

# M Mountain State Sierran

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FALL 2025

## USDA Proposes Repeal of the Roadless Conservation Rule

**Lovers of the Monongahela National Forest are likely familiar with the Roadless Rule.**

First adopted by the U.S. Forest Service in the Clinton Administration, the rule protects large, roadless tracts of national forest lands from timbering and exploitation, thereby protecting wildlife, water quality, and recreational opportunities. The Roadless Rule covers almost one-third of National Forest acreage, including critical habitats for over 1600 threatened and endangered plants and animals. But the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is proposing to repeal that rule, claiming it would allow more timber harvests and help fight forest fires.



**BY JIM KOTCON**

### **TIMBER ACCESS?**

Many of the areas protected by the Roadless Rule are roadless for a reason. Most are relatively inaccessible. Many have poor quality timber. The U.S. Forest Service already provides many timber sales that are “below cost,” meaning it costs taxpayers more to manage the sale, build the roads, and repair the damage, than the Forest Service makes from the timber sales. Even worse for fiscal conservatives, these below-cost sales compete with timber from private landowners. In essence, private landowners are paying taxes on their own property while having to support the timber sales that compete with their own private timber! (Sawmill operators are laughing all the way to the bank!)

### **FOREST FIRES?**

New research indicates that wildfires are four times more likely to start in areas with roads than in roadless tracts. Damages from wildfires tend to be focused at the suburban/forest boundary, and that is where homes and businesses are most at risk. Building roads into roadless areas does nothing to reduce their risk, and instead drains fire prevention resources from areas that need them.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



### **Inside this Issue**

- |                                      |                                     |                                    |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2   From the Chair/Chapter Directory | 6   Coal Plants Examined            | 11   WV Rivers Celebrates Its 35th |
| 3   Microgrids                       | 7   Fighting Rate Hikes in Wheeling | 12   Get Outdoors on WV Outings    |
| 4   Corridor H                       | 8   Newfound Activism for Member    | 15   In Memory of Susan Ray Brown  |
| 5   WVEC Plans Environmental Goals   | 10   Meet New ExCom Member          |                                    |

# On Climate, America is Out of Touch with the Rest of the World

BY JIM KOTCON

**The U.S. EPA recently announced a proposal to rescind the “Endangerment Finding” that holds that release of greenhouse gases is harmful to human health and the environment.** This finding had already been the subject of legal appeals, beginning in 2003 when the EPA found that they lacked legal authority to regulate greenhouse gases. The State of Massachusetts, joined by 11 other states, sued to overturn that decision, leading to a landmark case in 2007, where the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Clean Air Act does cover the pollutants that cause climate change. The ruling also stated that if the EPA makes the finding that certain pollutants cause harm, then it must regulate emissions of those pollutants. The EPA issued that Endangerment Finding in 2009, and it has formed the legal foundation of all EPA greenhouse gas rules since that time. That foundation was strengthened in 2022, when Congress added language to the Inflation Reduction Act that specifically labelled greenhouse gases as pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

However, the EPA under the Trump Administration proposed on July 29 to rescind that finding and thereby repeal all EPA greenhouse gas regulations. The EPA argues that they “no longer ... have the statutory authority” to regulate greenhouse gases.

**Comments on this proposal must be received  
BEFORE SEPTEMBER 15.** FEDERAL REGISTER/VOL. 90, NO. 146:36288.



Meanwhile, back in the real world, the scientific evidence supporting the findings has become overwhelming. New research is improving the science of “climate attribution,” that is, assigning the cost and legal liability for damage from climate change to the largest sources of greenhouse gases. For example, the “Social Cost of Carbon” was conservatively estimated at \$190 per ton of carbon dioxide in 2023. While some continue to challenge that result as uncertain, what is clear is that assuming a cost of zero is certainly wrong.

The EPA proposal to rescind the Endangerment Finding is in direct conflict with a decision a few days earlier from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). On July 23, the ICJ found that nations are still legally liable for harms from greenhouse gas emissions. The ICJ decision is likely to strengthen various civil liability lawsuits against polluters, including youth-led lawsuits in Montana and California.

Here in West Virginia, many political leaders, including our Congressional delegation, Gov. Morrissey, and many state legislators, remain convinced that we must rely on fossil fuels. While residents continue to worry about ever-increasing electric bills, these political leaders insist we must continue to use coal and gas, even when renewables are cheaper. They, and the Trump EPA, simply ignore the current economics, not to mention the health impacts and true costs of fossil fuels.

Almost every other country is moving to renewables as quickly as possible. As the science of climate attribution continues to improve, today’s uncertainties will become tomorrow’s legal liabilities. Utilities, insurance companies, and many state and local governments are already reviewing their legal options.

I believe that the U.S. faces a significant risk of penalties for continued use of fossil fuels, and the time to transition is now. Take advantage of your opportunity to comment on this issue—for our climate, for our health, and for our pocketbooks! 🍃

## West Virginia Sierra Club Chapter Directory

Email contact for all officers and staff: [sierraclub.wv@gmail.com](mailto:sierraclub.wv@gmail.com)  
*Term ends at first meeting of indicated year.*

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE		
Jim Kotcon, Chair	(’26)	304-594-3322
Bill Price, Vice Chair	(’26)	304-389-8822
Molly Martin	(’27)	304-694-4192
Dani Parent	(’26)	606-371-9434
Alex Cole	(’27)	304-767-8687
John Harris, CCL Delegate	(’27)	347-907-1197

MONONGAHELA GROUP EXCOMM		
Elizabeth (ET) Taylor, Chair	(’27)	
Michael Attfield, Vice Chair, Chpt. Delegate	(’26)	304-983-8056
Jim Kotcon, Conservation Chair	(’27)	304-594-3322
Betsy Lawson, Secretary	(’27)	304-983-2980

### EASTERN PANHANDLE GROUP EXCOMM

Currently Inactive.  
For information, contact Chris Craig at [ccraig@laurellodge.com](mailto:ccraig@laurellodge.com).

