



SPECIAL EDITION
**FRIENDS OF
BLACKWATER**

25 years of conservation, community & celebration

Honoring our past

.....
INSPIRING OUR FUTURE

A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

It is exciting that all of the 10,000-acre Blackwater Canyon is now in public ownership and accessible to everyone. "It's Our Canyon!"

The campaign to protect the Canyon has been a massive group effort all the way! When we were fighting to protect the Canyon Rail-Trail, the Forest Service got more than 12,000 comments from across the nation. When we sent out notices to everyone who had donated to Friends of Blackwater over the past 25-plus years, we needed more than 2,500 postcards!

As a refuge for rare species and as a world-class recreational and scenic resource, the Blackwater Canyon is beginning a new era of healing and opportunity. We have the tools to cherish, heal, lift up, and protect this amazing landscape. Let's join together to make it happen!

Judith A. Podd



LEADING THE WAY:

A DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE



WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER IN THE NEXT 25 YEARS?

"Well, I think we need to still rally around the Blackwater Canyon & say we want special protection, because it's such a special place. One protection would be, calling the Blackwater Canyon & surrounding acres on them a National Recreation Area."

WHAT LIGHTS YOU UP?

"Oh, Beautiful views. Animals. Nature. The natural world. Flora and Fauna of any kind."

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST LESSON NATURE HAS TAUGHT YOU?

"That things recover, you know, that this forest is a recovering forest, that Mother Nature will heal. Some things, not all things, but the trees will come back, and the Cheat Mountain salamanders returned to a desolate landscape that was once in the Blackwater, so there's hope."

WHAT IS ONE WORD THAT YOU WOULD DESCRIBE TUCHER COUNTY OR THE BLACKWATER CANYON?

"Magical."

SO HOW DID YOUR BACKGROUND INFLUENCE YOUR DEDICATION TO GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM AND WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO WEST VIRGINIA?

"I remember going in the woods with my grandmother when I was eight years old, picking wildflowers & having her name them and giving me little books to find the name—that was very inspirational."



THE MEASURE OF OUR MISSION

since 2000

Non-Profit: Friends of Blackwater

Campaign Period: The Year 2000 - Present Day

KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS

TOTAL
NUMBER OF
DONORS

3,412

NUMBER OF
NEWSLETTERS
PRINTED

76,000

NUMBER OF
FOUNDATIONS/
PARTNERS

132

NUMBER OF
PUBLIC
COMMENTS
TO AGENCIES

93,567

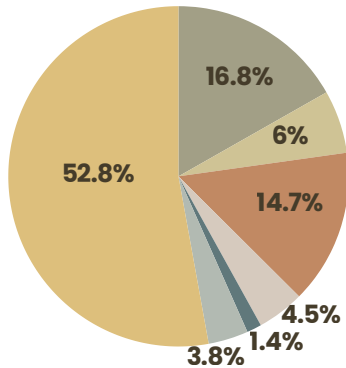
NUMBER OF
EMAIL
SUBSCRIBERS

4,871

NUMBER OF
SOCIAL
MEDIA
FOLLOWERS

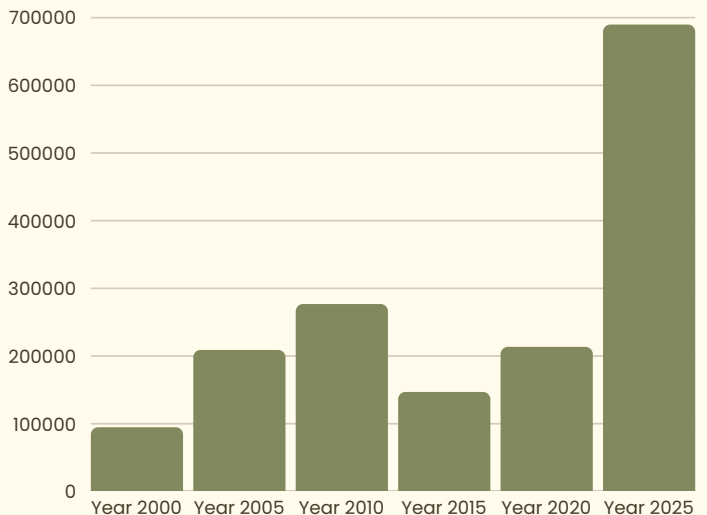
10,747

Sources of Income



- Watershed
- Heritage
- Trails
- Public Land
- Highways
- Climate Change
- General Support

Yearly Revenue (2000-OCT 2025)



FOB TRIVIA

HOW MANY ANIMALS
HAVE BEEN ADVOCATED
FOR IN THE WV
HIGHLANDS?

