



## Wild Virginia Seeks Day In Court to Support EPA's Decision to Regulate Biomass CO2 Emissions

Biomass incineration, the burning of woody and agricultural materials, is often promoted as a significant component of the effort to shift Americans away from our addiction to fossil fuels. Though often touted as "renewable" and "carbon-neutral," burning any organic material releases carbon dioxide. Scientists, in fact, have pointed out that a shift away from coal to burning trees, shrubs and grasses, in the absence of significant conservation measures, could actually increase the rate of increasing carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently created rules that require monitoring and regulating of CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions in Clean Air Act permits for large stationary sources. The "tailoring rule" establishes the agency's framework for evaluating and limiting these emissions.

The "tailoring rule" is being challenged by industry interests and several members of Congress in the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals (Southeastern Legal Foundation, et al. v. US EPA), arguing that burning biomass for energy is "carbon-neutral" and requires no evaluation. On July 6, Wild Virginia, represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center, along with Georgia ForestWatch, the Conservation Law Foundation and the Natural Resources Council of Maine, intervened in support of the EPA regulations, by filing declarations with the court explaining how overturning this rule could significantly

threaten Virginia's forests.

The EPA's decision to analyze emissions from burning biomass as it regulates greenhouse gases from large power plants and other large industrial facilities is an extremely important decision. The rule insightfully includes a commitment to continue a scientific evaluation of the true carbon impact of all methods of creating energy, including the many forms of biomass energy.



A big sky view from Ramsey's Draft Wilderness.

Large-scale biomass incineration poses a double threat to Virginia's forests. Already the George Washington National Forest is considering an increase in the yearly acreage and amount of logging, which would allow for potential increases in demand for "whole trees." But if biomass incineration also increases the rate of CO2 emissions, given climate change already in evidence, it could have negative domino-type effects for the forest plants, animals, air and water quality. The EPA rule will let the public know upfront how proposed incinerators will affect Virginia's air, water, climate and forests.

Wild Virginia's President, Nathan Van Hooser, and Wild Virginia member Peyton Coyner, a Nelson County resident, each filed affidavits in the motion to intervene. Peyton notes that, "I've hiked and camped in the national forests of Virginia for over a half century, and I've seen the changes - fewer brook trout, hazier views, more invasive plants and insects - which I think are at least partly due to a warming climate. But if we move too hastily on using biomass as a major source of energy, we might end up destroying our forests altogether, so it's important that when it's done, it's done right."

A May 17, 2010 letter to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi signed by 90 scientists supports the EPA action. "Replacement of fossil fuels with bioenergy does not directly stop carbon dioxide emissions from tailpipes or smokestacks. Although fossil fuel emissions are reduced or eliminated, the combustion of biomass replaces fossil emissions with its own emissions (which may even be higher per unit of energy because of the lower energy to carbon ratio of biomass)... clearing or cutting forests for energy, either to burn trees directly in power plants or to replace forests with bioenergy crops, has the net effect of releasing otherwise sequestered carbon into the atmosphere, just like the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. That creates a carbon debt which may reduce ongoing carbon uptake by the forest, and as a result, may increase net greenhouse gas emissions for an extended time period

con't page 4

## Wild Virginia Update

Letter from our Conservation Director, David Hannah

I was fortunate to take some vacation time in July, and my wife and I returned to the Adirondack Mountains in northern New York. We first traveled there in 1998, promptly fell in love with the region, and try to return when we can. This summer's week on Silver Lake was our third stay in these northern woods and mountains.

There are many things to love about the Adirondacks: numerous rivers, streams, and natural lakes; abundant wildlife; the northern trees and forests; the mountains themselves; and the trails that will take you to quiet, tucked away spots or to peaks and ridges with panoramic views. There are many similarities to the Appalachians of which I am so fond.

Perhaps the most striking thing to me is the sheer size of the Adirondacks. The New York state constitution was amended in 1892 to keep the area "forever wild." The 6 million acres in the park are almost equally divided between private and public ownership. The region is not untouched though. Like the great forests of the Appa-

lachians, almost every spot in the Adirondacks was logged prior to the 20th Century. In part, the denuded lands made protection by the state possible. After more than a century of regrowth though, the forests are expansive and reaching maturity in many areas. When I visit, I see true restoration of natural areas is possible, and simply removing or reducing human disturbance goes a long way toward making it happen.



The region is not without issues and challenges. There is often conflict about how intensively privately owned working forests should be managed. Tension sometimes arises when residents push for more development in and around existing communities. Motorized activities on lakes and in the woods, and the potential environmental impacts of both, are often debated. Non-native invasive plants and forest pests are present and must be addressed too.

