



# Into the Canyon

Newsletter of Friends of the Cheat

Spring 2004



## 10th Annual Cheat River Festival !!!

That's right folks, it was all of ten years ago that the first Cheatfest happened. Since then, thousands of river lovers have celebrated each first Saturday in May to raise awareness and resources for the mission of Friends of the Cheat. This year promises to be bigger and better! The river is getting cleaner but the job is not finished! Come and see for yourself at the focus area where government agencies and conservation groups will educate and enlighten you! Watch demonstrations and listen to storytellers' tales....some of them might be true! Check the playbill inside and get ready to dance to the music! Shop from noon till late from artisans and crafters, paddle gear vendors, hard to find music and the best food in the watershed! It's all at Cheatfest!

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## Into the Canyon

*Published by:*

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Zoar Paddling Club

## Cheat Fest Retrospective

By Dave Bassage, Board Member  
Friends of the Cheat

An incredible whirlwind of effort created the first Cheat Festival 10 years ago, and sometimes I feel like I'm still whirling. **Who knew all of the great things to come from that first meeting of an eclectic collection of concerned citizens the previous June?** The only thing we had in common was shared discontent with orange streams in our backyard, yet less than a year later I found myself overwhelmed with emotion when I took the stage to address 1500 people in a field that only a few weeks before was choked with eight foot tall weeds.

Roger Harrison and I first hatched the idea of a festival in the Fall of 2004 in the back of a bus as we were riding back from a Gauley River trip. Roger and I both guided rafts for the same company, but his "day job" was serving as the first Executive Director of the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, and I had emerged as president of the fledgling Friends of the Cheat. We were seeking ways to attract funding and attention to the issues in the Cheat Watershed, and hit on the concept of a Spring version of Gauley Fest, tailored to meet our specific needs.

The FOC board was enthusiastic, and WVRC agreed to provide logistical support, with the two organizations splitting any proceeds. We sat down with Gauley Fest organizers to pick their brains and they graciously shared the wisdom of their experience and even volunteered their light system and key volunteer labor to help get us off to a good start.

The site we picked was the same one FOC now owns and stewards, strategically located at the confluence of the Cheat and Muddy Creek, its most polluted tributary, but it bore little resemblance to the beautiful riverside gathering spot of today. Once a Native American hunting camp, then an orchard, it had been long neglected and was so overgrown we weren't entirely sure it was flat. There was no electricity, no stage, no improvement whatsoever.

To solve the electricity problem we approached Anker Energy with a request for portable generators.

CEO John Faltis responded with a pledge not only for generators, but also cash support and an offer to perform \$200,000 worth of reclamation wherever it could do the most good in the watershed. We had been working from the principle that government, citizens, and industry ought to be able to collectively address problems in the watershed. Anker's pledge put that principle into action, and led to the signing of the River of Promise shared commitment at that first Cheat Fest.

Committees were formed, materials scrounged, vendors solicited, the site cleared, publicity generated, T-shirts designed. We had no clue how many people to expect – maybe as many as 500? More? Behind schedule from the start, with most of us performing each task for the first time in our lives, somehow it all came together. The day before Fest day a portable stage on loan from the WV Brew Pub was propped up on donated cribbing. We didn't even think about a tarp over the stage. It couldn't rain on Cheat Fest, could it? Not this time, thankfully.

The day dawned sunny and beautiful. Here's where the memories start to compress into a series of snapshot images. I remember taking a VIP raft down the Cheat, which had swollen to a season high of four and a half feet. In the raft were Office of Surface Mining director Bob Uram, state Clean Streams Initiative director Rick Buckley, John Faltis, and Paul Ziemkiewicz and Courtney Black from the National Mine Lands Reclamation Center. I remember little of the actual river run, but at that level at that time Coliseum rapid was especially challenging, so we ate lunch just above the rapid to afford a good view of any extra excitement. Sure enough, a number of rafts were flipping or dropping swimmers as guides tried to adapt to the conditions. Long after the rest of us had finished eating, Bob Uram approached me with only a single bite taken out of his sandwich. "Dave, by my calculations over 50% of the people entering this rapid end up in the water – are we going to be OK?" I tried to reassure him without committing the cardinal guide sin of overconfidence, and thankfully we aced the run. Regardless of all my other efforts to help the watershed, I sometimes think delivering Bob Uram safely down the river that day more than any-

*Continued see "Retrospective" on page 4*

thing else cemented his support for our efforts in the years to come.

When we got back, the Fest was in full swing. More people than I'd ever imagined were browsing the booths, dallying by the river, and dancing to the incredible music wafting over the site. The apple tree next to the stage was in full bloom, and two hawks circled overhead.

As the sun started to blaze into a glorious sunset down the canyon, the original signatories to the River of Promise shared commitment gathered back stage. I approached the microphone to introduce the event, and found myself unable to speak as the emotion of the event rolled over me.

**All the hard work of so many, charting new ground against uncertain odds, all at once showed promise of future success, which made our River of Promise shared commitment signing all the more perfectly appropriate.**

I have no idea what I finally said once I got my voice back, but the faces kept smiling and I'll never forget that moment. For me, that was the beginning of something magical, and today as water quality keeps improving, much needed funding keeps pouring into reclamation efforts, and a mix of old and new leadership drives the Friends of the Cheat and River of Promise efforts to new heights, the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cheat Fest seems the perfect time to reflect on how it all began, and look forward to all the good yet to come.



