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2017- EXTREME APPALACHIA!

Mode of Program Participation

Community Organizing and Educational Programming

Participation Type

Roundtable

Session Title

Grassroots Forest Defense: Past, Present, and Future Models

Session Abstract or Summary

This roundtable draws together leading activists and thinkers to discuss citizen efforts to protect the Appalachian region's National Forests. These federal lands encompass over 6 million acres of the globe's richest temperate forests, and contain countless biological treasures. Appalachian citizens have mounted innovative and effective grassroots campaigns to protect many of these lands from clearcutting and other large-scale threats. The panel includes perspectives from West Virginia's Monongahela, Virginia's George Washington, and North Carolina's Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests. The U.S. Forest Service is currently revising its management plan for the Pisgah and Nantahala, and grassroots activists Rob and Mary Kelly, Will Harlan, and Josh Kelly will report on recent developments and citizen efforts there. Forest scholars Kathryn Newfont and Chris Bolgiano will frame these and other protectionist efforts in broad historical and contemporary contexts, drawing on research and experience in the Monongahela and George Washington. The panel includes biology, forestry, and history expertise along with its activist "reports from the field." Its many award-winning activists, writers, and thinkers will offer ideas about future challenges and strategies alongside past and present efforts.

[Kathryn Newfont, University of Kentucky](#)

[Chris Bolgiano, James Madison University](#)

[Will Harlan, Friends of Big Ivy](#)

[Josh Kelly, MountainTrue](#)

[Mary Sauls Kelly, Madison County Forest Watch](#)

[Rob Kelly, Madison County Forest Watch](#)

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The View from Monongahela: Appalachians Making History

Presentation #1 Abstract or Summary

Newfont will discuss the "Monongahela case," a landmark suit brought by West Virginians that changed U.S. forest management policy in the 1970s and continues to shape it in the present day. Activism in response to the Pisgah, Nantahala, and George Washington National Forest management plans discussed in the other presentations is all made possible by the 1976 National Forest Management Act. The act, precipitated by the successful anti-clearcutting Monongahela suit, requires public input to national forest management planning. West Virginians' influence on national forest policy thus continues to be powerfully felt on the 40th anniversary of this watershed legislation.

At-A-Glance Bio- Presenter #1

Kathryn Newfont is with the University of Kentucky history department and Appalachian

Studies program. Her first book, *Blue Ridge Commons: Environmental Activism and Forest History in Western North Carolina*, looked at wilderness, petroleum, and clearcut timber harvesting on the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests in the 1970s-1980s. It won ASA's 2012 Weatherford Award for Non-fiction and the 2012 Thomas Wolfe Literary Award. Her recent project, *The Land Speaks: Voices from the Intersection of Oral and Environmental History*, co-edited with Debbie Lee of the University of Washington, is forthcoming from Oxford University Press (expected fall 2017). She is currently researching the "Monongahela Case," a landmark suit brought by West Virginians that changed U.S. forest management policy in the 1970s and continues to shape it the present day. In addition to her scholarship, she has worked with environmental organizations such as the Western North Carolina Alliance, Friends of Big Ivy, and Madison County Forest Watch, as well as the Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership.

Presentation #2 Title

The View from the George Washington National Forest: Our Biggest Carbon Commons in the East

Presentation #2 Abstract or Summary

The U.S. Forest Service finalized its management plan for the George Washington National Forest in 2014. Chris Bolgiano will reflect on her experience with the planning process, her assessment of the final plan, and her ideas for future forest protection efforts. Fracking threatened the George Washington during the public process, and "local opposition" helped prevent its going forward. A planned pipeline still may trouble these commons woods. But the Appalachian national forests sequester carbon, and this role as carbon sink may offer possibilities for future protection. Our National Forests, if left alone to operate as carbon sinks, may be our best regional defense against climate change.

At-A-Glance Bio- Presenter #2

Chris Bolgiano's writing about Appalachian forests has won numerous awards. [*Living in the Appalachian Forest: True Tales of Sustainable Forestry*](#), (Stackpole Books, 2002), won the Southern Environmental Law Center's Reed Memorial Award for Outstanding Writing on the Southern Environment, 2003 and the [*Virginia Outdoor Writers Association's*](#) Excellence in Craft Contest. Her other books include **Southern Appalachian Celebration: In Praise of Ancient Mountains, Old-Growth Forests, and Wilderness (2011)**; and **The Appalachian Forest, A Search For Roots and Renewal (1998)** Her first book, [*The Eastern Cougar: Historic Accounts, Scientific Investigations, and New Evidence*](#), compiled – for the first time – dozens of confirmations of cougars living wild in the East in recent decades. She also edited entitled [*Mighty Giants: An American Chestnut Anthology*](#), published in 2007. Chris has long been an environmental activist involved in forest issues, especially with the George Washington National Forest near her home. She has written travel articles for the **New York Times** and **Washington Post**, investigative reports for a wide variety of environmental magazines, and radio commentaries for National Public Radio's *Living on Earth*. Chris also served as Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarian at James Madison University.

