

# The Potomac Highland Steward

JANUARY 2009

## PATHS AND TRAILS

### CARVING UP THE POTOMAC HIGHLANDS

Downstate coal barons holding West Virginia's political reins seem bound and determined to turn the remote, beautiful Potomac Highlands into the same dreary energy colony that has kept southern West Virginia poor and bleak for decades. Instead of getting serious about conserving electricity with green retrofits and community design, controlling coal-burning pollution, or developing renewable power sources closer to population centers, they want to burn more West Virginia coal and build huge power lines across our mountains, to ship electricity to the East Coast.

The Potomac Highlands is now being assaulted by TWO new proposed major power lines: "PATH" and "TrAIL." Power company information sites are at [www.ApTrailInfo.com](http://www.ApTrailInfo.com) and [www.PathTransmission.com](http://www.PathTransmission.com).

TrAIL, or Trans Allegheny Interstate Line, would be a 500 Kilovolt line running from southwestern Pennsylvania through West Virginia's Monongalia, Preston, Tucker, Grant, Hardy, and Hampshire Counties before crossing to a substation in Meadow Brook, Virginia. It has been approved by the West Virginia Public Service Commission and the Virginia State Corporation Commission. On Nov.

13 it was approved by Pennsylvania despite negative recommendations by administrative judges and consumer officials there. New federal regulations designed to speed up power line construction allow power companies to recoup costs of acquiring land even if the line is never built. That means they can go ahead and buy land in one state even if the other states turn the project down.

A well-heeled citizens group – Piedmont Environmental Council, representing Virginia's nine-county Blue Ridge area – filed a notice of appeal Nov. 5 with the Virginia Supreme Court. They're citing a ruling by Pennsylvania administrative law judges that the power lines are all about utility profits, not true energy needs. The companies didn't bother to study conservation, demand-side management, power generating alternatives, or the harm to the land and its owners before proposing the new lines. The Pennsylvania judges confirm that the true impetus for TrAIL is to transport cheaper coal-fired electricity from west to east and site new generation in remote areas where there are not as many people to fight it, but where it is more environmentally harmful and less energy-efficient. See PEC's website [www.pecva.org](http://www.pecva.org)

PATH is similar – transporting electricity from coalfields to

the East Coast. American Electric Power and Allegheny Energy will be applying to WV PSC to build a single 765-kilovolt (kV) transmission line from AEP's Amos substation near St. Albans, W.Va., west of the state capital in Charleston, all the way across West Virginia to a new substation near Kemptown, southeast of Frederick, Md. A new mid-point substation is proposed for eastern Grant County, northern Hardy County or Hampshire County. The power line was moved away from the Martinsburg area, where it would have impacted Civil War battlefields such as Antietam in Sharpsburg, Md.

The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy has passed resolutions against PATH and TrAIL, as has WV Highlands conservancy ([WVHighlands.org/wv\\_voice/?p=771](http://WVHighlands.org/wv_voice/?p=771).) Friends of the Cacapon River ([www.CacaponCurrents.org](http://www.CacaponCurrents.org)) has started a petition, demanding that PATH, if built, should follow the route of TrAIL or an existing earlier power line and not disturb more of our mountains and farmlands. The Capon Valley Coalition continues to say "No!" to the TrAIL project at [CaponValleyCoalition.com](http://CaponValleyCoalition.com).

## ENERGY ALTERNATIVES

### FOR WEST VIRGINIA

According to the West Virginia Environmental Council citizen energy plan, surface mining accounts for only 5,500 jobs in the state, and 80% of West Virginians oppose removing our mountains. The coal industry, however, holds a vise-grip around the Capitol dome (Gov. Joe Manchin is a former coal trader). The political influence of extractive industry has kept West Virginia from putting priority on nature, history tourism, agriculture, and forestry, which all offer more hope for good jobs. Both major presidential candidates made weak noises on both sides of mountaintop removal and called for "clean coal."

***Is there a better future for West Virginia other than being an energy colony?*** Because we don't have a large population, energy self-sufficiency is possible, but we must be committed to it. For some ideas, take a look at the WV Environmental Council's Citizen Energy Plan at <http://www.wvecouncil.org/issues/index.html>

***Is bigger always better?*** According to the latest worldwide renewable energy news via the website of Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition in Huntington ([www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org)), a judge in California has struck down a huge solar project in the desert and recommended small rooftop collectors instead. Couldn't the same principle apply to some of the gargantuan wind turbines that have invaded the Allegheny Front?