Less than a year earlier 26 of us had gathered to figure out how to generate support for efforts to care for the watershed. Now, as the sun set on a beautiful day and an apathetic past, 1500 dedicated supporters smiled up at me waiting for me to tell them better days were coming.

*Dave Bassage has recently rejoined the FOC Board. He served as the organization's first president and executive director before taking a position with the state DEP where he applies the lessons learned in the formative years of FOC.*

# Rail-Trails in the Watershed ?

by Keith Pitzer

In the last issue we reported on the local interest in rail-trail development on some abandoned rail corridors in the county. Local citizens had been meeting and discussing the need for, and possibility of, rail-trail development in Preston County. The Mon River Rail-Trail Conservancy has acted as mentor and resource. FOC, with much help from Peggy Pings with National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program, has been involved in this effort by helping with funding requests, directly applying for funding when appropriate, and by functioning as the non-profit umbrella under which the local rail-trail group can raise funds and eventually incorporate into a free standing organization.

The rail corridors in question are as follows:

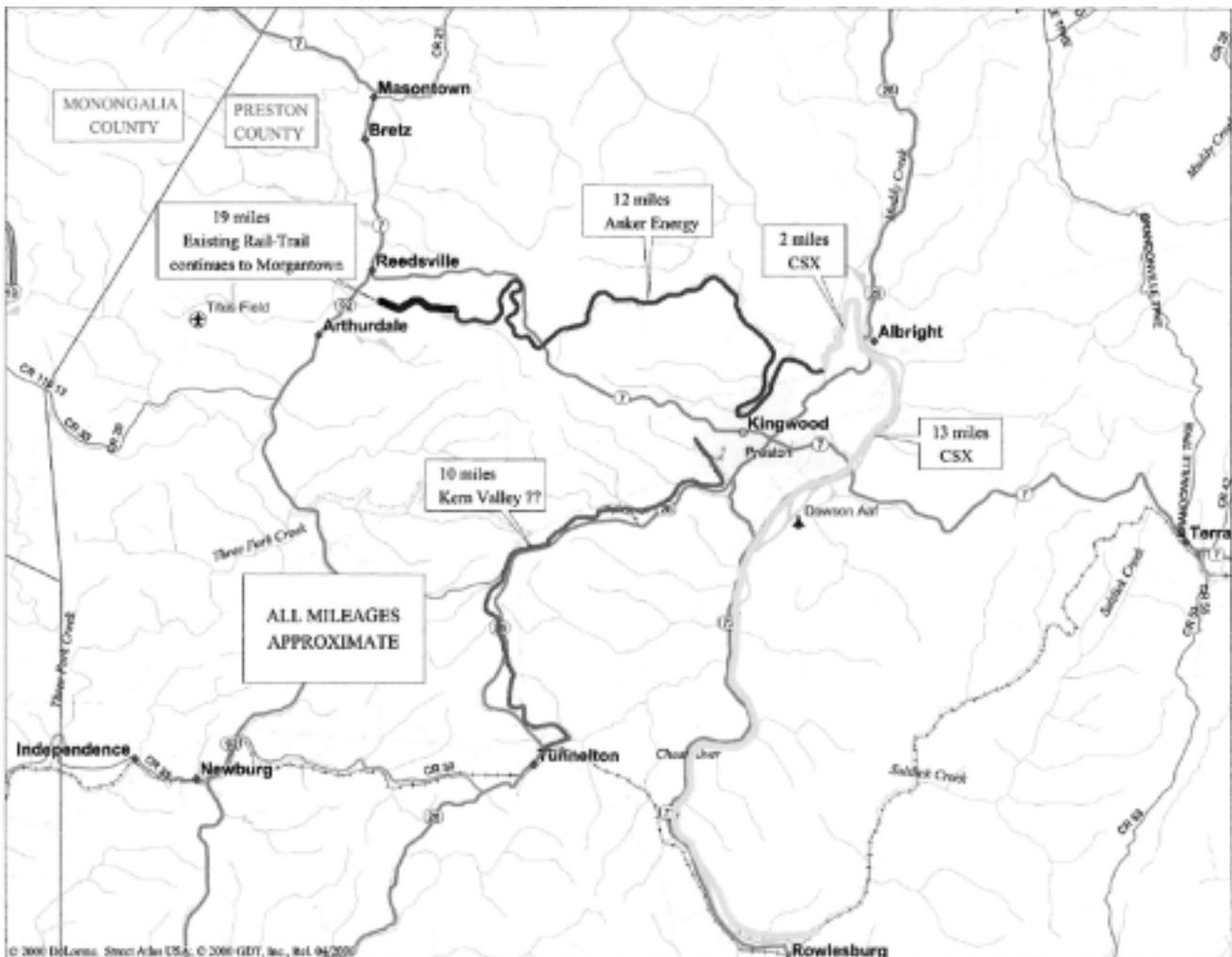
**M & K Railroad Corridor** – this would connect the end of the Deckers Creek Trail to Kingwood. About 2/3 of this 12 mile corridor is owned by Anker Energy. While the other 1/3 is parceled out, leases and or detours could provide a connection with the Mon River Trail system through this trail. It runs alongside the North Fork of Greens Run for half this distance or more and is scenic and wooded.

