastewater stored in unlined pits or for any pollutants that leach out. The EPA now must either craft new rules or legally justify keeping the 1982 regulations in place. — K.R.

Miners Pressure Congress for Pension Fix

In May, dozens of retired coal miners came to Washington and called on Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and other Washington lawmakers to pass legislation that would preserve pensions for 87,000 retirees and 20,000 working miners, AP News reports. Union leaders stated that

coal bankruptcies and the 2008 recession have drained \$6 billion from the fund.

Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and other lawmakers joined a press conference with the miners. Manchin introduced a bill in January that would shore up funding for miners' pensions. It awaits decision in committee. — K.R.



New Coalition Aims to Reform Energy Policy in Virginia

On May 7, Appalachian Voices and eight other organizations representing a wide range of public policy ideologies introduced the Virginia Energy Reform Coalition. The unprecedented coalition is united to reform Virginia's energy market, which currently benefits utility companies at the expense of ratepayers and the environment.

"The status quo is carefully designed to line the pockets of the government-protected utility monopolies who have been calling the shots," said Tom Cormons, Executive Director of Appalachian Voices. "Now citizens are demanding a system that puts consumers and local economies first by allowing small, clean energy businesses to compete in the marketplace on a level playing field."

VERC's policy goals are intended to lower prices and increase choices for ratepayers while improving the environment. These reforms include establishing a well-designed competitive retail electricity market, an independent

grid operator and streamlined, uniform interconnection standards. Additionally, VERC aims to create a low-income bill assistance and weatherization program and ensure that ratepayers are informed about what services are available.

"Today's energy market should be a place of cooperation and innovation, not privilege and political influence," said Virginia Institute for Public Policy President Lynn Taylor. "This is what's best for Virginia's electricity consumer and this is exactly what the Virginia Energy Reform Coalition hopes to achieve."

In addition to Appalachian Voices, members of the coalition include Clean Virginia, Earth Stewardship Alliance, FreedomWorks, Piedmont Environmental Council, R Street Institute, Reason Foundation, Virginia Institute for Public Policy and the Virginia Poverty Law Center.

To learn more about the coalition, visit virginiaenergyreform.org, and read our letter from Tom Cormons on page 2.

Rallying Against Pipelines



On May 17, Appalachian Voices joined around 300 activists who stood up for environmental justice and marched through Richmond, Va., against the fracked-gas Atlantic Coast Pipeline and massive compressor station slated to be built in the historic, majority African-American community of Union Hill, Va. Union Hill community leaders, above, stand with guest speakers William Barber III and Kareena Gore. Marchers followed a portion of the same route that civil rights advocates marched 51 years ago almost to the day as part of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign.

The next day, crowds gathered in Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring's hometown of Leesburg, Va., and urged him to halt work on the Mountain Valley Pipeline while his office pursues a lawsuit against the company. They also called on Herring to affirm a state board's ability to revoke a Clean Water Act certification for the MVP. The board considered revoking the certification but stopped in March, citing vague recommendations from Herring's office. Read more on page 8. *Top photo by Cat McCue, right photos by Parker Michels-Boyce*



Solar Discovery in Southwest Virginia

The U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office recognized the Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia in a national competition that supports community groups for their innovative solar program designs.

Known as the "Solar in Your Community Challenge," the challenge is a competition designed to incentivize the development of new approaches to make electricity more affordable while expand-

ing solar access across America. The Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia was honored in the "Solar Discovery: Bringing Solar to New Markets" category.

"Innovative solar programs supported by this challenge can help reduce the electricity bills for our local governments, residents, and businesses," says our New Economy Program Manager Chelsea Barnes. Appalachian Voices is a co-convenor of the workgroup.

Enter to Design the Label for "Power to the People" Pilsner

Wild Wolf Brewing Company, a farm-to-fork, sustainably minded brewing company based in Nellysford, Va., is crafting up a hop-infused pilsner to honor Appalachian Voices' work to create a just and clean energy future. To celebrate, we're holding a contest to design the label for the new "Power



to the People Pilsner," due in taps by this fall. Initial design entries are due by June 30, with the winner chosen by Appalachian Voices staff by July 8 and final artwork due later in July. For details and to enter, visit appvoices.org/wild-wolf-competition

Marion Loper: Translating Career Skills to The Appalachian Voice

Member Spotlight

By Sam Kepple



Marion Loper, a volunteer distributor for The Appalachian Voice, retired from a 29-year media career in 1999 and then worked in media sales and marketing. Before settling in Knoxville in 2008, he moved around the country a lot for work—but always found himself in metropolitan areas.