Presentation #3 Title

The View from Big Ivy: Protecting Treasures in the Pisgah

Presentation #3 Abstract or Summary

Will Harlan will reflect on the Friends of Big Ivy's efforts to use the Pisgah-Nantahala management planning process to secure permanent protection for Big Ivy's old-growth forests and rare plants. Harlan founded Friends of Big Ivy, and has spearheaded citizen efforts to gain wilderness protection for the section. Though several western North Carolina county governments passed resolutions against additional wilderness in their area, Friends of Big Ivy secured support for the Big Ivy wilderness proposal from the Buncombe County Commissioners.

At-A-Glance Bio- Presenter #3

Will Harlan is founder and lead organizer for Friends of Big Ivy, a grassroots community organization working to protect 11,000 acres of old-growth forest, wilderness, and rare species habitat in Southern Appalachia. He is an award-winning journalist, and for sixteen years, he has served as editor in chief of Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine. He also has written for National Geographic Adventure and appeared in Sports Illustrated, The New York Times, and on The Oprah Winfrey Show. His book *Untamed: The Wildest Woman in America* was a New York Times Best Seller and a Barnes & Noble Discover Award Finalist. It was named one of The Daily Beast's Top Ten Books of 2014 and one of Amazon's Top 100 Books of 2014. It also won the Society of Environmental Journalist's Rachel Carson Book Award and the Langum Charitable Trust's Malott Prize. Harlan is also one of the country's top trail runners. He is the five-time champion of the Mount Mitchell 40-Mile Challenge, a race to the top of the highest peak in the East. He holds the record for the fastest unsupported run of the Appalachian Trail through Great Smoky Mountains National Park. He was the 2009 champion of the Caballo Blanco Copper Canyon 50-Mile Ultramarathon, made famous by the bestselling book *Born to Run*. He founded the nonprofit Barefoot Seeds to help Mexico's indigenous Tarahumara continue living and running in their ancestral canyons. Harlan is the subject of the feature-length, award-winning documentary *El Chivo*. Harlan, his wife, and their two sons live on an off-grid farm in the mountains of North Carolina, where he milks goats, keeps bees, raises chickens, and grows most of his fruits and vegetables.

Presentation #4 Title

Presentation #4 Abstract or Summary

As Public Lands Field Biologist with the Western North Carolina Alliance and later MountainTrue, Josh Kelly has played a leading role in the forest management planning process for the Nantahala and Pisgah. He advocates for responsible forest decision-making and works closely with both the Forest Service and with grassroots citizens' groups such as Madison County Forest Watch and Friends of Big Ivy. With an eye on both biology and politics, in this field report Josh offers his region-wide perspective on challenges and opportunities in the forest management planning process.

At-A-Glance Bio- Presenter #4

Land Josh Kelly is Public Lands Field Biologist with MountainTrue, western North Carolina's leading environmental protection organization. Josh was born in Madison County, N.C., and went to school at UNC Asheville, earning a degree in biology. He then worked for the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition, where he focused on identifying remnant old-growth forests on public land, and at WildLaw, where he worked to promote ecological restoration as the new paradigm of National Forest management. Josh has also helped the Forest Service conduct rare plant surveys and save hemlocks from hemlock woolly adelgid. At MountainTrue, Josh monitors logging and development issues on public land and provide site-specific, scientific information to promote ecological restoration and oppose ecologically damaging management. "We live in a time when the human footprint on the planet is bigger than ever and our need to come together to solve environmental problems is urgent. Public lands comprise the largest and highest quality natural areas in this great country and are truly priceless. The most rewarding work I have done has involved helping to steer Forest Service management towards a paradigm where we as a society give back to the land, rather than just take", says Josh.

Presentation #5 Title

The View from Bluff Mountain: End of an Era?

Presentation #5 Abstract or Summary

Rob and Mary Kelly have explored and advocated for Appalachian forests as a team since they met at a fiddle festival in Virginia in 1984. They moved to a small farm adjacent to a remote section of Pisgah National Forest when Mary accepted a job with the regional grassroots group Western North Carolina Alliance in 1988. They were soon schooled in grassroots forest organizing by their feisty neighbors in the Shelton Laurel community, who had already stood together against several USFS projects, as well as by the many members of WNC Alliance during the Alliance's successful "Cut the Clearcutting" campaign and Forest Task Force efforts. Their combined experience in forestry, ecology and rural sensibilities has forged a powerful partnership. Shortly after Mary left her job with WNCA in 1995, the Kellys became volunteer leaders in a coalition that stopped a large logging and road development plan aimed at Bluff Mountain on Pisgah National Forest near Hot Springs, Madison County NC. They reflect on their decades of experience working to protect Bluff Mountain, as well as on recent developments affecting Bluff in the forest management planning process.