(Since the hemlock woolly adelgid is not present, a real treat for me was seeing large, healthy hemlocks!) The reality though is this – the residents and the state continue to work very hard on strong protection of the natural resources while creating livable, desirable communities with economic opportunities for its citizens.

Many of these themes resonate for me as Wild Virginia continues work on the management plan for the George Washington National Forest. I feel very lucky to have the Adirondacks as a working example to look to. Though a mere 1.1 million acres in size, the GWNF is a true ecological gem – and must remain so. I've heard it said that the Shenandoah Mountain area of the GWNF provides the greatest backcountry setting along the eastern seaboard between the Great Smokies to the south and the Adirondacks to the north. I agree with the statement and try to repeat it whenever I can. It also motivates me to keep working on conserving and protecting the Appalachian Mountains in my own backyard.

## Volunteer Spotlight - Cynthia Hurst, Board Member

Cynthia joined Wild Virginia's board in 2006 and has been instrumental in key events and activities since then, such as the Treehugger's Ball, Earth Day Celebrations and the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival. She has worked with nonprofits for about 25 years and her wisdom and experience has greatly benefited Wild Virginia.

Cynthia grew up in the Shenandoah Valley and graduated from James Madison University with a BA in English and French. After college, she started with Clean Water Action as a door-to-door can-

vasser before becoming the director of their Baltimore office and later the Miami office. In Miami she worked to protect the Everglades and Florida Bay and also learned to scuba dive and ride her bike in traffic!

Cynthia returned to Virginia about 12 years ago, working first at the Wildlife Center of Virginia and later with WHTJ, the Charlottesville PBS station. She started Butterflies in Progress, LLC in 2006 and has assisted many local and national organizations with fundraising campaigns and events since that time--JABA, the Wayne Theatre, Habitat for Humanity, and Celebra-

tion of Community--to name just a few. Wild Virginia is fortunate to have the abilities, desire, and energy that Cynthia brings to the board.



*Ancient Mountain Sentinel*  
Volume XII, Number III - Summer 2010



David Hannah  
Conservation Director  
PO Box 1065  
Charlottesville, VA 22902  
(434) 971-1553  
<http://www.wildvirginia.org>  
[dhannah@wildvirginia.org](mailto:dhannah@wildvirginia.org)

#### Board of Directors

Nathan VanHooser — President  
Chris Bowlen — Vice President  
Jennifer Johnson — Secretary  
Eric Gilchrist — Treasurer

Cynthia Hurst  
Ernie Reed  
Kristin Taverna  
Spencer Thompson

Dana Gilbert — Newsletter Editor

#### DONATIONS:

Wild Virginia is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Please make checks payable to Wild Virginia and mail to PO Box 1065, Charlottesville, VA 22902. All donations are tax deductible to the extent of IRS law.

*Ancient Mountain Sentinel* is printed on 100% recycled, non-chlorine bleached paper. Your use of this or similar paper will prevent the destruction of native forests. **Recycle.... Pass this newsletter on to a friend!**

**PLEASE BUY RECYCLED PAPER, OTHERWISE YOU ARE NOT COMPLETING THE CYCLE!**

## Wild Virginia Hikes and Outings

All hike info also available on our website: <http://www.wildvirginia.org>

### A Full Outings Calendar : COME JOIN US!

#### Sunday, September 26 Chimney Hollow & Crawford Mountain

A 6.5 mile one way trip of moderate difficulty starts at 2000 ft with a gradual ascent through Chimney Hollow ravine, an area once rich in hemlocks, now dominated by white pine and laurel. The trail ascends toward Coalpit Knob affording several opportunities for good views. The trail ends when it joins Crawford Mountain trail at just over 3500 ft elevation. We'll continue south on Crawford Mountain Trail to meet up with our shuttle vehicles on State Road 688.

Meet at the trail head 9:30 AM. We'll then shuttle some of our vehicles to the trail end. Bad weather will cancel this trip so please check in with leader Eric Gilchrist, [ericgrv@gmail.com](mailto:ericgrv@gmail.com) or 434-882-3179.

Trailhead: Travel 18.4 miles on Rt 250 West of Staunton. The trail head is on the left (south) side of Rt 250. Park alongside the road. If you pass the brown forest sign for Braley pond you have missed the trail head. For carpool rides from Charlottesville area meet at 8:30 AM at Shenandoah Joe's Coffee on Rt. 250 just west of the UVA campus.