Marion had a long-standing interest in protecting the environment, and would almost always belong to a chapter of the Sierra Club wherever he resided. In Pittsburgh, he participated in the creation of a Braille trail for blind children and also served as a trail guide.

"They cut out a trail in one of the large city parks for blind children, and we would take them up there and take them through so they could smell and hear the city park," Marion recalls.

He says he understands the

complexities of environmental issues because his father worked in the oil business and he grew up unaware of the impact of fossil fuel extraction on the natural world. But after seeing the damage caused by coal mines

in Pennsylvania, Marion became even more convinced of the need for new sources of energy. According to Marion, the time for coal-sourced energy has come and gone and coal needs to be replaced with more sustainable alternatives like solar power.

About three years ago, Marion decided to get more involved in environmental and social activism. He became a member of the American Indian Museum wing of the Smithsonian, the Tribal Council of Native Education, and Save the Whales—but he still felt the need to be doing more. Then, he came into contact with Appalachian Voices.

Marion is now entering his second year of distributing The Appalachian Voice. He says he realized that helping to distribute the publication was something that he knew how to do and was capable of helping with. He seeks out locations in Knoxville where he feels the paper would be a good fit and has formed relationships with at least 20 locations.

"I feel that the paper is doing a good job of monitoring and reporting the information and putting it out in front of the general public so that they can make an informed decision as to what they want to do moving forward," says Marion.

For Marion, one of those most rewarding elements of being a distributor is getting to meet all kinds of people who are passionate about the environment.

"I was tickled to meet these unique people, and that's kind of what I was looking for and I feel good about distributing the paper," Marion says. "It gets me out, it takes care of boredom, it's a feel-good. And I know that your message is good and accurate and needed."

Progress on Coal Ash in North Carolina

On April 1, we celebrated the welcome news that the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality ordered Duke Energy to excavate the six coal ash sites in the state that did not already have cleanup plans in place. The decision was a testament to the determination of the people living near these toxic sites who have

been calling on the state for strong cleanup measures for years.

The DEQ's decision follows the best science to safeguard public health and drinking water. We applaud the agency for fulfilling its mandate to protect residents, which is what the public expects state regu-

lators to do in regards to Duke and any other corporation in the state.

Appalachian Voices is proud to have been a leader in this years-long fight alongside members of the A.C.T. Against Coal Ash coalition. But the work continues—Duke appealed the order and is trying to foist the costs of cleanup on ratepayers. Read more on page 22.

STAND FOR ENERGY JUSTICE

North Carolinians deserve energy choice and not monopolies like Duke Energy that continue to pursue fossil fuels, block growth for renewable energy, mismanage coal ash waste pollution, and are allowed to increase rates by buying favors with our elected officials.

Sign the petition to end the Duke Monopoly today.

EnergyJusticeNC.org

Support The Appalachian Voice

Help us reach more readers by handing out papers at no cost to you – become a volunteer distributor in your area!

Visit appvoices.org/raise-our-voice or call (828) 262-1500

Appalachian Voices BUSINESS LEAGUE

New & Renewing Members April/May 2019

Across The Way Productions, Inc. / Floydfest Floyd, Va.	Proper Restaurant Boone, N.C.
NC Sustainable Energy Association Raleigh, N.C.	Recover Brands Charlotte, N.C.
Pilgrimage Music & Cultural Festival Franklin, Tenn.	Red Wings Roots Music Festival Mt. Solon, Va.
	Sigora Solar Charlottesville, Va.

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

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

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This guitar at the Appalachian African-American Cultural Center in Pennington Gap, Va., belonged to the late Dickenson County, Va., musician and coal miner Earl Gilmore, a devout Christian who came out as gay towards the end of his life. He led his church choir, performed with renowned musicians and traveled internationally until his death in 2000. Learn about an upcoming documentary on Gilmore at BecauseImHere.com and read about the cultural center on page 10. Photo by Kevin Ridder

Join us for the Summer of Sound!

Appalachian Voices is dedicated to preserving our region's natural heritage, and our members are vital to our success. They support our work and help sustain The Appalachian Voice. If you love reading our publication, take the next step and become a member today.

Now is the perfect time to join because from May through August, all new members who give at the \$50 level or above will be entered into prize drawings for music festival tickets!



Photo courtesy of FloydFest

AppVoices.org/join

JOIN NOW!

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