OTHER CHAPTER LEADERS	
Kathy Gregg, Archives/Chapter History	304-472-4055
Bill Price, Conservation	304-389-8822
Alex Cole, Membership	304-767-8687
Chris Craig, Newsletter & Outings	304-433-1260
David Sturm, Political	304-612-0024
Candice Elliott, Treasurer	304-319-2245
Davis Funk, Webmaster	
Audrey Bennett, WVU Sierra Student Coalition	

REGIONAL SIERRA CLUB ORGANIZING STAFF	
Honey May, WV Chapter Director	304-356-8774
Lisa Di Bartolomeo Organizer, Beyond Coal Campaign	304-685-2423

# Microgrids: The Future of Electric Generation



BY BETSY JAEGER LAWSON

After decades of mostly stable electricity consumption, the national electricity grid now faces an unprecedented surge in demand driven by the explosive growth of data centers (for AI and cryptocurrency) and the electrification of cars, appliances, buildings, and transportation. A crisis looms that won't be solved by constructing more high voltage transmission lines like the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link (MARL), a proposed line that would cross northern West Virginia to serve data centers in northern Virginia.

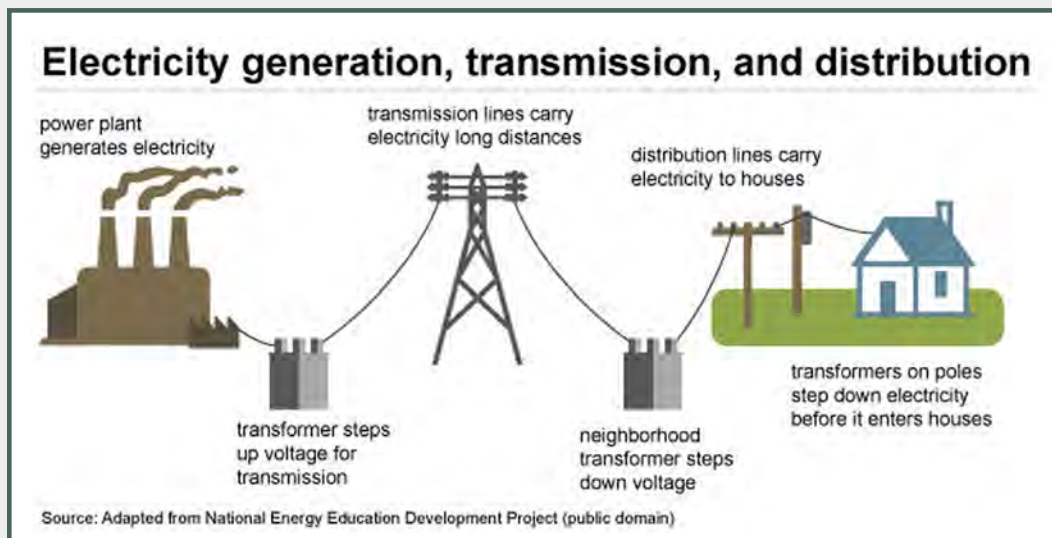
In the late-19th century's "War of the Currents," Nicola Tesla and Thomas Edison promoted two competing systems of electricity distribution: **alternating current** (AC, promoted by Tesla) and **direct current** (DC, promoted by Edison). Electricity is all about the flow of electrons—AC periodically changes direction while DC flows consistently in one direction. AC is easily transformed to different voltage levels. High voltage is more efficient for transmission over long distances and can then be transformed to low voltage for delivery to homes and businesses. With backing from George Westinghouse, Tesla's AC system was ultimately used for our national infrastructure.

cells, batteries, and some generators are common sources of DC power. This form is preferred for many electronic devices, where a consistent, unidirectional flow of current is needed. And DC is 50% more efficient over short distances. Edison's plan for more local energy distribution is being realized as microgrids offer one possible solution to grid overload.

If connected to the regional grid, microgrids can provide additional backup, improving reliability. They can keep the lights on when the main grid is down, better manage electricity supply and demand, and integrate more quickly with renewable energy, reducing greenhouse gas

emissions. Since the energy is created close to where it is used, high-voltage transmission lines aren't necessary, and less energy is lost to transmission. Off-grid solar microgrids can be installed much faster than traditional grid interconnections—even faster than co-located gas turbines, which often face long permitting queues.

**The dark side of microgrid buildout** is seen in West Virginia's last legislative session with the passage of HB 2014, which allows for independent power sources to be built using fossil fuels and local water sources without any input



North America has two major and three minor grids, which connect at various points. The major transmission grids are operated by smaller transmission system operators, like PJM, which covers West Virginia and twelve other states. But the weaknesses of centralized power grids are becoming apparent now, as high-voltage transmission lines are more vulnerable to extreme weather and earthquakes. They can cause wildfires in the arid West, require vast rights of way across private property, and increase costs greatly to consumers—and they don't easily accommodate renewable energy.

Solar panels receive photons from sunlight, which knock electrons free from the atoms of the panels' semiconducting material, generating electrical charge in the form of direct current (DC). Solar

from the communities where they will be located. Tucker County is one of several counties in the state to see the immediate impact of this bill. A proposed data center, Ridgeline, is awaiting a permit from the WVDEP to run seven natural gas turbines. They are seeking a "minor source" permit, but the application is so heavily redacted that it's impossible to know how much pollution they plan to emit. This microgrid would be used solely to power perhaps 12 warehouses full of computers with lots of pollution and water use.

More positively, the Pittsburgh Airport is the first airport in the world to be completely powered by a microgrid, utilizing on-site natural gas and solar energy. As part of a major renovation begun

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

# Controversial Corridor H in Wardensville Faces Significant Delays



BY LOKI KERN

CAMPAIGN ORGANIZER,  
FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER

In the summer 2025 issue of the *Mountain State Sierran*, I wrote about the public backlash to the Wardensville section of Corridor H, located in Hardy County, WV. The highway was originally planned to connect to I-81 but has been rejected from Virginia's long-term transportation plans since the mid-90s. Dubbed the "Road to Nowhere," the five-lane eyesore is currently planned to end abruptly on the WV/VA state line. This particular section is only seven miles long, yet costs nearly a half-billion dollars. It seizes hundreds of acres of residents' property, goes through more than 200 acres of the George Washington National Forest, disturbs

pristine headwaters of the Cacapon River, and threatens the town's water supply.