Hike leader Ernie Reed enjoying the June outing to Three Ridges Wilderness

#### Sunday, October 17 Groom's Ridge Trail

Fall colors will be at or close to their peak at higher elevations for this Wild Va outing. Enjoy the forest on a 9 mile hike of moderate difficulty. We will start on the Wild Oak Trail and walk 4.6 miles along Chestnut Ridge. Starting at about 1700 ft, this trail steadily ascends to 3250ft and offers good views to the south and west. We will head north then east on Grooms Ridge Trail. This trail has a series of ups and downs as we make our way along the ridge and a final descent to Tillman Road. To complete the loop back to the parking area, there is 0.5 mile (included in the 9 mile estimate) walk back on Tillman Road. Bring lunch, water and warm clothes.

Meet at 9:45 at the Wild Oak Trail Parking area near the North River Gap (Stokesville) entrance to the GWNF. From 250 west of Staunton, turn right and travel north on Rt 42 to Rt 760, about 5.5miles. Turn left(west) on 760 to Rt 747. Turn left on 747 then bear right onto Rt 730 to Stokesville. Turn left on Rt 718 enter the GWNF, stay on the paved road. The trail parking area will be on your right.

Carpooling from Charlottesville is available meeting promptly at 8:00 AM at Shenandoah Joe's Coffee on Rt. 250 just west of the UVA campus.

Please notify trip leader Chris Bowlen if you plan to come 540-289-6801; [bowlenchris@comcast.net](mailto:bowlenchris@comcast.net)





## Update on the Forest Management Plan for the GWNF

Forest planning continues for the George Washington National Forest (GWNF). Five public meetings were held in April to re-initiate the process. Since those meetings, an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) of Forest Service employees has continued to work on the plan. A draft Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be released late this year or in early 2011. The plan is the responsibility of Liz Agpaoa, the Regional Forester in Atlanta, who will review the plan and EIS that GWNF staff submits to her.

Among the tasks of the IDT is to develop a range of alternative plans for analysis and consideration. To date, six alternatives have been identified. One of the alternatives is “no change”, or simply continuing the current plan, which was completed in 1993. A second alternative is a “need for change” plan. This plan is based on internal analysis by GWNF staff with some input from public meetings. It addresses issues the Forest

Service identified in the Notice of Intent to resume planning, published on March 10 (see our Spring 2010 issue or visit our website for more details).

More work and analysis has been completed on the “need for change” alternative than any others at this point. Though other alternatives are under development and additional alternatives could be added, it appears the Forest Service has an investment in the “need for change” alternative. That is unfortunate, as it currently includes many undesirable characteristics. For instance, the number of acres identified as suitable for timber production would increase to 500,000 from the current amount of 350,000. Only four areas and about 20,000 acres would be recommended for wilderness consideration, a woefully inadequate proposal. About 8,000 acres in some inventoried roadless areas would be actively managed, salvage logging would be permitted in some proposed backcountry areas, and some areas of old growth would also be open

to harvesting.

There needs to be more analysis and development of alternatives that emphasize an “easy on the land” approach and minimize active management and resource extraction. To that end, the “Conservation Alternative” that Heartwood and Wild Virginia submitted to the Forest Service is being used as the basis for one of the plan alternatives (this and other formal comments are viewable on our website). This is a positive step, as a strong conservation plan must be seriously considered and fully analyzed along with all other alternatives. Wild Virginia and our conservation partners continue to work on the Forest Plan with the IDT, and will continue to push for appropriate and sound forest management. Stay tuned and please remain engaged as the process continues.

## Non-Native Invasive Plant Project



Doug Benson and Grahame Taylor, college students hired by Wild Virginia to inventory Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area

This summer, Wild Virginia began a survey of non-native invasive plants (NNIP) in the Ramsey's Draft Wilderness Area in the GWNF. Two local college students, Grahame Taylor from Eastern Mennonite University and Doug Benson from the Uni-

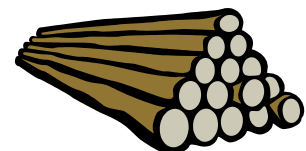
versity of Virginia, have been busy hiking the trails in Ramsey's Draft and using GPS units to record trail segments where they observed NNIPs. At this writing, the field work is essentially completed.

Wild Virginia is proud of this project. Although the Shenandoah Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society has conducted NNIP surveys along selected roads in the North River Ranger District for several years, this is the first organized effort to document invasive plants in any of the GWNF's six wilderness areas. Funding from the National Forest Foundation and collaboration with the Forest Service made the project possible. Reports, other materials and future plans will be forthcoming later this year.

## Biomass (from page 1)

and thereby undercut greenhouse gas reductions needed over the next several decades.”

What happens next? In the absence of a comprehensive energy bill that “clears the air,” the DC Circuit Court, or eventually the Supreme Court, may have to be the ones to “do the right thing” when it comes to the EPA's effort to accurately assess CO2 emissions.



