

Battling for the bat

DEP plan is model for 13-state guidelines

By Tom Aluise

About 10 years ago, federal regulators expressed concern that coal-producing states weren't doing enough to protect the endangered



Fala

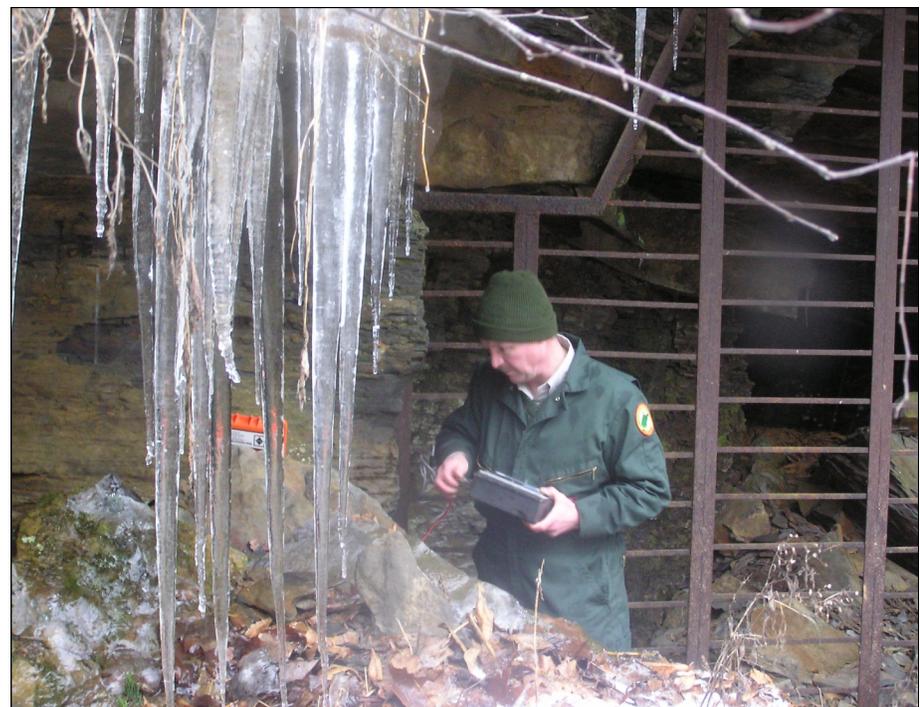
Indiana bat from the potential harmful effects of surface mining. West Virginia's Department of Environmental Protection listened and took action.

"We had some existing programs with protective measures but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said we needed to do more," said Bob Fala, a wildlife analyst with the DEP's Division of Mining and Reclamation. "We had to find out what we needed to do and incorporate it into our state mining permit."

That began a process early this decade that eventually brought West Virginia to the national forefront in its efforts to protect the Indiana bat from possible environmental hazards.

"In 2002 we started working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Elkins," Fala said. "We started going

up there and they were coming down here. The secret was to engage them and develop some guidance. We came up with a sort of cookbook on what to do. Then, it just kind of evolved."



DEP regulators routinely monitor the effects of surface mining above mine portals known to harbor bats. The mine gate allows bats to come and go freely. In September, the U.S. Department of the Interior released its guidelines for protecting the endangered Indiana Bat (right) in mining areas. The document was modeled after West Virginia's plan, which the DEP helped develop.

The DEP was awarded a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for generous assistance in Endangered Species Act reviews for coal mining

permits. Also, Fala and co-worker Kevin Quick each received individual USFWS "Regional Director's Conservation Awards" for the same reason.



In 2007, the USFWS West Virginia Field Office, in cooperation with the DEP, Division of National Resources and the Office of Surface Mining (OSM), issued West Virginia's comprehensive plan for protecting the Indiana bat in mining

areas.

The document was groundbreaking not only for its content, but also because it exemplified the type of progress that could be made when state and federal agencies overcame barriers, joined forces and worked together on issues related to protecting endangered species.

"Coal companies went from being in limbo to a

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The DEP's Division of Mining and Reclamation office in Logan employs about 60 people when fully staffed. The 5-year-old building has 13,000 square feet of space.

Logan office is buzzing with mining activity

■ **Editor's note:** This is the first in a series of stories on DEP offices located around West Virginia.

By Tom Aluise

LOGAN — It's tucked out of sight on the far edges of the sprawling Fountain Place development, a shiny and still-growing shopping and restaurant complex that sits conspicuously along



Route 119 on the outskirts of town here. But don't let that fool you. The Division of Mining and Reclamation's Logan office might not be easy to spot from the road, but it's a busy place.

"A lot of business goes on here in a day's time," DMR Assistant Director Benny Campbell said. "Our office regulates about 60 percent of the coal mined in West Virginia, surface and underground.

"We wear a lot of hats. We have some very, very sharp individuals who work here."

The Logan office has roots that stretch back to the early 1970s when it was part of the then Department of Natural Resources.

It has been located in several



Benny Campbell, DMR assistant director, says the Logan office regulates about 60 percent of the state's mining.

different spots around town but appears to have finally found a permanent home in its modern, 13,000-square foot building at Fountain Place. The DMR moved into the one-story facility five years ago.