Fortunately, there have been significant changes to Corridor H's permitting because of the impact that the "Save Wardensville" coalition was able to muster. This group includes concerned citizens, business owners, and regional organizations from both Virginia and West Virginia. Never underestimate the influence of mobilized and upset Appalachians!

Amazingly, during the comment period on Corridor H's draft Environmental Assessment (EA), a couple hundred submissions were received—enough that the final EA's release has been delayed by two months. This is an incredibly important step, as the EA process either ends in a more in-depth study of the proposal or in greenlighting the project.

The delay isn't just limited to the EA. The whole project's permitting process has been shifted, and is now scheduled to be finished by April of next year, which sets the project to begin construction in summer of 2026 (assuming no further delays happen).

What seemed to push the entire project behind is the Forest Service's recent decision to pursue what's called a Special Use Permit (SUP), required when an entity wants to use Forest Service land. Until now, the Forest Service claimed that an SUP wasn't required for the 247-acre right-of-way through the George Washington National Forest, despite similar highway

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**Never underestimate the influence of mobilized and upset Appalachians!**

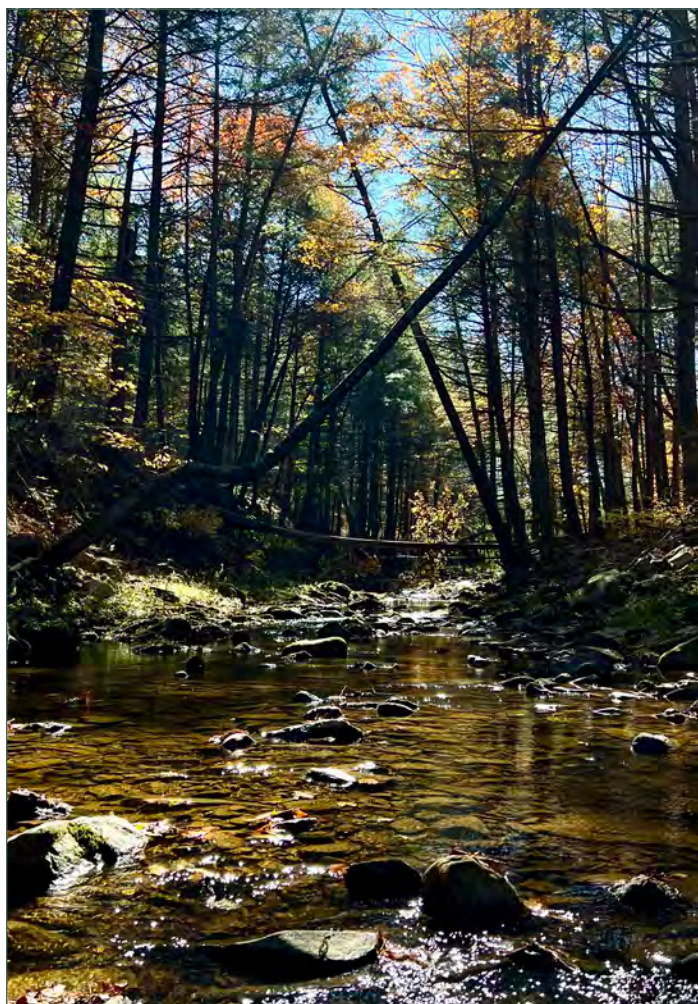
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—LOKI KERN

projects needing one. The recent flood of comments and letters pressured the Forest Service to reverse their decision.

This change by the Forest Service is highly unusual but appreciated, as the SUP process requires a public comment period, which gives us another opportunity to demonstrate the local community's opposition to the project. This reversal could signal that the agency is dotting their i's and crossing their t's, or that they're concerned about a certain aspect of the project. Either way, the goal of the highway expansion is so faulty that no additional review will justify it.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Trout Run flows into the Cacapon River at Wardensville. Questions remain on what impact the extension of Corridor H into the town's watershed might have. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WV HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY.

# Register Now for WVEC's Annual Meeting

BY JILLIAN WELSH

Join us for the West Virginia Environmental Council's annual meeting on **September 20**, at Cedar Lakes Conference Center's Jackson Hall in Ripley, WV.

Your voice and ideas matter—every participant is crucial! Whether you're a seasoned advocate or just getting started, **everyone is welcome**.



**SATURDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2025**

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**Cedar Lakes Conference Center  
Ripley, WV**

**REGISTRATION  
IS NOW OPEN!**



This year, we'll hear from guest speakers covering a wide range of topics, with a strong focus on flooding resilience and mitigation policies. We'll also hear from guests from neighboring states Virginia and Kentucky.

Our Kentucky speaker will share insights on their community air monitoring efforts and discuss how the Kentucky legislature successfully passed a bill aimed at undermining community air monitoring, similar to the legislation proposed in West Virginia over the past two years.

Our Virginia speaker will discuss how data centers have shaped the state's landscape over the past couple of decades, and how environmental groups are pushing for responsible development while advocating for stronger environmental monitoring and compliance laws in the Virginia General Assembly.



Participants listen in during WVEC's 2024 annual retreat at Tygart Lake State Park, where members gathered to shape WVEC's legislative priorities for 2025. PHOTO BY JILLIAN WELSH.

We'll also explore public land policy developments in WV, the Clean Air Act, and the impact of this year's HB 2014 on local control, along with innovative strategies for promoting our environmental policy priorities in the legislature and with the public.

This is your chance to help shape our priorities for the 2026 WV legislative session, connect with changemakers, and ensure your voice is part of the conversation. We encourage you to join us for the day—or make it a weekend getaway with Friday arrivals, evening socials, and Sunday brunch!

Visit [WVECouncil.org](http://WVECouncil.org) for full details on registration, lodging, and meals.