18

HOW MANY ACRES HAVE
BEEN PROTECTED OVER THE
LAST 25 YEARS?

7,325

MILES OF WATERWAYS
ADOPTED?

72.7

NUMBER OF INTERPRETIVE
HISTORIC TRAIL SIGNS
INSTALLED?

40

LARGEST INDIVIDUAL
DONORS OF ALL TIME

1. DONNA & CARROLL COOK
2. DR. FLORENCE MILLAR
3. RAFF AND LENORE POMERANCE
4. LINDA BUTLER
5. ANNETTE TANNER

MOST INDIVIDUAL
CONTRIBUTIONS OF ALL TIME

1. LAWRENCE FANNING
2. DOUG JOHNSON
3. FRANCES STEWART
4. SARA GANN
5. JOE DUMIRE

MILES OF TRAILS THAT
HAVE BEEN BUILT &
IMPROVED?

22.1

.....

108

MILES IN PLANNING

MOST ACTIONS TAKEN

1. JERRY PAYNE
2. WILLIAM STYER
3. KELLY RILEY
4. LOIS LUDWIG
5. GREGORY ESTEVE



HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER

1997

3,000 ACRES IN
BLACKWATER CANYON
SOLD TO A
TIMBER COMPANY

2000

FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER
FORMED

2002

RIVER ROAD TRAIL
(500 ACRES) ADDED
TO BLACKWATER
FALLS STATE PARK
BY GOVERNOR WISE

2003

HISTORY WORKSHOP IN
THOMAS FUNDED BY THE
WV HUMANITIES
COUNCIL LEADS TO THE
JR CLIFFORD PROJECT

2005

FOB LAWSUIT CREATES
PRESERVES FOR
ENDANGERED CHEAT
SNAIL LEADING TO
ACQUISITION OF 4000
ACRES IN CHEAT
CANYON FOR PUBLIC USE



2006

FIGHT TO KEEP FEDERAL
PROTECTION FOR
"GINNY" BEGINS

2008

FOB & WILDERNESS
SOCIETY STOP 3
FEDERAL GAS LEASE
SALES ON MON
NATIONAL FOREST

2009

FOB BEGINS EDUCATIONAL
CAMPAIGN FOR THE BATS
BEING DECIMATED BY
WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME

2010

BLACKWATER CANYON
RAIL TRAIL LOGGING HAUL
ROAD PLAN DROPPED

2012

NEW HOME FOR LIBERTY
PLAY ON FOUNDING OF
THE STATE OF WV
SHOWN STATEWIDE



2018

FOB STOPS MASSIVE
'PUMP STORAGE' COMPLEX FOR
BIG RUN BOG IN THE
BLACKWATER CANYON

2019

FOB PARTNERS WITH
WV HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY
& LOCAL BUSINESSES ON 'GO
NORTH' CAMPAIGN FOR
CORRIDOR H

2020

FOB BEGINS INVASIVE SPECIES
REMOVAL ALONG 3.8 MILES OF
THE BLACKWATER RAIL TRAIL +
THE EXTENDED BLACKWATER
LOOP TRAIL IS FUNDED ALONG
THE SAME ROUTE

2023

ARC GRANT APPROVED TO
FUND 100-MILE WV MTN RR
TRAIL FROM THOMAS, WV TO
CUMBERLAND, MD

2025

DAVIS RIVERWALK TRAIL
COMPLETED TO GAGING
STATION, BEGINNING THE
8-MILE BLACKWATER LOOP
TRAIL FROM DAVIS TO THOMAS
THRU BLACKWATER FALLS
STATE PARK