**West Virginia Northern** – between Tunnelton and Kingwood. This 10 mile corridor is currently owned by Kern Valley Railroad, a railroad salvage company based in Utah. This corridor is intact and would take very little improvement to accommodate bicycle and foot traffic. (both of these corridors are currently used by some local residents for recreation and athletic training.)

**CSX along Cheat River** – this 15 mile corridor between Rowlesburg and Albright has the potential to become the “crown jewel” of area rail trails because of its proximity to the Cheat River and its tie in with other uses such as paddling, swimming and fishing. This corridor actually extends beyond Albright and connects with the M&K corridor, making the possibility of connection with the Mon River Trail system.

FOC sees these projects as falling in the “promote” part of our mission statement. These trails could provide safe exercise and improved wellness for local communities as well as recreation and economic enhancement of the local economy through increased tourism and travel.

Contact Connie Ervin at 864-5901 if you are interested in joining our efforts. She is chairing the Preston Rail-Trail Committee. Friends of the Cheat is also a point of contact.



## Once Upon A Dream .....

By Jim Snyder

The other day I had to run to town. As I got to the other side of the Albright bridge, I noticed this dusty old sign beside the road. It was titled “Albright Ash Pile Reclamation Site” and elaborated on this early project, which happened down at the end of that drive. I chuckled to myself. I wondered how many people had read that sign or knew what it meant.

My mind wandered back about a decade to the characters who played a role in those earliest days of the Cheat clean-up effort. As I mused, and before I got to the railroad tracks, I had an uplifting experience- literally! The first thing I noticed was tree branches streaming by and the fact that the road sounds were muted. Then my truck vaporized into dust. As I soared above the treetops, Albright hunkering down below, I knew what was happening. I was getting yet another visit by my alien friends- the ones who occasionally stop by at night and let me see things that I can't understand. I couldn't see them, but this had all the earmarks of their handiwork.

My attention gathered downstream across the river from my house in Ruthbell- at the ash pile itself. As I was collecting my senses on the site, I had the odd sensation of bursting through layers of tissue paper and then a sulfur smell made it all too real. I had been shredding through the years ~back in time. Now I stood on a hot hilltop that was venting smoky fumes from a decades-old “gob” pile from a small mine nearby. For nearly the last twenty years, I had become accustomed to my “neighbor” across the river and used to the fact that that was just the “way things were”. I could see the gob pile oozing orange into the river- minute by minute, year after year. It was claiming the river as its own- poisonous. I remembered how one of the old timers had told me about this time one of the “Eye-talians”, who lived on the bad side of the river here, rode a big fish bareback in the stilled waters behind a summertime dam they had by the bridge there. Those fish were looong gone. This gob-pile- insult to the river was some entremaneur's lasting mark that he made in our

world. It outlived the coal that was mined and the fortune that was spent. It was our reminder of him.

Speaking of reminders then~ my mind flashed to the faces of John and Kathy Faltis. John was the president of Anker Energy back then and he elected to be remembered a different way. I remember our first meeting, arranged by Dave Bassage. It turns out the parties on both sides were trying to get a feel for one another. Trying to see if each other was earnest and trustworthy and of pure intent. That began our brief but impactful relationship with them~ until their passing in a tragic helicopter crash a few years later. Through them we met Scott Rotruck~ a well-connected ambassador of the industry who sported arms so large they left Popeye reaching shakily for his bottle of Viagra. Through them all we came to meet many industry and government-side players in the upcoming reclamation effort. And their blessing on our efforts has a still-lasting effect. Sure- we've been tarred with the mark of being middle-of-the-rovers with an open forum. But we've received a lot of support from virtually everyone involved. We were able to hear the “regulated” side of the story and also express our interests to those who matter. All in all it was a good thing to know these guys (in particular) and we stand unashamed of our relationship.

I heard the sound of a stick cracking, and in a blink, the hillside I was standing on was reclaimed. It was green and no longer venting fumes. And there was no more orange seeping nefariously into the Cheat. This was just one of the lasting marks the Faltis's left in this world.

I turned around and more years passed. There was a handful of significant efforts on the part of this diverse fan club of the Cheat River- the so-called “Friends of the Cheat”. Who are these guys and girls and how dare they? How do they survive? Do they really think they can revive the “best river in the world”? And what would they have if they did? Something for generations to enjoy? Something “NOT” lost forever?

And then I found myself as if waking up. I was sifting through my warranty policy to find a clause about disintegration. Out of the corner of my eye I saw my truck sitting where it always does. And I had to wonder. Was it all a dream? Is it still?

## Working Upstream

By Keith Pitzer, Executive Director  
Friends of the Cheat

It's been a hard winter. Or at least it seems that way. The long cold days in January reduced the wood pile much quicker and farther than I had planned. I found myself cutting wood and bringing wood in from the surrounding woods at every opportunity.