**Questions? Email us at [WVECevents@gmail.com](mailto:WVECevents@gmail.com).**



USDA | [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1](#)

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

When the Forest Service developed the rule in 1999, it conducted the most extensive public participation in federal rulemaking history. The Forest Service held over 600 public meetings across the country. And more than 1.6 million people submitted comments—95% of them supporting strong roadless area protection.

## ROADLESS AREAS IN THE MON FOREST

Some of the premier recreation areas in the Monongahela National Forest are protected by the Roadless Rule. These include Spruce Knob/Seneca Creek, Canaan Loop, Cheat Mountain, Gauley Mountain, and the Falls of Hills Creek. A map of all these Roadless Areas is available at: [outdooralliance.org/roadless](http://outdooralliance.org/roadless).

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Contact our Congressional delegation (addresses on the back of the newsletter) and ask them to protect roadless areas in West Virginia. These areas represent the heart of the state's tourism industry and are much more valuable as they are than if they are opened up for timber extraction.

You can also ask them to support permanent legal protection by co-sponsoring either **HR3930**, or **S2042**, the Roadless Area Conservation Act.

**MORE DETAILS:**



And consider writing a letter to the editor.

**These iconic spaces represent the heart of Wild and Wonderful West Virginia, and we should protect them for future generations.**

# WV Chapter Kicks Off “Toxic Tour” of Coal-Powered Plants

**Until I started my job as the Beyond Coal Campaign Organizer for West Virginia, I had never visited my local coal-fired power plants**—despite the fact that, in Morgantown, I live within six miles of Fort Martin, seven miles from Longview, 20 miles from Grant Town, and within 50 miles of Mitchell, Mount Storm, and Harrison. I figured lots of other people had never seen where their electricity comes from either, so Jim Kotcon, Honey May, and I decided to start holding “Toxic Tours.” Each tour will focus on a coal-fired power plant in the state, and we have several to choose from, unfortunately! Since Jim and I live in Morgantown, we decided to start nearby, and we invited local Sierra Club members to join us.



**BY LISA DI BARTOLOMEO**



*At a July stop on the Sierra Club West Virginia Chapter’s “Toxic Tour,” attendees gathered at the F.A.R.M. restaurant and market in Granville to discuss the Longview and Fort Martin power plants and their impact on air quality and utility rates in West Virginia. PHOTO BY LISA DI BARTOLOMEO.*

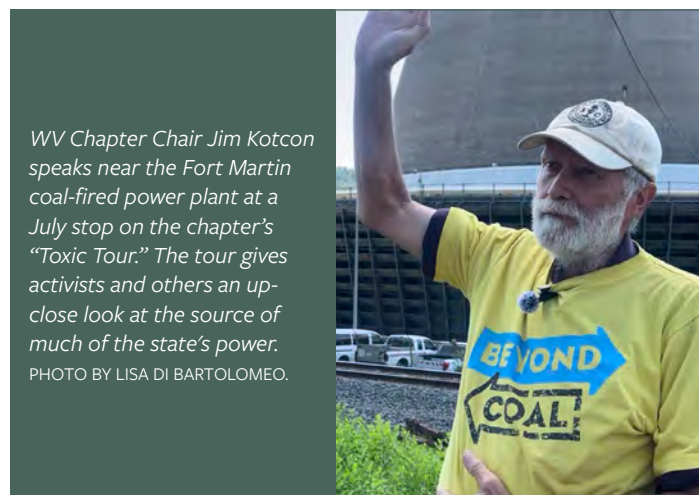
On July 12—a hot, sunny Saturday morning—fourteen intrepid explorers joined us in Granville, where we met up to carpool and travel to Longview and Fort Martin. We did our best to find shady spots where we could gather to listen to Jim explain the process of burning coal, the mechanics of power plants, the many environmental effects of the toxins spewed by the power plants, and other interesting facts. Jim is a fount of knowledge! We all learned a lot and enjoyed getting to know our local plant—especially because many people, like me, had never done more than glimpse the plants’ smoke on the horizon. The trip was a great opportunity to meet local Sierra Club members and to share curiosity and concern for where our power comes from—both literal power (electricity) and figurative power (our members and our movement).

Working with Jim and Honey, I plan to have a Toxic Tour at each of our coal-fired power plants around the state over the next few months, so stay tuned for an email from me if you live near one, or send me an email if you’d like to join one even if it means travel time for you. Our list will include Grant Town (Marion County), Harrison (Haywood, Harrison County), John Amos (Winfield, Putnam County), Mitchell (Moundsville, Marshall County), Mountaineer (Letart, Mason County), Mount Storm (near Bismarck, Grant County), and Pleasants (near Belmont, Pleasants County).

As Sierra Club members, we must be informed and up-to-date on the threats we all face because of coal-fired power plants—including the

dangers from the plants we live near. This is especially true given that the Trump Administration’s EPA is proposing to roll back the Methane and Air Toxins Standards (MATS) that have helped reduce pollution and its attendant health effects. Seeing the giant, looming coal-fired power plants just next door to our homes, schools, hospitals, and playgrounds helps each of us to grasp the size of the threats. Even if the pollutants are microscopic, the devastation they cause is huge.

**TO RECEIVE INFORMATION** about future stops on the Chapter’s Toxic Tour, contact Lisa via email at [lisa.dibartolomeo@sierraclub.org](mailto:lisa.dibartolomeo@sierraclub.org).



*WV Chapter Chair Jim Kotcon speaks near the Fort Martin coal-fired power plant at a July stop on the chapter’s “Toxic Tour.” The tour gives activists and others an up-close look at the source of much of the state’s power. PHOTO BY LISA DI BARTOLOMEO.*

# Fighting Rate Hikes— and Lending a Helping Hand— in Wheeling

BY LISA DI BARTOLOMEO

**Have you heard that American Electric Power (AEP) is asking the Public Service Commission to let them raise electric rates for customers of Wheeling Power and Appalachian Power?**

AEP is seeking to increase customers' rates by 13.5%—on top of rates that have already doubled in the past ten years. WV Chapter Chair Jim Kotcon, Director Honey May, and I have been working with our coalition partners in West Virginians for Energy Freedom to raise awareness and support citizen opposition to the drastic rate hikes—as well as the big cuts to solar net metering that the utility companies are requesting. We've garnered over 5,000 public comments, and we've recruited people to speak out, both before the PSC in Charleston and at our special remote hearing site in Wheeling, on June 17. Jim and I are grateful to the Ohio County Public Library for providing the venue and to the PSC and their staff for facilitating that remote session in Wheeling, which enabled more people to address the hearing without traveling for hours. All told, about a dozen people went on the record against the rate increases and cuts to solar net metering.