12/30/2024

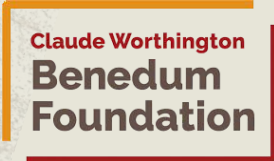
**BLACKWATER CANYON FINALLY
PRESERVED INTO PUBLIC USE**

2025

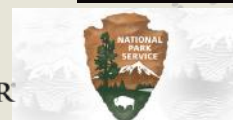
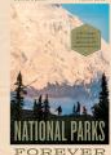
FOB PARTNERS WITH
HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY,
SIERRA CLUB, & TUCKER
UNITED TO OPPOSE
PROPOSED DATA CENTER IN
TUCKER COUNTY



conservation COLLABORATORS



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advertising for the environment





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FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER (FOB) IS A NONPROFIT CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE UNIQUE ECOLOGY, SCENIC LANDSCAPES, OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES, MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE HIGH ALLEGHENY MOUNTAINS OF WEST VIRGINIA.

THROUGH PUBLIC OUTREACH, ADVOCACY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION, FOB ALSO SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE REGION.

.....

KENT MASON

PROTECTING HERITAGE & NATURE IN THE HIGH ALLEGHENIES

FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER REACHED A 25-YEAR GOAL OF SECURING PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF BLACKWATER CANYON – MISSION ACCOMPLISHED! TODAY, WE CONTINUE THAT LEGACY THROUGH PROJECTS AND CAMPAIGNS THAT PROTECT THE REGION'S NATURAL AND HISTORIC TREASURES.

J.R. CLIFFORD PROJECT



One of FOB's earliest and most impactful heritage initiatives was the J.R. Clifford Project, honoring John Robert Clifford, West Virginia's first African American attorney. Clifford was also a civil rights pioneer, educator, and publisher who successfully argued a landmark 1898 case on behalf of teacher Carrie Williams. This case challenged racial inequality and wage discrimination in schools, leaving a lasting legacy on civil rights in West Virginia.

THE HERITAGE PROJECT

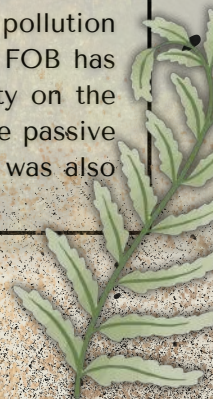


Our Heritage Project has since expanded to include 40 historical interpretive signs based on railroad development throughout Tucker County. These signs have recently been replicated for a traveling "Tucker Heritage Art Exhibit," and cover the Thomas to Douglas Rail Trail, William Avenue in Davis, the Davis City Park, and the Blackwater Falls State Park waterfront. Support for this signage came from the West Virginia Humanities, WVDEP, The Benedum Foundation, and AFNHA.

WATER QUALITY



True to its mission, FOB has also long been committed to restoring clean water in the Blackwater Canyon, addressing legacy Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) pollution from early coal mining starting with the North Fork Watershed Project. FOB has since secured multiple WVDEP grants to plan an active treatment facility on the North Fork of the Blackwater River. Additional clean water efforts include passive treatment at Beaver Creek, another key tributary. New signage on AMD was also recently created as an educational tool.



LEGACY

Ultimately, FOB's main legacy is to protect biodiversity while continually supporting public land access and outdoor recreation. On the ground, FOB is continually improving the Blackwater Rail Trail—removing invasive plants and maintaining the trail for hikers and cyclists that includes advocacy for the five million dollar restoration of the historic stonecut Big Run Culvert. In 2022, FOB additionally published their first comprehensive guidebook featuring maps and tours of public lands in the Blackwater watershed.

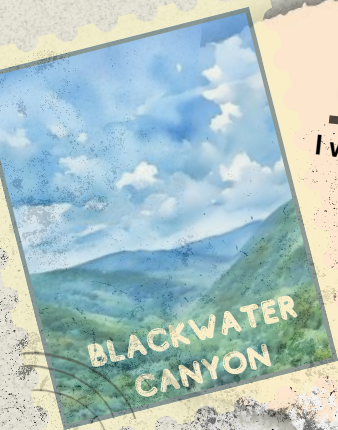


LOOKING AHEAD – THE BLACKWATER LOOP TRAIL

Looking ahead, FOB is leading several ambitious trail projects. The Blackwater Loop Trail is now underway, beginning with the 0.7-mile Davis Riverwalk section. This trail will eventually connect Davis, Blackwater Falls State Park, and the federal Blackwater Rail Trail, with progress being made to complete the Loop from Thomas back to Davis, avoiding busy Route 32.

WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAIN RAIL TRAIL

Even more visionary is the 100-mile West Virginia Mountain Railroad Trail. Currently in the planning phase, it aims to connect Thomas, WV to Cumberland, MD via former rail grades—linking the region to the Great Allegheny Passage, and the C&O Canal Trail, with sights on earning National Historic Trail status.



IF YOU COULD TIME TRAVEL TO ANY TIME IN TUCKER COUNTY, WHEN WOULD YOU GO? AND WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

I would time travel to 25 years in the future and see how much more beautiful the Blackwater Canyon will look from Lindy Point

-Judy Rodd



FROM VISION TO VICTORY



2002 Successful community organizing pressured Governor Wise to add 500 acres to Blackwater Falls State Park. This purchase expanded recreational opportunities and made accessing Blackwater Falls State Park from the Town of Davis easier than ever (and we have plans to make it even more accessible).

2010 After an eight-year long battle, Allegheny Wood Products was defeated in their attempt to turn the Thomas Rail Trail into a logging road. Friends of Blackwater ran an effective public campaign advocating for our area's unique species and growing recreational economy, which would've been harmed had this attempt succeeded.

2014 The Cheat Canyon campaign, which resulted in the purchase of nearly 4,000 acres, established the Cheat Canyon Wildlife Management Area. We couldn't have done it without a strong regional coalition of environmental advocates, including the Sierra Club, the Cheat Lake Environment and Recreation Association, and the Nature Conservancy.

2018 The Big Run Pumped Storage Hydro Project, which would've seized over 1,200 acres, ruined the magical Big Run Bog, and disturbed the Mill Run watershed, was run out of Tucker County after loud and passionate backlash from community members.

A LEGACY OF ACHIEVEMENT



2019 Since its resurgence in 2019, the four-lane highway Corridor H, which has been looming over our area for the past thirty years, has yet to have a finalized route. The community-favored Northern Alternative is officially being studied, and the permitting process is scheduled to be finished by August 2026. As usual, FOB is working hard to make sure comment periods are widely known and that local residents' knowledge is considered by our state government.

2024 In December of 2024, Friends of Blackwater's founding mission, to unify the Blackwater Canyon under public ownership, was completed! This massive undertaking was a quarter century in the making, and wouldn't have been possible without our campaign and the dedication of former Senator Joe Manchin.

2025 Fundamental Data proposed a natural gas-fueled power plant, built for powering data centers near Thomas, WV; their air quality permit had significant redactions. FOB is working with experts, coordinating with concerned parties, and researching legal avenues to make sure this horrendous idea never goes beyond the blueprint.

NOW With the Blackwater Canyon now publicly owned, we'd like to see the Blackwater Canyon be designated as a National Recreation Area (NRA), like that of Spruce Knob and Seneca Rocks. An NRA emphasizes recreational activities, like biking, fishing, hunting, kayaking, and more, as opposed to extractive industries.

25 years OF TEAMWORK



STAFF & WORKERS

1. VIVIAN STOCKMAN
2. LINDA COOPER
3. JUDY RODD, DIRECTOR
4. JOHN M. BROWN
5. VALERIE LITTLE
6. AIMEE DUNCAN
7. BRANDAE MULLINS
8. SANDY FISHER
9. BETSY LUSHER
10. LORI HALDEMAN
11. KIM BROUGHTON
12. NANCY SPENCER
13. HOLLY ASH
14. CHRISTINE KOZAN
15. ROBIN VANOVER
16. KATE LEARY
17. COLIN MATTESON
18. JOCELYN PHARES
19. CHEYENNE CARTER
20. EMMIE CORNELL
21. SEAN COFFERS
22. COLIN MATTESON
23. IAN SMITH
24. DAVID YOUNG
25. SARAH CARTRON
26. SAMANTHA MILLER
27. FRANK GEBHARD
28. AARON GRAHAM
29. ATLEE WISE
30. BRADY O'BRIEN
31. CHELSEA ICE-TOOTHMAN
32. IZABELLA HUBBARD
33. LOKI KERN
34. LESLEY STOKES
35. SHANNON GRAY
36. JULIE PALAS
37. JOSH STEVENS