But winter brings its own special joys and privileges as well. We cross-country skied around the property, enjoying the great powdery snow, the viewshed from our ridgetop farm and the exhilaration of just being outside in the clear cold environment of winter in West Virginia. The snow was often squeaky cold and dry. Still, unless the wind blew hard, one keeps warm with minimal layers and the constant steady pace of the cross country rhythm. Boskie, a big Labrador, thoroughly enjoyed the snow, burrowing through drifts to retrieve a buried stick, wallowing through deep new powder to run back to us.

The river was a sight to behold for a couple of weeks. Quieter pools in the Narrows along the river road were frozen over completely, covered with a blanket of snow. At the beginnings and ends of pools the current would make for narrow open channels of water, flanked by ice & snow.

I took up window bird watching. This is the practice of putting out a birdfeeder, stocking it well and waiting to see what birds come around for free lunch. An identification guide was little help to me. The pictures usually didn't match what I was observing outside the kitchen window. Gradually, the birds became bolder, would come and feed even if I was coming and going, carrying in wood. I took this as a show of appreciation for buying groceries.

The news at the office is a mix of ideas for this coming season's projects, stream monitoring, rail-trails, Cheatfest.....

With March already here, we are working on Cheatfest, taking vendor registrations, reserving tents, porta-johns, security, etc. We ponder the publicity for Cheatfest, wonder how the folks that come get to know about it, how we can get the word to others that don't. We discuss what makes a well rounded enjoyable experience for most folks. But who are most folks? Who comes to Cheatfest? Are they the same?

How different can we be from each other and still agree to share and care for something like a *watershed*? Do we all know what a *watershed* is and how that intrinsically connects everything within the *watershed*? Can we all sit on the same grassy field listening to music and supporting the efforts to restore the environmental integrity of a *watershed*? Can we come together and discuss current issues facing a community and agree on a best course of action for a *watershed*?

The years remind me that this is the *tenth annual Cheatfest*. Who would have predicted ten years ago that the efforts started then would continue to gain momentum for this long? Do we have a special ceremony of the VIPs, that could score some points calling out for a restored environment for our children, rhetoric overused and seldom followed? Do we have a big name act on the music stage that could break the budget? How about fireworks? How many ways are there to celebrate and share that celebration with others? It is not with fireworks, or crowds that don't care, or politicians supporting identities instead of commitments. Cheatfest will be what it has always been.....the best of human nature, volunteering to make something more than the parts, to share in the spirit of love for the outdoors, for this place on the planet. Come and enjoy.

Finally, this is an election year. We read it, and hear of it constantly in the news. Friends of the Cheat has remained in the middle of many roads over its ten year history. We have built partnerships between industry and enviros, between agencies and academia. We have tried to bridge the gap between free spirited out-of-state boaters and hard willed mountaineers. We have not always succeeded. We will not endorse candidates but we will caution all of you that read this, that the love of our mountains and rivers should hold these candidates accountable to the earth. Nothing else much matters. If we do not caretake this earth better than recent history shows, we will not have other things to worry about either. Without clean water and clean air we won't have to decide who has access to special places for recreation. Special places won't be especially valuable when climate change and resource extraction has rendered much of the landscape either undesirable or unendurable.

Without love and care of the earth, nothing else much matters. To that end we are working upstream.

# **10th Annual Cheat River Festival**

**Saturday May 1st • Gates open at noon • \$10 admission/under 12 free**

## **Entertainment**

(musicians donate their talents)

Half Time String Band

Zen

Stewed Mulligan

Hillbilly Gypsy

Legendary Woodticks

From the Hip

Wolf Creek Session

## **Storytelling**

Keith McManus

Eloise Milne

## **Children's Area**

Family Resource Network

## **Watershed Education**

Project Wet

WV Save Our Streams

WVDEP Stream Restoration Group

## **Silent Auction**

Raffle of a 36" screen Sony TV

Thrillseeker-donated by Custom  
Inflatables

Rafting trip through the Cheat  
Canyon for 4 - donated by

Mountain Streams

Paddling Gear from numerous  
vendors

## **Food Vendors**

Crosley's Cajun and Creole

Delightful Dozens

Highwaters Grill and Barbecue

Laughing Fish Coffee Company

Mario's Fishbowl

Monroe's Deli

We're Nuts

## **Vendors (as of March 15)**

Astral Buoyancy Company

Cool Runnings

Custom Inflatables, Inc.

Go Big Distribution (Fluid Kayaks)

Jan's Novelties

Jay Krasney Flavored Ices

Mountain Mist Products

Mountain Streams

Mountain Surf, Inc.

Muskrat Paddles

Mystical Crystal

Ohiopyle Massage

PS Composites

Pyranha

Rain and Snow, Inc.

Rapidstyle

The Underwear Guys

Tygart River Enterprises

Gail Anderson Vincent -Clay Artist

Watershed, LLC

## **Wildlife Education**

J.L. Cook Native Snakes

WV Raptor Rehabilitation Center

WVU American Fisheries Society

## **Cheat Down-River Race Friday April 30th**

Entry times: 2-4:30 pm at the  
Cheatfest site  
Start time: 5 pm (approximately)  
Mass start  
Roughly 12 miles of Class IV-V  
Whitewater  
Entry fee: \$20  
Race Coordinator: Rick Gusic  
412-271-8888

### **Explore the River of Promise Interpretive Trail**

Friends of the Cheat created a self-guided auto tour along Muddy Creek in 2003.