*Share your thoughts on what should be done with energy and the environment with President-elect Obama's team at [change.gov/page/s/yourvision](http://change.gov/page/s/yourvision)*

## GAS & HEARTBURN ON THE LAND LOOK BEFORE YOU LEASE

Having run amok through Grant County, gas companies are now looking under the surface in Hampshire County. The Friends of the Cacapon River ([www.CacaponCurrents.org](http://www.CacaponCurrents.org)) reports that company “land-men” have come knocking on doors west of Cacapon Mountain, looking for land to lease.

West Virginia has a long history of landowners losing their mineral rights to greedy energy companies. They often get away with paying a fraction of what these rights are worth. And their underground activities can affect the surface – pollution in your water well, gas and oil leaks in your fields and woods, and unwelcome access roads across your land.

Longtime Charleston environmental lawyer Dave McMahon, and West Virginia Citizens Action Group director Gary Zuckett, himself a landowner affected by gas well drilling, have teamed up to provide advice to landowners. WVSORO (West Virginia Surface Owners Rights Organization), only a year and a half old, now has 600 members. It puts out a guidebook for landowners on the rights, and has spoken at Farm Bureau and Woodland Owners meetings, and at the state legislature. So Look Before You Lease! Consult their website [www.wvsoro.org](http://www.wvsoro.org) or call them at 304-346-5891.

## POTOMAC WATERSHED CHEMICALS HURTING THE FISH, AND US

Studies by Cacapon Institute and other groups are monitoring pollution problems in the Potomac watershed. Groups of dead fish have been spotted in the South Branch, Cacapon, Potomac, and Shenandoah. No scientific explanation has yet been determined. Intersex fish, with both male and female characteristics, that are often weak and sick, have appeared. Polluted water includes hormones and chemicals that disrupt people’s and animals’ endocrine gland systems. Part of the cause may be agricultural chemicals; but the chemicals may also come from hospitals, nursing homes, and houses flushing prescription medications down the drain. Potomac Water Watch ([PotomacWaterWatch.org](http://PotomacWaterWatch.org)) has organized a pill drive, calling for people to return outdated prescriptions to Judy’s Drug Store in Petersburg and CVS in Moorefield, rather than flush them down the drain.

Rivers don’t stop at the state line. You can report fish kills to Jeff Kelble, fishing guide, B&B host, and eagle-eyed river patroller from Boyce, VA, at 540-837-1479. His website ([PotomacRiverKeeper.org/shenandoah](http://PotomacRiverKeeper.org/shenandoah)) links to many other Virginia river sites. The Potomac Conservancy ([www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org)) watches the DC end of the river.

## GW FOREST PLANNING GET YOUR TWO CENTS IN, WITH ONE EYE OPEN

Do you hike, watch birds, hunt or fish in the national forest, or appreciate the role of public forests in giving us clean air and water? The George Washington National Forest Planning process continues, with public workshop meetings in November, December and January in Verona and Lexington, VA. They’re dealing with issues like managing wilderness areas for people, plants and wildlife; roadless areas; where and how to cut timber; and how to manage things when private owners of subsurface minerals under the National Forest want to get coal, oil and gas. The plan was last revised in 1993.

The environmental legal group Earthjustice has challenged the Bush administration’s revisions to the national forest planning process itself, saying recent rules give US Forest Service officials too much discretion over whether environmental impact statements and wildlife protection are needed. More information is available at Virginia Forest Watch: [www.VirginiaForestWatch.org](http://www.VirginiaForestWatch.org). To get your two cents in on the latest forest plan, go to the National Forest website [www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision](http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision). The closest national forest ranger office to our area is in Edinburg, Virginia, 540-984-4101.

## CORRIDOR H FIX THE ROADS WE HAVE!

As gas prices skyrocketed last year, highway use dropped, and so did gas tax revenues. Road repairs suffered. A happy byproduct was less funding for the destructive, unneeded Corridor H highway. Parts of it are being built between Moorefield and Bismarck in Hardy and Grant County, in addition to the Moorefield to Wardensville stretch that is finished and hardly used. However, the WV DOT Division of Highways revised its projections on the sections between Kerens and Parsons (no construction until 2017), Parsons to Davis, including Blackwater Canyon (no construction until 2029) and Wardensville to Virginia line (no construction until 2025). Details from WVDOH on [www.wvcorridorh.com/route/route.html](http://www.wvcorridorh.com/route/route.html)

With U.S. Senator Robert Byrd, D-WV, stepping down as appropriations chair, Corridor H funding will continue to be tight, even though Gov. Joe Manchin tried to get Homeland Security funding last year for corridor H as an escape route for people fleeing a hypothetical terrorist attack on D.C.

To put people to work, save energy, and cut down on pollution, we need our crumbling roads and bridges fixed, and new trains and buses. Money spent on new roads will only encourage more driving, and that is a waste.

## PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK ... WE DEPEND SOLELY ON YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

We are an advocacy group, and we lobby to protect our Potomac Highlands, so we are not tax-deductible.