VISTAS

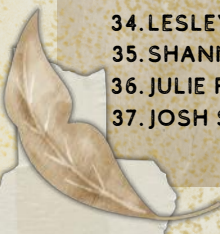
1. EMILY SAMARGO
2. JANEL FARON
3. CADE ARCHELUTA
4. MEREDITH BAXTER
5. SETH PITT
6. LIZ SALSURY
7. ATHEY LUTZ
8. DEREK NAPERIAS
9. NICK FIORINO
10. JOSH NEASE
11. CORRIN EVANS
12. EVAN SUPAK
13. NICK EATON
14. LISA PORTER
15. RACHELLE THORNE
16. JOYCE EDGELL
17. JANA PYLES
18. HANNAH FURBEE
19. BEN WIERCINSKI
20. ANDY HERRMANN
21. KATIE DOPKOWSKI
22. HANNAH SPENCER
23. ILONA VOLKER
24. LAUREN PAYNE
25. SAVANNAH WING
26. MONICA ZABROSKI
27. ALICIA ERJAVEC
28. MEGAN LOWE
29. NORA SHERIDAN
30. MARIA ARMADA
31. ALICIA ERJAVEC

INTERNS

1. DOUG GILBERT
2. CARRIE JAMISON
3. BRIAN BELLEW
4. BRIANA ALL
5. LOGAN THORNE
6. NATE MCPEAK
7. NORA SHERIDAN
8. HANNAH FURBEE
9. KATHRINE NYDEN
10. CARRIE NYDEN

CONSULTANTS

1. DAVID VAGO
2. CAITLYN MCCLURE
3. KELLY MEARS
4. JASON LITTEN
5. DUSTIN TOOTHMAN
6. BUCK NEELY
7. TIM DANEHY
8. COURTNEY ZIMMERMAN
9. MATTHEW POWELL
10. LUCAS DAVIS
11. CAITLYN HARLESS
12. DESTRY JARVIS
13. JIM CHRISTIE
14. PAUL CORBIT BROWN
15. BRAD BASIL
16. WINSTON SMITH
17. ELIZABETH BYERS
18. JULIE ZICKAFOOSE
19. ZACH ADAMS
20. SAM & JOE HERMANN
21. AKRF
22. NICK FEDORKO
23. DOUG TILLEY
24. CONSULTECON
25. MATT WARD





LEGAL REPRESENTATION

1. ERIC GLITZENSTEIN, ESQ.
2. JOSH BARRETT, ESQ.
3. JASON HUBER, ESQ.
4. JIM ZIMAROWSKI, ESQ.
5. BILL EUBANKS, ESQ.

VOLUNTEERS

1. LON MARSHALL
2. JOE DUMIRE
3. GLENDA MARSHALL
4. KENT MASON
5. KITTY DOOLEY (JR CLIFFORD)

TUCKER PRODUCTIONS

SHOOTOUT AT THE DEPOT

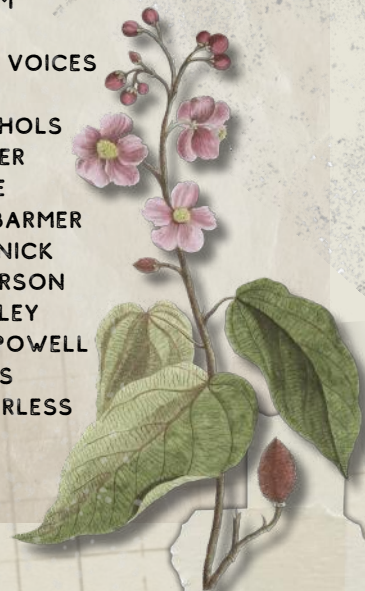
- A. MIKE MILLER
- B. GERRY MILNES
- C. TOM RODD
- D. WILLIAM PETERSON
- E. ELAINE GEORGE
- F. RUTH MELNICK
- G. PAT A. NICHOLS
- H. CASEY RUCKER
- I. JAKE KOPEC
- J. SAVANNAH WILKINS
- K. LOWELL MOORE
- L. DEBBIE MCHENRY
- M. SARAH FLETCHER
- N. DEBBIE STEVENS
- O. CHEYENNE ELSWICK
- P. PRISCILLA RODD
- Q. CAROL JACKSON