While we were working to bring attention to the additional rate hikes that West Virginians just can't afford, the devastating floods of Father's Day weekend hit especially hard in Ohio and Marshall Counties. Jim and I wanted to help out any way we could. Knowing that we were traveling to Wheeling on June 17 for the remote hearing, I put out the call here in Morgantown for donations we could take with us. A few people generously donated numerous items, including diapers, hygiene products, and pet food, and Jim and I crammed them into his Chevy Bolt and delivered them to a donation center outside Wheeling. Our work was featured in a July 23 article in Wheeling's *Intelligencer*, "All for One, and One for All: Ohio Valley Proves There's Strength in Community."

The hearing, combined with the chance to help out our fellow West Virginians, offered a meaningful opportunity to hear testimony from not only low-income folks, but also from people who'd spent the day mucking out their neighbors' homes and businesses after the floods of the previous weekend. 🍃



*At the Ohio County Public Library in June, the Sierra Club's WV Chapter and its Beyond Coal Campaign organized an opportunity for citizens to speak remotely during a PSC hearing. PHOTO BY LISA DI BARTOLOMEO.*

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## AEP is seeking to increase customers' rates by 13.5%—on top of rates that have already doubled in the past ten years.

—JIM KOTCON

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*How much relief can you stuff into a Chevy Bolt? After the recent area floods, Beyond Coal organizer Lisa Di Bartolomeo and WV Chapter Chair Jim Kotcon combined a relief drive with their Wheeling campaign opposing utility rate hikes. PHOTO BY LISA DI BARTOLOMEO.*



# Finding New Purpose as an Advocate

BY RACHEL STEVENS

**While I've been an advocate most of my life for important issues, that part of my life has really blossomed this year. Motives ranged from personal experiences with climate change to concerns about our country's democracy to the prospect of giant transmission lines cutting through my backyard.** These issues fueled my activism from a place of fear and anger. Those emotions drove me to engage in several organizations—Mountaineers Indivisible Citizens Action (MICA), the Sierra Club, and the League of Women Voters, among others. I signed up for every Zoom meeting I could, made phone calls every morning to our representatives, and dug into environmental issues that were never on my radar before.

My husband and I engaged in membership and organizational growth for MICA in Morgantown. We attended rallies like “Hands Off”—the national movement to protest the government’s broad overreach. It was empowering to see so many people speak out on these issues and stand up for democracy. MICA has been a great influence in the Morgantown area and has organized grassroots efforts like food and supply drives for local homeless shelters as well as participation in nationwide protests like the “No Kings” rally.

From MICA’s influence, groups have formed closer to my home, like Concerned Citizens of Preston County and Neighbors. In a short amount of time, this group has united to address food scarcity, resources for the unhoused, the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link (MARL) transmission line, and cuts to

Medicaid. Concerned Citizens has shown what a difference a community can make when people come together.

Through my local chapter of the Sierra Club, I learned others were also concerned about MARL. After months of questions, NextEra (PJM’s contractor for the line) offered open houses and a map of proposed routes. While I felt relief that it no longer looked like my property would be in the direct path, my concern for the impact of this line on wildlife and on my neighbors persisted. My activism took the form of raising awareness—pointing people to the group Power Up for Our Future. This coalition consists of groups united in resisting the impacts of transmission lines and data centers. I also shared what I learned at the open houses, wrote letters to the editors of various newspapers, and spoke publicly. Many others have been active

alongside me, creating public meetings and new non-profits such as West Virginians Against Transmission Injustice ([wvatli.org](http://wvatli.org)) in Mineral County. This is definitely a fight that demands the involvement of all West Virginians, regardless of whether they live in the direct path of the planned line. Financially, we all will bear its burden through increased electric rates over time.

Sometimes you reach a point in life—maybe midlife—when you realize you’ve been searching for your purpose and find it’s been there all along. For me, that’s been the case with advocacy—for people, animals, and the environment. I’ll admit that speaking out has often come with a trembling voice, but that quaver is born of passion rather than fear—or perhaps passion pushing through fear. The role of being an advocate is one I’m proud to hold. I smiled when I recently



In April, author Rachel Stevens and her husband Frank helped organize at Moutaineers Indivisible Citizen Action's Hands Off rally in Morgantown.

overheard my husband tell his childhood friend, “Yeah, she’s a real tree hugger.”

Rather than acting from fear and anger, I am learning to act in a healthy, balanced way, with confidence and sound information. I’m also trying to make sure I factor in my needs as well. I recently joked that I need to “hobbit” for a while—stay home, garden, read books,

drink tea, and eat multiple meals a day—if I am going to be able to go out and slay dragons. Thankfully, I know I have a multitude of other people out there fighting alongside me with protest signs, phone calls, letters, marches, rallies, and petitions. **Together, we can make a difference in our world, even while finding new meaning in our lives.**

**Sometimes you reach a point in life—maybe midlife—when you realize you’ve been searching for your purpose and find it’s been there all along.**

—RACHEL STEVENS

PHOTO SPREAD: Concerned Citizens of Preston County and Neighbors took part in this No Kings rally in Friendsville, MD in June. Citizen concern stirred author Rachel Stevens and others to take action in places one might not expect. PHOTO BY CHRISSEY ZELTNER.

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## INTRODUCING THE CHAPTER'S NEWEST EXCOM MEMBER:

# Molly Martin

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**I am excited to be joining the team of the Sierra Club's WV Chapter. Nature has always been the place I love to be the most, and anything I can do to protect and preserve it is welcomed!**

I am the child of an enlisted young man and a young European woman who fell in love, got married, had a child, and then moved back to America. I am very thankful for the opportunity of being raised in a culturally mixed home and have maintained my dual citizenship.