Please clip out this form (if your mailing label is correct on the back you do not have to fill out your name and address below), and make your check payable to **Stewards of the Potomac Highlands**. You may use the enclosed envelope or mail it to **PO Box 455, Wardensville, WV 26851**.

\_\_ \$25 \_\_ \$50 \_\_ \$200 \_\_ \$500 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Email address:

Phone:

Websites you'd like us to link to:

Areas of greatest concern:

Name and address/email of others who'd be interested so we can send them a free copy of our newsletter:

You can use your credit card to donate online at [PotomacStewards.com](http://PotomacStewards.com)

## WHAT WE ARE, WHAT WE DO

Stewards of the Potomac Highlands is a nonprofit 501(c)(4) citizens group addressing ways to live and work in respect and harmony with nature and people, primarily in the eight beautiful northeastern counties of West Virginia (Pendleton, Grant, Mineral, Hardy, Hampshire, Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson).

We aim to strengthen citizens' efforts by sharing information and promoting networking among our neighbors. We can lend our support to other groups who lobby for changes in laws and policies.

During 2008 we signed onto Friends of Blackwater's legal action protesting the de-listing of the endangered Northern W.Va. Flying Squirrel; and intervened in two sewer permit appeals to support the Department of Environmental Protection in limiting Nitrogen and Phosphorus pollution in the Potomac and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

Among the leadership of Stewards, we have had personal experience in small scale vegetable and livestock farming; history, arts and nature tourism; land use planning; transportation; quarry, construction, water quality regulation; environmental education; gas and wind power.

We invite you to use our newsletter and website to find support and information on the issues you care about.

## OUR DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

### President

Paul Burke, Shepherdstown, Jefferson County  
304-876-2227

### Vice President

Kirsten Weiblen, Yellow Spring, Hampshire County  
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### Secretary

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### Board Member & State Liaison

Bonni McKeown, Charleston, Kanawha County  
304-345-5383

### Board Member

Andy Andryshak, Great Cacapon, Morgan County  
304-947-5664

**We're always looking for members and volunteers.**

**Please email us at [info@PotomacStewards.com](mailto:info@PotomacStewards.com)**

**or send a note to**

**PO Box 455, Wardensville, WV 26851**



Stewards of the Potomac Highlands  
 PO Box 455  
 Wardensville WV 26851

[www.PotomacStewards.com](http://www.PotomacStewards.com)

## REPRESENTING YOURSELF WITHOUT A LAWYER

There are many environmental battles, from the backyard to the North Pole. In trying to enforce environmental rules, it is possible to represent yourself, without a lawyer. Though it is very hard to win without a lawyer, it is also hard to win *with* a lawyer. With a lawyer, you often can't afford to go beyond the first level. On your own you can keep going as long as your motivation lasts. If you can't afford a lawyer, yet have a good case, it's better to do it yourself than not do it at all. At least there's some chance: things may change for the better while the case is in court; you may settle for something; or you just might win!

Our website, [PotomacStewards.com](http://PotomacStewards.com), has more detailed information on what is involved in both administrative appeals and court trials, as well as some first-hand accounts of self-representation. Interested in attending a workshop on representing yourself in environmental cases? Email us at [info@PotomacStewards.com](mailto:info@PotomacStewards.com).

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*Disclaimer: Stewards of the Potomac Highlands does not provide legal or other professional advice, and nothing in this newsletter or on our website should be construed as such. We provide information, not Legal Advice. If you are sued, or want professional assurance that our information, and your interpretation of it, is appropriate to your particular situation, please consult a lawyer.*

## REDUCING CARBON DIOXIDE

<b>CO<sub>2</sub> CARD</b>	<b>POUNDS OF CO<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>To save our hills and planet we must reduce energy and CO<sub>2</sub> We need CO<sub>2</sub> labeling</b>
<b>CO<sub>2</sub> RELEASED BY DAILY OPERATIONS</b>		
Electricity	1.34	per kilowatt-hour
Gasoline	20	per gallon
Diesel, heating oil	22	per gallon
Natural gas	12	per 100 cubic feet
Propane	13	per gallon
Hot water	0.08 0.18	per gallon, gas heater per gallon, electric heater
Airplane	370 + 1.1 x miles	per passenger, per takeoff
Car, 1 person	0.8 0.6	per passenger mile at 24 mpg per passenger mile at 33 mpg
City or county bus	0.7	per passenger mile
Train	0.4	per passenger mile
Private bus	0.1	per passenger mile
<b>CO<sub>2</sub> RELEASED DURING MANUFACTURE</b>		
Steel	0.8	per pound of steel
Aluminum	1.5-2.2	per pound of aluminum
Newspapers	2.1	per pound of paper
Personal computer	61	per pound of equipment