There are ten signs at four sites to help the public learn about acid mine drainage and its effects on our streams and rivers.

There are four signs at the Cheatfest site, one at the Virginia Iron Furnace, four at the Woolen Mill/Rt. 26 intersection and one further up Woolen Mill Road on a clean section of Muddy Creek. There are locator signs along the road to guide visitors to the sites.

Explore the history of the Virginia Iron Furnace, the T&T mine blow-out, and the community of Ruthbelle. Learn about efforts to restore the streams and the role of Friends of

## **Explore the Cheat River and Canyon**

FOC is partnering with with several conservation organizations to sponsor rafting trips and hikes. All profits go to the sponsoring organizations.

### **Spring Rafting Trips**

#### **May 23 Cheat Canyon Rafting**

*Sponsored by Friends of the Cheat*

This is the classic Class II-V rafting trip through the heart of the gorge. Adventure-Class whitewater with lots of big rapids. Mountain Streams is the outfitter. Lunch provided. Minimum age 16. Wetsuit rentals available. Suggested donation: \$75/person

#### **June 13th Lower Cheat Canyon**

*Sponsored by Cooper's Rock Foundation and CLEAR*

Family Class whitewater in the deepest part of the Cheat gorge. Cheat River Outfitters/Lunch is provided. Suggested donation: \$59/person

#### **June 27th Cheat Narrows**

*Sponsored by Friends of the Cheat*

Class III roadside whitewater trip above Albright that is ideal for families. Outfitted by Cheat River Outfitters, lunch provided. Suggested donation: \$49/person

### **Cheat Canyon Hikes**

#### **May 15 Spring Wildflower Hike**

#### **October 16 2nd Annual George Rosier Memorial Fall Color Hike**

*Sponsored by WV Scenic Trails Association*

This is a ten mile hike down the Allegheny Trail through the Cheat Canyon. A naturalist will accompany both hikes and price includes shuttle back to starting point at the Cheatfest site. Bring raingear, water and lunch. Wear hiking boots. Suggested donation \$25

Contact Elsa Nadler at 599-2917 for details.

**To Register for Trips** contact Friends of the Cheat. We accept Visa or Mastercard. A liability release is required for rafting trips.

## New Wilderness Areas in the Mon National Forest Could Protect Parts of the Cheat Watershed

By Matt Keller  
WV Wilderness Coordinator

The passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act put in place the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) which is made up of individual wilderness areas on federal public lands across our great nation. Wilderness designation is the strongest protection a piece of federal land can be given, protecting it from logging, mining, motorized use and building of permanent structures. We are fortunate here in West Virginia to have some outstanding wilderness areas. Dolly Sods, Cranberry, Otter Creek, Laurel Fork North and South and Mountain Lake Wilderness Areas (the latter we share with Virginia) are well loved and well used by West Virginians and folks throughout the region alike.

There are several places left on the Mon National Forest that meet the criteria defined in the 1964 Wilderness Act but have no lasting protection. These wild places are a rarity, with the bulk of the Mon being highly fragmented by roads and other development. Wilderness designation carries many benefits for people and critters alike. Wilderness areas are often in headwaters areas, and assure a source of clean water. There are several new wilderness areas on the Mon under consideration that would protect portions of the Cheat River watershed, mostly tributaries of Red Creek, Shavers Fork, and Gandy Creek. Some of the best outdoor recreation in the nation, particularly hunting, fishing and hiking, takes place in wilderness areas because of the unique and wild experience they provide.

Over the past couple of years, the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition, a grassroots endeavor coordinated by the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, the Sierra Club-West Virginia Chapter and The Wilderness Society has been laying the groundwork for a campaign to permanently protect more of these wild places. Throughout 2003, an inventory of potential wilderness areas was conducted. These areas have been evaluated not only in the field but on paper, with each one being run through a matrix of

wilderness attributes. We're nearly finished with a draft proposal recommending new wilderness area designations. We are working with West Virginia's congressional delegation and have been exploring the possibility of introducing a new wilderness bill. It's been over 20 years since any new wilderness was designated in West Virginia.

We've developed working relationships with the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and the Monongahela National Forest Supervisor and other stakeholder groups. We are sensitive to issues surrounding acid precipitation and stream treatment for native species recovery. The coalition is very open to working with the DNR to make sure boundaries for potential new wilderness areas do not preclude treatment for streams with a high probability of being treated for acidity in the future.

We are focused intensely on building grassroots support for wilderness. Many West Virginians have already written their elected officials in Washington to let them know they want more areas protected on the Mon. We've gotten great support from businesses and organizations across the state through formal endorsements of our work. For more information, feel free to visit me at Cheatfest, contact me (304-864-5530, [mattk@twsw.org](mailto:mattk@twsw.org)) or visit our web site: [www.wvwild.org](http://www.wvwild.org). From this site, you'll find a link to send a fax or print out a letter to our congressional delegation and Governor Wise asking them to support new wilderness designations.