I grew up in rural West Virginia on a large farm. There I learned much wonderful, useful knowledge and developed my love for nature. I moved to Morgantown in 1982 to attend

WVU, where I obtained my bachelor's degree in journalism. And I never left Morgantown!

My career began in 1985 at Mylan Pharmaceuticals, where I had the opportunity over many years to work in various departments and learn all sides of a company. The last 12 years were spent in the Global Security Department, where I was a project manager facilitating the standardization of our security systems platform across our American and global sites. This enabled me to travel extensively and experience nature in other parts of the world.

Unfortunately, Mylan began decreasing staff in 2016. My department was eventually



eliminated, and Mylan was sold to a foreign entity. I now work at WVU Medicine part-time in the Spine Center to facilitate surgeon/patient relations.

Over the next couple of years, I hope to retire from the hospital and dedicate more time to my passions: family, friends, outdoor activities, and nature advocacy through the Sierra Club.

**In general, I want to make the most of my time left on this beautiful planet!**

## CORRIDOR H | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4



*Corridor H currently lies just outside the town of Wardensville. The National Forest Service has delayed the release of an Environmental Assessment of the extension of the highway from there to the Virginia border. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WV HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY.*

As residents of a town lying within a WV Bureau of Public Health-designated "Wellhead Protection Area," the people of Wardensville are concerned about how the expanded highway and its traffic will affect their water. They have also built an economy based on Main Street traffic; cars must go through downtown in order to get on the already-completed section of Corridor H. This proposed seven-mile section, among other things, will literally and figuratively bypass the community's wishes. Many residents are worried that without traffic, Wardensville will become a ghost town.

While the West Virginia Department of Transportation works on responding to comments and the Forest Service drafts a Special Use Permit, the Save Wardensville coalition's work remains unchanged. We are continuing to speak with experts in relevant fields, consult lawyers about Forest Service issues, and bring new stakeholders into the fold. Our mission is still to create a highway that doesn't pass residents by. 🌿

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**FOR UPDATES on Corridor H and the Wardensville expansion, go to [savewardensville.org](https://savewardensville.org).**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, email [loki@saveblackwater.org](mailto:loki@saveblackwater.org).**

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## WV Rivers Celebrates 35 Years

The West Virginia Rivers Coalition will celebrate its 35th anniversary on Friday, September 12, at the Confluence Resort in Hico, WV, with an evening of reflection, reconnection, and reinvigoration. For 35 years WV Rivers has protected and championed clean water, thanks to a community of passionate advocates and river lovers. From its humble beginnings in a Morgantown living room to securing major victories like the PFAS Protection Act, every step of the journey has been powered by people who believe in clean water and healthy communities.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION** on the celebration and to register, visit [wvrivers.org/35thanniversary](http://wvrivers.org/35thanniversary).

### MICROGRIDS | [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3](#)

in 2021, the airport completed an eight-acre solar array that fully powers airport facilities. The airport said it has saved more than \$1 million in annual electricity costs since the solar array became operational. The airport is also downsizing to a single terminal and eliminating the tram to save lots more energy and money.

In May 2025, the first solar microgrid panels were installed at the Ravenswood Business Park in Jackson County. This will be the site of one of the world's largest solar and storage microgrids, constructed by Berkshire Hathaway Energy Renewables for Titanium Metals Corporation (TIMET) and the start of an industrial hub. The solar array and a 50-megawatt battery energy storage system are designed to serve 70% of TIMET's expected energy demand.

With so much demand for energy, why did Congress just pass a huge budget that will set our new electricity generation back years, raise utility prices for consumers, and continue our reliance on dirtier, costlier energy projects that take longer to build? Repealing these federal programs and tax incentives will cost nearly 10,500 West Virginia jobs in 2030. And ALL our federal legislators voted for it. If you believe this is not a wise move for the state or the nation, let them know. Contact information can be found on the back page of this newsletter. 🍀



*Betsy Lawson took a turn churning ice cream at the Mon Group's June ice cream social at East Marion Park in Fairmont.*

PHOTO BY LISA DI BARTOLOMEO.

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**DEADLINE FOR THE 2025-26 WINTER ISSUE: NOVEMBER 8, 2025**

Opinions expressed in the *Mountain State Sierran* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Sierra Club.

# Outings

FOR MORE DETAILS on each outing,  
and to register online, visit:  
[sierraclub.org/west-virginia/events](https://sierraclub.org/west-virginia/events)



## DAY HIKE

**Saturday, August 23, 2025**

**Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Berkeley County, WV**

We will hike in Sleepy Creek WMA to remnants of an abandoned coal mine. We will be on the Tuscarora Trail as well as some connector trails. We will have some good views along the way, along with rolling hills. The elevation gain is about 770 feet. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance:** 5 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 3.5 hours

**Leader:** Ken Kendall  
kekendall65@gmail.com  
304-433-9537

## DAY HIKE

**Saturday, September 6, 2025**

**Cheat Canyon Wildlife Management Area and Allegheny Trail**

This section is 8-10 miles, depending on whether the Jenkinsburg Bridge is accessible for a shuttle. We will start on the Allegheny Trail at the Friends of Cheat Campground near Albright, WV. If it is accessible, we can take the Railroad Grade Trail to Jenkinsburg. Alternatively, we may park at the Mt. Nebo parking area, so we would stay on the Allegheny Trail to climb out of the canyon. Check for details online nearer the date. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance:** 9 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATELY DIFFICULT

**Duration:** 4.5 hours

**Leader:** Jim Kotcon  
jkotcon@gmail.com  
304-594-3322

## DAY HIKE

**Saturday, September 13, 2025**

**Tuscarora Trail – North Mountain, VA/WV**

Our exploration of the Tuscarora Trail in West Virginia and northern Virginia continues on this walk atop North Mountain between the villages of Gore and Lehigh. There will be some good views, including the one from the Pinnacles rock cropping. We may also see a small waterfall. This woodland hike involves 1900 feet of climbing—mostly gradual—and one low-water crossing. Because it involves a carpool, reservations are required, and you must be willing to drive or ride with others. There is no charge for the hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance:** 12 miles

**Difficulty:** DIFFICULT

**Duration:** 7 hours, including carpool

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
ccraig@laurellodge.com  
304-433-1260



*On a May hike on the Tuscarora Trail in Berkeley County, WV, Alison Smith was rewarded for her climb up High Rock with a grand view of the area.*

PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.