MOONSHINE MEMORIES

- A. ROBERT BASTRESS, ESQUIRE
- B. DR. WILLIAM HAL GORBY
- C. SILAS BRIGHT
- D. BARBARA ALFORD
- E. RONNIE BEALL
- F. MITCHELLE BEALL
- G. RONALD BROWN
- H. SUSAN CALLAHAN
- I. DAVE ESCH
- J. CARL HARR
- K. DANIEL HEDGES
- L. JAKE KOPEC
- M. MIKE MILLER
- N. SUSAN MOORE
- O. PAT A. NICHOLS
- P. RAFE POMERANCE
- Q. DAVID ROBERTS
- R. MIKE ROSENAU
- S. CASEY RUCKER
- T. DIANA VERA
- U. TOM YOCUM

EARLY MINING VOICES

- A. CHUCK NICHOLS
- B. FRANK SLIDER
- C. CHIP CHASE
- D. AARON Q. BARMER
- E. RUTHIE MELNICK
- F. MARK ANDERSON
- G. JOHN STEALEY
- H. MATTHEW POWELL
- I. LUCAS DAVIS
- J. CAITLYN HARLESS



Blackwater area should remain a state treasure

I am writing to register my opposition to the U.S. Forest Service plan to allow a commercial logging haul road along the Blackwater Canyon Trail.

Surely, before any further plans are made studies must be done as to the impact on rare species, on the river, to historic sites, to trail users and to the growing tourism economy.

Our Blackwater Canyon should be protected — not exploited. I have visited Blackwater State Park several times and feel it is a West Virginia treasure (as well as a national treasure) that we must take care of now and in the future.



WILDERNESS & WONDER



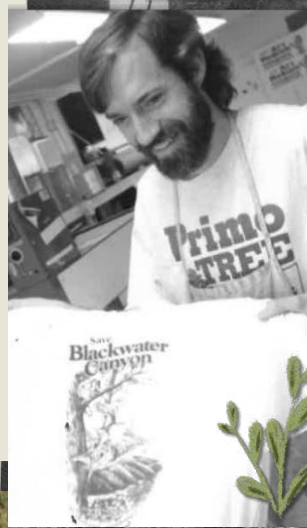
Berkeley Springs, WV

Keep pristine quality of Blackwater Canyon

Re: Bill Shields, Mon Forest Supervisor
I'm writing to you in regard to the Blackwater River Canyon trail.

I have traveled throughout Europe, the Caribbean, and the United States in the military and have seen no other place with any more beauty and uniqueness than the Blackwater Canyon.

I am opposed to any commercial traffic on this trail that in my opinion would be shortsighted and would do damage to this God-given gift to West Virginia for years to come.



Jackson outlines plans for Blackwater Canyon

CHARLESTON (AP) — Democratic gubernatorial candidate Lloyd Jackson wants to make the Blackwater Canyon part of Blackwater Falls State Park, either through negotiations with the owner or use of the state's eminent domain powers.

The goal is part of his "Forever Wild West Virginia" program announced Sunday. The program would identify and prioritize for conservation "those special places and public access sites in West Virginia that should be protected," according to a campaign statement.

His program would coordinate the development of a multi-agency natural resource mitigation plan. "Private corporations own many large tracts of undeveloped lands in our state, many of which are closed to public use and access. West Virginia has no comprehensive or consistent approach for the use of mitigation funds to offset potential fines that become



8-B THE DOMINION POST SATURDAY, JAN. 12, 2008

Manchin budget includes Blackwater Canyon purchase

CHARLESTON — Gov. Joe Manchin wants lawmakers to provide \$5 million to purchase a portion of the Blackwater Canyon.