Red Run Falls in fall 2003. Photo used by permission of Steve Brown, WV DNR.

## GIS Mapping Project Underway

By Ben Mack, OSM Vista

Where are we? This is a very common question that can be answered many different ways. Some people answer this question by pulling out a map and pointing to a spot on it. Here at Friends of the Cheat, we use maps all the time to establish where we are and where we might be going, especially in terms of the watershed.

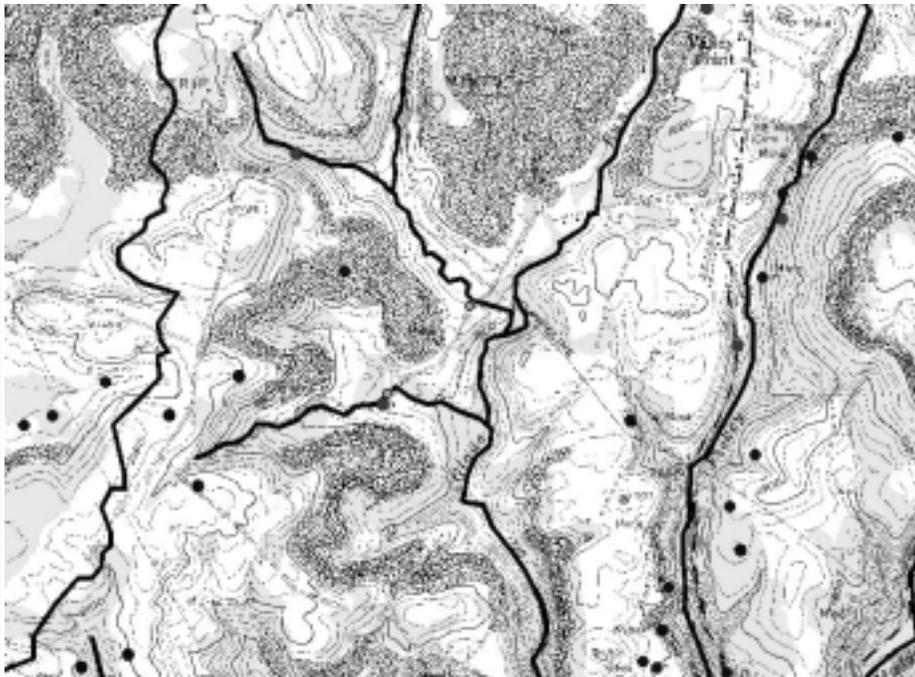
As for where we are going, we hope to use an innovative tool to help us figure out this very question. We have just recently received two computers here at the office through the generosity of the Canaan Valley Institute. One of these computers is being used to run a program called ArcView, which allows us to make detailed maps with layers of information that can be overlaid on top of topographic or other maps.

ArcView will be used to create maps of the Cheat. The Cheat watershed will be broken up into sub-watersheds, and these will be delineated by a watershed border. Each map will show abandoned mine lands, bond forfeitures (sites that were abandoned after 1977), and active mines. These mining sites will be shown by various colored lines and points drawn on top of the topo map. These maps will also

be interactive. When the desired line or point is clicked upon, a linked database table will pop up on the screen. This table will display water quality data for that particular site, including the amount of acidity that the site contributes to its sub-watershed. Other data that will appear on the table will include flow rate, depth, and conductivity (metal content).

Once these maps are completed, they will be an invaluable tool for Friends of the Cheat and the River of Promise. We will use them to help us determine which areas in the watershed are the most impacted by mine drainage. Once this is established, we can then prioritize reclamation projects by which watersheds will benefit most from acid reduction. This allows us to use our funding more efficiently and will also help us achieve better reclamation results. The ultimate goal of our reclamation efforts will be to restore fisheries in streams that are currently impaired.

This project also emphasizes our attempts to cooperate with state agencies, private companies, and other stakeholders in the watershed. The data for this project has to come from many different sources, including the WVDEP, USGS, Canaan Valley Institute, and West Virginia University, among others. By using information from all these different places, this will truly be a cooperative project that will benefit stakeholders in the entire watershed.



This is a map of part of the Muddy Creek drainage of the Cheat River, which includes the Valley Point area of Preston County. On this map, there are WVDEP sampling points and bond forfeiture sites, which are mines that were abandoned after 1977. There are also Abandoned Mine Land sites (mines abandoned before 1977), as well as active mines with a discharge permit. Were this map in color, each category of data would be a different color circle. The stippled areas represent lands disturbed by mining. Water quality data can be attached to specific points on the map. The line on the far left is the watershed boundary for Muddy Creek.

## Stream Monitoring Update

By Ben Mack, OSM Vista

As the snows of winter melt, it is time to look forward to spring here at Friends of the Cheat. Besides new growth on the trees and the emergence of flowers, spring also heralds the recommencement of our volunteer stream monitoring program. Like last year, we plan to sample two times. We hope to continue to get more of the community involved in this worthwhile project!

Last years sampling was a big success! The first round of stream sampling took place in July and August 2003, while the second round occurred in October 2003. Sixteen dedicated volunteers went through eight hours of stream monitor training and were rewarded by becoming certified stream monitors. These volunteers then logged roughly 8-10 more hours each on the actual stream monitoring days. These were long days, but very rewarding!