## GUIDED BIRD WATCHING HIKE

**Sunday, September 21, 2025**

**Bird Nerds Outing, Snake Hill Wildlife Management Area (WMA)**

On this 3.5-mile loop, Kyle Aldinger, who holds a PhD in Forest Resources, will lead us on a bird walk and share his special interests in conservation of birds, insects, and native plants. September is a beautiful time of year to witness songbirds during their fall migration. Dr. Aldinger will cover identification, migration, habitat, and conservation of various bird species. Snake Hill WMA is a serene escape to nature, managed by the WV Division of Natural Resources for the primary purpose of habitat restoration and management and for hunting access. The terrain is a mix of rolling hills and rocky cliffs near the Cheat River Gorge, and we will enjoy the view from two overlooks above the river.

**Distance:** 3.5 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Leader:** Adrienne Epley Brown  
adrienne\_epley@yahoo.com  
702-465-9119

## DAY HIKE

**Sunday, September 28, 2025**

**Ziler Loop Trail, Cacapon State Park**

On this 5-mile loop we will ascend 1269 feet to stunning views and rocky terrain. Well-behaved dogs are welcome but must be on a leash. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance:** 5 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATELY DIFFICULT

**Duration:** 3.5 hours

**Leader:** Tammy Vincent  
tammy.vincent.id@gmail.com  
208-866-8422



After a June hike at Dolly Sods, Sierrans visited Blackwater Falls before a post-hike dinner. Recent storms made the always beautiful cascade especially impressive. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.

## DAY HIKE Saturday, October 4, 2025

**Stauffer's Marsh Nature Preserve,  
Berkeley County, WV**

Stauffer's Marsh is a wetland preserve owned and managed by Potomac Valley Audubon Society. Prior owners restored the agricultural property to wetland ponds and marshes as part of the USDA Wetland Reserve Program. Along our short walk on the preserve trails, we'll likely spot herons and ducks, and perhaps some more unusual wildlife. Dogs are not permitted in the preserve. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance:** 2 miles

**Difficulty:** EASY

**Duration:** 1.5 hours

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
ccraig@laurellodge.com  
304-433-1260



Five Sierrans didn't let morning showers keep them from riding the Allegheny Highlands Trail in early June. They're shown here at a town park in Parsons, WV.

PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.

## BIKE RIDE Saturday, October 11, 2025

**Western Maryland Rail Trail, Hancock, MD**

We will bike the Western Maryland Rail Trail from Hancock, MD west to the Pearre parking lot and access point and stop for a snack or lunch break before returning to our starting point. The entire trip will be on the recently repaved trail. The ride is nearly level, with 200 ft. elevation gain over the 22 miles.

**Distance:** 22 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 3.5 hours

**Leader:** Ken Kendall  
kekendall65@gmail.com  
304-433-9537

## DAY HIKE Sunday, October 19, 2025

**Snake Hill Wildlife Management Area**

This hike is 2-3 miles, depending on whether we go all the way to Table Rock. We will walk at a gentle pace on mostly gentle slopes of a well-maintained logging road, but the overlook at Cheat View and Table Rock can be slippery when wet. These sites have the best views of Coopers Rock, Haystack Rock, and the Cheat View area. In addition, we will do a conservation training and check out two gas wells on the property. Keep up with last-minute details by registering in advance.

**Distance:** 3 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Leader:** Jim Kotcon  
jkotcon@gmail.com  
304-594-3322

## DAY HIKE Saturday, November 8, 2025

**Woodthrush and Farmstead Trail Loop,  
Sweet Run State Park, VA**

This trail on rolling terrain winds through the lush forests and open meadows of Sweet Run State Park, passing the remnants of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century farming community, including historic structures and Wortman Pond. There is a \$10/car entry fee to the state park (or a VA park pass).

**Distance:** 5 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Leader:** Tammy Vincent  
tammy.vincent.id@gmail.com  
208-866-8422

## RAIL TRAIL CYCLING Saturday, November 15, 2025

**Wheeling Heritage Trail and  
Brooke Pioneer Trail**

We will ride north along the paved and level Wheeling Heritage Trail and Brooke Pioneer Trail toward (and perhaps into) the Brooke County seat of Wellsburg, WV. The Ohio River will be visible from most of the trail and with a little luck we might see an eagle or two. There is no charge for this ride, but donations are welcome. If cyclists want to ride longer and farther after we return to our cars, we can head south toward Wheeling for as long and far as interested.

**Distance:** 18 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE (Distance can be increased if desired)

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Leader:** John Harris  
harrisjohnedward@gmail.com  
347-907-1197

## DAY HIKE

**Saturday, November 22, 2025**

**Appalachian Trail & Hosack Run,  
Caledonia State Park, PA**

We'll climb out of the state park on the AT, passing the notable Quarry Gap Shelter before completing a loop on fire roads and local trails. We'll be in mixed forests and cross several streams. Total elevation gain is 1,236 feet. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance:** 6.9 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 4.5 hours

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
ccraig@laurellodge.com  
304-433-1260



*The heat of July kept attendance down on this hike on Pennsylvania's Appalachian Trail out of Caledonia State Park, but Ed Wheelless and Carol Culvyhouse still enjoyed the day, including these rock formations atop South Mountain.*

PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG

## DAY HIKE

**Saturday, December 13, 2025**

**Tuscarora Trail, Great Northern Mountain,  
Capon Springs, WV**

Our exploration of the Tuscarora Trail continues with this stretch atop the ridgeline of Great Northern Mountain. Climbs are gradual. We will have several impressive views. From the meeting place, we will carpool to the hike start, so reservations are required, and we ask you to notify us if your plans change. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance:** 7.8 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 5 hours

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
ccraig@laurellodge.com  
304-433-1260



*At least one Sierran on this July bike ride on the C&O Canal took the opportunity to cool his feet at McMahon's Mill, near Clear Spring, MD. PHOTO BY TAMMY VINCENT.*

## DAY HIKE

**Saturday, December 20, 2025**

**Shannondale Springs Trail, Shannondale Spring  
Wildlife Management Area**

This loop hike has 482 feet of elevation gain on a trail popular with birders and hikers. Dogs are welcome but must be on a leash. There is no charge for the hike, but donations are welcome.