The Tucker County attraction has been a target for purchase since Allegheny Wood Products acquired 3,000 acres along the canyon in 1997.

Manchin's legislative liaison, Joe Martin, says the administration is working with the Trust for Public Land. The money was listed in Manchin's proposed budget for next fiscal year.



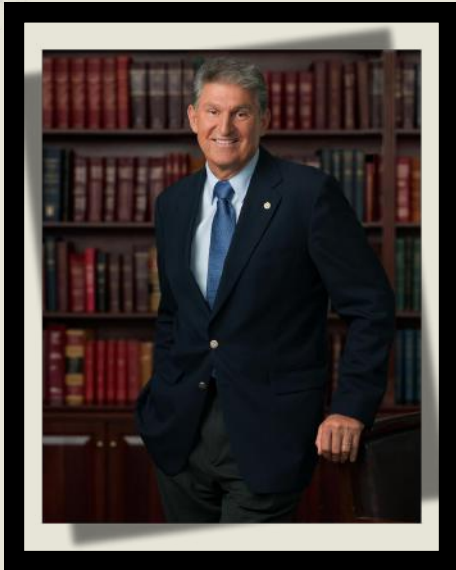
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KENT MASON

A Dream Fulfilled: **CELEBRATING BLACKWATER CANYON'S RETURN TO PUBLIC HANDS**

For more than two decades, Friends of Blackwater and our partners have worked tirelessly toward one goal: returning the majestic Blackwater Canyon to public control. This year, that dream has finally been realized — thanks in large part to Senator Joe Manchin, whose leadership and persistence have brought this historic conservation victory to life.



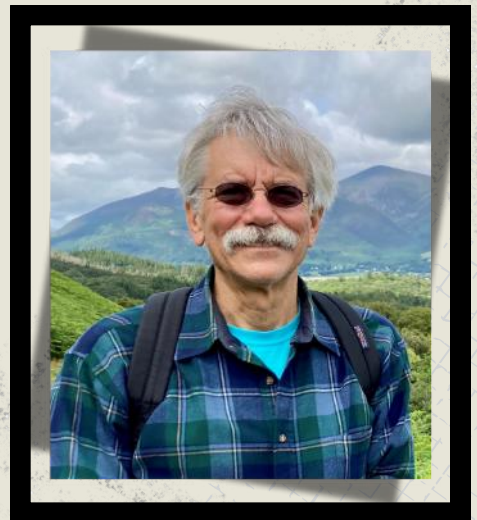
Senator Joe Manchin

In 2005, then-Governor Manchin made a promise to the people of West Virginia that he would find a way to bring the canyon under public stewardship. True to his word, he never stopped working to make it happen. Nearly twenty years later, Senator Manchin kept that commitment by securing funding in the federal budget to acquire the canyon through the Monongahela National Forest. His vision and dedication ensured that one of West Virginia's most treasured landscapes — home to the Blackwater River, iconic trails, and rich wildlife habitat — will be protected for generations to come.

Friends of Blackwater extends our deepest gratitude to Senator Manchin for his unwavering support of public lands and for understanding that protecting Blackwater Canyon is not just about preserving natural beauty, but about safeguarding a vital part of West Virginia's identity and outdoor heritage.

CELEBRATING RAILS-TO-TRAILS PIONEER PETER HARNIK

Friends of Blackwater is honored to recognize Peter Harnik — a national leader in the Rails-to-Trails movement and creator of the new documentary *From Rails to Trails*. As co-founder of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, and the Center for City Park Excellence at the Trust for Public Land, Peter has dedicated his life to transforming historic rail corridors into public greenways. Over the past 35 years, he has explored and studied more than 200 rail-trails across 45 states, capturing the power of recreation, history, and community. His lifelong advocacy embodies the spirit of Blackwater Canyon's rebirth, and we are proud to welcome him as a featured speaker at our upcoming celebration.



Peter Harnik



Friends of Blackwater

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