At each of these streams, three main types of testing occurred: benthic, chemical, and physical. Benthic (macroinvertebrate) testing was performed to assess aquatic life in the stream by collecting and identifying insects and other aquatic life from the stream. Chemical sampling included pH (how acidic the water is), dissolved oxygen (available oxygen for underwater critters), and conductivity (the amount of metals in the water). Physical

sampling includes flow rate and temperature. These three categories of characteristics determine whether or not advanced life, such as trout, can live in a stream. A clean stream full of fish and other life is a very rare resource indeed!

Many of you may be wondering, "Why these streams? There are many mine impacted streams in the Cheat watershed. What is so special about these three?" As we were attempting to set up our monitoring program in 2003, we noticed that some streams stood out from the others in that they had relatively lighter mining impacts, but were still not carrying fish populations. In the case of the North Fork of Greens Run, there was more mining activity. There have been three remediation projects finished on this stream, and we wanted to establish how effective these projects were. We chose these three streams because we wanted to determine if any of these streams could be restored as a fishery with a minimal amount of work. This year's monitoring will continue to aid us in determining what problems these streams have.

While our stream monitoring program was a great success last year, we still need volunteers to make it work in 2004! The date for stream monitor training is April 17, 2004 and the first round of sampling will take place on May 8, 15, or 22, 2004. Anyone who is interested in learning about their area streams (and spending a nice day outside!) can contact us at 304-329-3621 or [foc@cheat.org](mailto:foc@cheat.org).



Kicknet in Muddy Creek with volunteers during training 6-28-03. Tim Craddock with WV Save Our Streams travels over the entire state training watershed volunteers and other groups. We learned how to complete a habitat assessment survey and to collect benthic macroinvertebrate samples to help determine the health of streams.

## Update on Cheat TMDL Trading Framework

For more than a year now, members of the Cheat TMDL Stakeholder Group have labored over the size and shape of a pollutant trading framework as an aid in implementing the Cheat TMDL. This project was funded by a pilot grant from USEPA and was an outgrowth of the development of the Cheat TMDL. The stakeholder group picked a technical team made of experts in various fields from fisheries biology to natural resource economics. This team met between meetings of the stakeholders to work out the details for various pollutant trading scenarios. The report of the stakeholder group is now finished and will be released by the time you read this.

For a bit of review, TMDL stands for *total maximum daily load*, or the amount of a given pollutant that can be carried in our waterways without degrading water quality. In the Cheat Watershed, those pollutants are associated with acid mine drainage (AMD).

The sites that discharge AMD into neighboring streams are for the most part old deep or surface mines that operated before the 1977 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). This act created the coal tax program that funds reclamation work on these abandoned sites. In addition, bonding on mines since 1977 pays into a fund that treats water from forfeited permits. Forfeited sites are those on which the operator simply let his company go broke, forfeited the bond and went on down the road. The combination of both categories of mine sites make up the vast majority of AMD sources in the watershed. There is very little active mining taking place. So we see that the damage is largely old work with no legal responsibilities linking it to operators.

Most permitted sites left in the watershed are treating water to regular technology based limits, the minimum treatment required by the Clean Water Act. However, some discharge limits are set to be lowered in the TMDL. Also, future industry might conduct activities requiring NPDES permits and so have a loading of some pollutant into streams.

The interest in pollutant trading comes from the desire to identify workable ways to recruit private investment in reclamation activities. Examples of this would be if a site had a permit reduction called for and the proscribed improvement in treatment was relatively costly in relation to the amount of reduction in total load. A trading option would explore the company funding reclamation of an abandoned site where for the same or less investment, substantially more reduction in loading would be achieved. The result would be more environmental improvement for less cost and impact to business.

Are we confused yet?

The Cheat TMDL Trading Framework technical team has found that the vast majority of AMD comes from abandoned and forfeited sites in the watershed. This and the fact there are very few active permits in the watershed leave us without many potential traders. That is if we look only at AMD pollutants. The Allegheny Power Albright Plant discharges water much warmer than water quality standards allow. This is under a variance awarded the plant largely because the AMD load in this segment of the Cheat River is so high that aquatic life is negligible. This leads us to consider the idea of *cross pollutant* trading of thermal discharge for AMD reclamation funding. The thermal impact would continue but this affects a limited area. The improvement of a much larger segment of the river could be achieved with funding for active alkaline treatment to counteract the effect of AMD. This type of trade is controversial and the precedent is a concern to many.

The report does not recommend or condemn cross pollutant trading. It does recommend the consideration that if allowed, cross pollutant trades should be given extra scrutiny and should be held to higher standards. In other words, same pollutant trades might happen on a favorable ratio of 3 lbs of iron removed from an abandoned site for every 1lb not reduced from a permitted site. But if we consider cross pollutant trading, how do we measure the pollutants? In this case, thermal pollution isn't even measured in pounds.

*continued see TMDL on next page*

The report describes the development of *eco-units* which are the measure of ecological improvements made possible, and measurable, as a result of trading activity. By ecological improvement, the tech team means that a biological response is reached that was not present before. If cross pollutant trading would be allowed, the stakeholder group recommends that it result in ecological improvement (read fish), not just measurable load reductions.