## Species Spotlight - The Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)

Article by Eric Gilchrist

The majority of individuals will never have the good fortune to see a bobcat in its natural setting despite healthy populations in much of North America. They are extremely elusive and even veteran outdoorsmen only catch an occasional glimpse. That was true for three of us Wild Virginia board members up until the evening of June 1, 2010. We were en route to our meeting at the Greenstone Parking Overlook Milepost 8.8 on the Blue Ridge Parkway and in the GWNF to meet our fellow board members and David Hannah. As we were driving we came upon a crossing cat. When we got to within 30 feet, it had stopped to allow us 10 seconds to enjoy our first sighting of this extremely elusive creature. What joy we all felt.

Although bobcats are extremely secretive, shy and retiring, they do make noise, particularly during the breeding season. And if you've ever heard these sounds, you likely won't soon forget them. The shrill shrieks are much like a person screaming, or an extremely hungry infant voicing its displeasure at the lack of food.

In Virginia, the Bobcat can be found in almost every county except for the far southeast corner near Virginia Beach. The Bobcat resembles other species of the *Lynx* genus but is on average the smallest of the four. Its coat is generally tan to grayish brown, with black streaks on the body and dark bars on the forelegs and tail. Its spotted patterning acts as camouflage. The ears are black-tipped and pointed, with short black tufts.

The pupils are round, black circles and will widen during nocturnal activity to maximize light reception. The cat has sharp hearing and vision, and a good sense of smell. Bobcats are excellent swimmers capable of crossing large riv-

ers but, like most felines, prefer to stay dry. Although a talented climber, Bobcats spend most of their time in the underbrush.

The adult male Bobcat is 28 to 40 inches long, averaging 35 inches with a stubby 4 to 7 inches tail, which has a "bobbed" appearance and gives the species its name. Adult males usually



range from 16 to 30 pounds and females average about 20 pounds.

The Bobcat keeps on the move from three hours before sunset until about midnight and then again from before dawn until three hours after sunrise. Each night it will move from 2 to 7 miles along its habitual route.

Bobcat activities are confined to well-defined territories, which vary in size depending on gender and the distribution of prey. The home range is marked with feces, urine scent, and by clawing prominent trees in the area. In its territory the Bobcat will have numerous places of shelter: usually a main den, and several auxiliary shelters on the outer extent of its range, such as hollow logs, brush piles, thickets, or under rock ledges.

Bobcats are important predators, and they truly are a rich addition to the fauna of the outdoor world. The

Bobcat is opportunistic and will hunt animals of different sizes, and will adjust its hunting techniques accordingly. The Bobcat is able to go for long periods without food, but will eat heavily when prey is abundant. With small animals, such as rodents, squirrels, birds, fish and insects, it will hunt in areas known to be abundant in prey, and will lie, crouch, or stand and wait for victims to wander close. It will then pounce, grabbing its prey with its sharp, retractable claws. For slightly larger animals, such as rabbits, it will stalk from cover and wait until they come within 20 to 35 feet before rushing in to attack. It has been known to kill deer and can take down prey weighing up to eight times its own body weight.

Bobcats typically live 8 to 10 years. They generally begin breeding by their second summer, though females may start as early as their first year. A dominant male will travel with a female and mate with her several times, generally from winter until early spring.

The female raises the young alone. One to six kittens are born in April or May, after roughly 60 to 70 days of gestation. There may sometimes be a second litter, with births as late as September. The young are weaned at about 2 months, and within 3 to 5 months they begin to travel with their mother. They will be hunting by themselves by fall of their first year and usually disperse shortly thereafter.

We all hope that you get a chance to see one in the wild or at least hear one. For more information go the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/?s=050051>



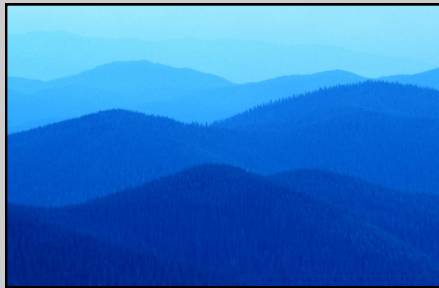
Photo by Gary Fleming

## Enter Wild Virginia's Photo Contest!

Do you have an amazing photo of the  
George Washington National Forest?

This fall, we will be holding our first ever photo contest and we want you to submit your photos! The winners will receive awesome prizes, including a free Wild Virginia membership and tickets to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival! Look for full contest details on our website in the coming weeks:

[www.wildvirginia.org](http://www.wildvirginia.org).



P.O. Box 1065  
Charlottesville, VA 22902  
[www.wildvirginia.org](http://www.wildvirginia.org)