**Distance:** 5.4 miles

**Difficulty:** MODERATE

**Duration:** 3.5

**Leader:** Tammy Vincent  
tammy.vincent.id@gmail.com  
208-866-8422

## DAY HIKE

**Saturday, December 27, 2025**

**Cool Spring Battlefield, Bluemont, VA**

We will walk the paved path around the Cool Spring Battlefield at the River Campus of Shenandoah University. We will have nice views of the Shenandoah River and the surrounding countryside, along with some Civil War history. There are two loops around the battlefield, so you can join us for one 2.5-mile loop or the entire 5 miles.

**Distance:** 2.5 or 5 miles

**Difficulty:** EASY

**Duration:** 1.5 or 2.5 hours

**Leader:** Ken Kendall  
kekendall65@gmail.com  
304-433-9537



*Lunchtime at Opequon Junction Campsite for these Sierrans on a C&O Canal bike ride in August. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.*

## DAY HIKE

**Thursday, January 1, 2026**

**C&O Canal Towpath, Dargan's Bend to Mountain  
Lock, Sharpsburg, MD**

Continue our Sierra Club tradition since 2018 and start out 2026 in healthy, outdoor fashion with our New Year hike along the C&O Canal Towpath. This year we will start at Dargan's Bend (just upstream from Harpers Ferry) and walk along a quiet section of the canal to Mountain Lock and back. Expect lovely winter views of the Potomac and perhaps some waterfowl and other birdlife. There is no charge for this hike, but donations are welcome. Well-behaved dogs on leashes are welcome.

**Distance:** 5 miles

**Difficulty:** EASY

**Duration:** 3 hours

**Leader:** Chris Craig  
ccraig@laurellodge.com  
304-433-1260



*This cave near Dam #4 on the C&O Canal gave Sierrans an opportunity for a little spelunking along with their bike ride.*

PHOTO BY TAMMY VINCENT.



*On this May hike on the Tuscarora Trail in Berkeley County, WV, Sierrans found they were right on time for peak mountain laurel blooms. PHOTO BY CHRIS CRAIG.*

## WV CHAPTER FOUNDING MEMBER PASSES:

# Susan Ray Brown

One of the founding members of the Sierra Club's West Virginia Chapter, Susan Ray Brown, passed away on July 18, 2025. Susan was a remarkable human being and had a deep love for, and loyalty to, the people—especially the children—of West Virginia, along with the region's hills, hollows, music, dance, and many special places. Throughout her life, Susan worked quietly but vigorously to bring peace, equity, joy, and kindness to her family, community, and this world.

In the early 1980s, as today, there were a number of serious environmental threats in our region, including proposals for toxin-generating coke ovens, a liquid fuels plant, and a tram over the Cheat River Canyon.

Susan helped to inspire a group of concerned citizens to form a Sierra Club chapter in order to protect and enjoy the natural beauty of this remarkable but threatened region. Joining Susan and her husband, Lee Petsonk, were a remarkable and generous group of folks who rolled up their sleeves to contribute to building an effective, sustainable, and successful Sierra Club chapter in West Virginia.

**BY LEE PETSONK**

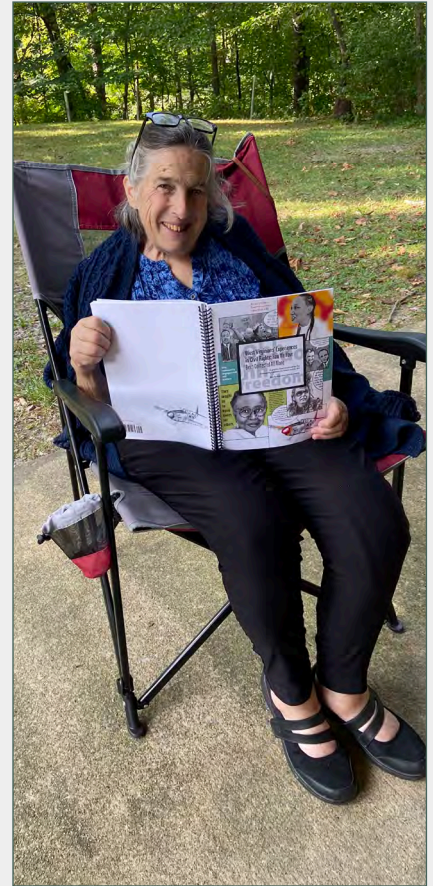


*Lee Petsonk is Susan's husband and another founding member of the WV Chapter.*

SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ SUSAN'S OBITUARY.

*Susan Ray Brown in 2024 at the annual meeting of the Community Coalition for Social Justice in Marilla Park, Morgantown. In her hands was a recently published book on civil rights in West Virginia.*

PHOTO BY BARBARA HOWE.



*Susan Ray Brown in 1983 at a Sierra Club group ExCom meeting. Also pictured (L to R) are Mary Davis, John Ostrowski, and Keith Gordon.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY KATHY GREGG.



## Sierra Club

West Virginia Chapter

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# FALL 2025



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## You're Invited to the Next WV Chapter ExCom Meetings

**Get involved. Meet chapter leaders.**

**Learn about issues and opportunities.**

The WV Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) will meet  
via Zoom on September 25, October 30, November 20,  
and December 18 from 7:15pm to 8:45pm.

For Zoom link and agenda, contact Jim Kotcon  
([jkotcon@gmail.com](mailto:jkotcon@gmail.com) or 304-594-3322).

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