The report also deals with considerations such as where in the watershed or stream segment can trading occur in relation to the permitted source. If the generator of credits and the site where credits are invested are in close proximity, lower trading ratios will be required.

Still confused? There's more, hold on....

The report, after conceiving of eco-units as a measure of environmental or ecological improvement, further promotes these eco-units as a unit of exchange or reclamation currency in the watershed. This allows the evaluation process to fuel reclamation between permit holder (credit user) and AMD abandoned site (credit generator).

Perhaps the most progressive idea of all in the report is the creation of an entity that would manage, evaluate and recommend specific trades to the WVDEP, and even recruit traders to achieve a reclamation strategy. This entity would not have regulatory authority but rather would coordinate the investment strategy of all reclamation in the watershed. The make up of this entity would be vital to its effectiveness. Stakeholder input and broad based guidance would help ensure restoration success. Whether funded by trading activity or merely the credit value of public funded reclamation, the coordination of these efforts across agency bureaucratic lines will deliver more water quality improvement at lower cost than ever before.

The report and how to implement any of its recommendations is now largely a matter for agencies to decide. Let's hope this work is considered as new tools to use in restoration of watersheds.

## FOC Updates

### AMD Projects

FOC in partnership with WVDEP/Water Resources and OSM, still have five projects on the drawing board and in various stages of approval for funding. All should be constructed this year. The Lick Run Project in partnership with the USACE, WVDEP/AML and OSM is progressing with design, access and funding agreements pending.

### AMD Symposium

FOC Director Keith Pitzer and former board member Bill Thorne are presenting a review of the Restoration of the Cheat River Watershed at the WV Surface Mine Drainage Task Force Symposium held in Morgantown, April 19-22. FOC and National Mine Land Reclamation Center will also lead a tour of AMD passive treatment projects in the Cheat Watershed.

### Cheat Canyon Access

FOC, in partnership with American Whitewater, local outfitters, WV Scenic Trail Assoc., continue to seek access agreements for recreational users in this special place. Concern continues for the Cheat Three Tooth land snail habitat within the canyon.

### Moving Mountains CD

Moving Mountains: Voices of Appalachia Rise Up Against Mountaintop Removal is a compilation CD featuring 13 different artists and 6 interviews with coal community residents. It was conceived and compiled by Jen Osha, a musician and activist. The proceeds from the CD will go to non-profit organizations helping mining communities threatened or destroyed by MTR. Among the songs on the CD is *Under a Blackened Moon* by FOC Director Keith Pitzer. This CD will be available at CheatFest.

### T&T Mine Tour

Ben Mack has arranged for the Environmental Science class from Preston High School to tour T&T treatment site on April 28 to learn about acid mine drainage and its treatment.

## Why Get Involved with the Friends of the Cheat?

From its headwaters in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, the Cheat River flows 157 miles to the Pennsylvania state line. In its lower 20 miles the river has been so severely polluted by acid mine drainage that it is effectively dead. Most of this damage is caused by underground and surface coal mines that were abandoned decades ago. The continuing legacy of this pollution has been the loss of fish and wildlife, aesthetic damage, degraded drinking water, and losses to the local economy from diminished recreation activities such as fishing and boating.

Our objective is to foster cooperative efforts by federal and state agencies, private industry, and local landowners to address the severe acid mine drainage problems that paint the Cheat Canyon orange and render it ecologically sterile. We need your support to create a new legacy for the Cheat River. Our membership includes fishermen, paddlers, guides and outfitters; land owners and renters; politicians and activists; geologists and biologists; small businesses and large industries; residents and folks from many states away. We are a diverse group with a common goal. Ours is a vision of a healthy river that provides multiple recreational opportunities and sustains viable local economies.

Help us make that vision a reality. *Remember...Rivers carry the lifeblood of the planet... but they should not run red.* Restore water quality on the Cheat! Become a member by completing the the form below or by visiting our website at [www.cheat.org](http://www.cheat.org).

## Volunteer Opportunity

Join us as we clean up our Adopt-a-Highway three mile stretch of State Highway 26 north of Albright on April 10th. We meet at Albright Quik Stop at 9 am. Three times per year we cooperate with the Division of Highways to clean up roadside litter. Each time, we wish we had more hands to help so that we could clean areas further from the road or extend our efforts further up the road. It is a grand opportunity to spend time with our outstanding board members. Jim Snyder always takes the lead on these clean-ups and Tom Nutter, Keith Pitzer, Sally Wilts and Ben Mack are usually involved. We'd love to see you there!

## Yes I want to be a Friend of the Cheat!

### Suggested donations:

⇒ Individual/Family \$20

⇒ Non-profit organization \$50

⇒ Business \$100

**T-shirt:** \$15 (\$10 with \$50 or more donation) T-shirt size: ⇒medium ⇒large ⇒xlarge ⇒xxlarge

Total amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Payable to: Friends of the Cheat

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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**Mark your Calendars!**  
**10<sup>th</sup> Annual**  
**Cheat River Festival**  
**Saturday May 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**Inside this edition of “Into the Canyon”**  
**You’ll find everything you need to**  
**know about Cheatfest**