At-A-Glance Bio- Presenter #5

Mary Sauls Kelly is from California, earned a B.S. in Biology from UC Santa Barbara (1978), and worked as a field biologist on threatened and endangered species for 5 years in California and Nevada before returning to graduate school in 1983. She earned a PhD in Ecology in 1988 at the University of Georgia. Seeking to move to the Appalachian mountains she took a job as Coordinator for the WNC Alliance in 1988. Her work included grassroots organizing, media campaigns, analyzing Forest Service documents, drafting appeals and participating in the formulation of 1994 Amendment to the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Plan. She also taught Ecology as an adjunct at UNC Asheville. She was a coordinator of a national gathering of clearcutting opponents in Asheville as well as a large conference on Eastern Old Growth Forests. Along with Rob, she helped lead the Bluff Mountain campaign (1995-97) and found the Bluff Mountain Music Festival. Last spring, she and Josh Kelly worked together on the Bluff Mountain BioBlitz that provided new information to the Forest Service about the biological diversity of Bluff Mountain.

Presentation #6 Title

The View from Bluff Mountain: End of an Era?

Presentation #6 Abstract or Summary

Rob and Mary Kelly have explored and advocated for Appalachian forests as a team since they met at a fiddle festival in Virginia in 1984. They moved to a small farm adjacent to a remote section of Pisgah National Forest when Mary accepted a job with the regional grassroots group Western North Carolina Alliance in 1988. They were soon schooled in grassroots forest organizing by their feisty neighbors in the Shelton Laurel community, who had already stood together against several USFS projects, as well as by the many members of WNC Alliance during the Alliance's successful "Cut the Clearcutting" campaign and Forest Task Force efforts. Their combined experience in forestry, ecology and rural sensibilities has forged a powerful partnership. Shortly after Mary left her job with WNCA in 1995, the Kellys became volunteer leaders in a coalition that stopped a large logging and road development plan aimed at Bluff Mountain on Pisgah National Forest near Hot Springs, Madison County NC. They reflect on their decades of experience working to protect Bluff Mountain, as well as on recent developments affecting Bluff in the forest management planning process.

At-A-Glance Bio- Presenter #6

Rob Kelly is an Alabama native and 1981 graduate (B.S.) of the Auburn University School of Forestry. He worked for several years as a procurement forester for a lumber company in north Florida that purchased timber off the Appalachian National Forest. He also worked as a technician at the University of Georgia's Institute of Ecology and Savannah River Ecology Lab. He volunteered as one of the many foresters that were active with the WNC Alliance in their efforts to reform US Forest Service practices. He also was a leader in the campaign to save Bluff Mountain, a co-founder of the Bluff Mountain Music Festival, and the instigator of the Hot Springs Mountain Club and a new network of foot trails in the Bluff Mountain area.



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Appalachian Mountains -

Appalachian Mountains - Geology: The Appalachians are among the oldest mountains on Earth, born of powerful upheavals within the terrestrial crust and sculpted by the ceaseless action of water upon the surface. The two types of rock that characterize the present Appalachian ranges tell much of the story of the mountains' long existence. First there are the most ancient crystalline rocks. Between about 1.1 billion and 541 million years ago, during the Precambrian era, long periods of sedimentation and violent eruptions alternated to create rocks and then subject them to Previous (Apostolic Succession). Next (Appearance and Reality). The Appalachian Mountains are a vast system of North American mountain ranges. They lie partly in Canada, but mostly in the United States, forming a zone, from 150-500 kilometers (approx. 90 to 300 miles) wide, running 2,400 km (1,500 miles) south and westward from Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada to central Alabama in the United States, with foothills in northeastern Mississippi. The northernmost mainland portion ends at Quebec's Monongahela National Forest. View from the slopes of Back Allegheny Mountain looking east. Visible are Allegheny Mountain (middle distance) and Shenandoah Mountain (far distance). The latter is in the George Washington National Forest of Virginia. The Monongahela National Forest includes some major landform features such as the Allegheny Front and the western portion of the Ridge-and-valley Appalachians. Within the forest are most of the highest mountain peaks in the state, including the highest, Spruce Knob (4,863 ft), also the highest point in the Alleghenies.