When it's fully staffed, the Logan office employs about 60 people, roughly 35 mine inspectors and 25 others in permitting.

The office oversees mining and reclamation activity in Logan, Boone, Mingo, Lincoln, Wayne, western Raleigh County and southern Kanawha County.

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Politan named Employee of Year

Ken Politan was so valuable to the Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Mining and Reclamation that his friend and co-worker, Lewis Halstead, often wondered how the division could get along without him.

Politan was the DEP's



Politan

upmost authority on coal NPDES issues — and much more.

"I often said, 'What would we do without him?'" said Halstead, deputy director of the DMR. "Now, I'm trying to figure that out."

Politan died on June 6 at the age of 51, cutting short a long (28 years) and distinguished career with the DEP.

On Sept. 16, he was honored as the agency's Employee of the Year. Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman made the announcement during the DEP's Employee Recognition Event at Little

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indepth

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Fun with water



Students make and decorate rain sticks with the help of DEP employees during the Children's Water Festival.

Festival gets kids in tune with the issues

Close to 275 Kanawha County fourth- and fifth-graders learned about the value of water and the issues surrounding its future during the 10th annual Children's Water Festival on Sept. 25 at the Marshall Graduate College in South Charleston.

Sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection, the Water Festival is part of the DEP's Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) program.

This year's Festival included indoor and outdoor stations where students learned about the importance of water and how to protect it.

Topics covered the water cycle, surface and ground water, watersheds, water quality and



REAP Program Manager Greg Rote teaches kids about water pollution with the help of a model.

aquatic life.

The goals of the festival included providing students and teachers with direct interaction with water professionals, as well as promoting interest in the environmental field.

Park rangers, biologists, geologists and engineers from the state and federal levels were among the presenters.



Division of Water and Waste Management employees Thomas Sowers, front, and Dave Phillips apply wash-away tattoos.

POLITAN

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Creek Park. It is the first time the agency has honored an employee posthumously.

"Those who worked closely with Ken think of him often," Huffman said. "Some of us might say we think of him daily."

Politan developed DMR policies and guidelines and represented his division in meetings with the public, the regulated industry, federal and other state agencies and the Legislature regarding the implementation of the NPDES and State 401 Certification programs.

Halstead said Politan was the "NPDES guy who knew everything. I don't know that anyone will ever be able to replace him. He knew more about NPDES permits than anyone in the state."

"Ken was the NPDES walking encyclopedia," said Bill Simmons, deputy director of operations for the DMR. "He was always willing to take the time to explain any questions about NPDES, mitigation or any other question anyone might have, including industry and environmental representatives."

Both Halstead and Simmons said Poli-

tan's work ethic was equal to the degree of his knowledge of mining issues.

"He was one of the hardest workers in the building," Halstead said.

"He was one of the, if not the hardest, working people I have ever met," Simmons said. "He had a good sense of humor and a calm demeanor and always maintained a professional attitude."

A native of Pennsylvania, Politan heard the term "Yankee" thrown his way more than once.

"He loved it," Halstead said. "He'd start making fun of West Virginia then."

Politan also loved his home state Steelers and West Virginia University, Halstead said.

And when anyone said something Politan didn't agree with, they knew his feelings immediately, Halstead said.

"He'd raise those eyebrows up. You could always tell by his facial expressions."

Said Huffman, "Ken's knowledge, dedication and expertise are what earned him this award. And as regulators we miss his institutional knowledge. But it is his character, integrity and sense of fun that we miss as his friends."

CPR, first aid classes set for Oct.

The Charleston headquarters of the Department of Environmental Protection is offering CPR/AED and first aid classes several times in October.

Classes are being offered on the following dates:

■ Oct. 7 — CPR/AED, 8 a.m.-noon, Room 1203, 1204.

■ Oct. 15 — CPR/AED, 8 a.m.-noon, Room 1203, 1204; First aid, 1-4:30 p.m., Room 1203, 1204.

■ Oct. 22 — CPR/AED, 8 a.m.-noon, Room 1203, 1204; First aid, 1-4:30 p.m., Room 1203, 1204.

■ Oct. 29 — CPR/AED, 8 a.m.-noon, Room 1203, 1204; First aid, 1-4:30 p.m., Room 1203, 1204.

Plan begins to take shape

Statewide Water Management Plan presented to watershed group

By Tom Aluise

It was a small step toward an ultimate goal, but a significant one nonetheless.

In September, representatives from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection met with large-quantity water users from the Tygart Valley Watershed at Tygart Lake State Park.

The meeting was the first of several the DEP plans to have with people residing in West Virginia's watersheds to share information on the Statewide Water Management Plan, a massive project that will take a comprehensive look at future water uses in the Mountain State and potential problems associated with those uses.

"I thought it was a milestone to have that meeting," said Mike Stratton, of the DEP's Division of Water and Waste Management. "It was the first one."

The development of a Water Management Plan was part of a 2008 amendment to the state Water Resources Protection and Management Act that was passed in 2004 by the West Virginia Legislature, and calls for the maintenance of a registry for large-quantity water users (750,000 gallons per month).

Stratton and a team of three other DWWM employees — Brian Carr,



Large-quantity water users from the Tygart Valley Watershed listen to DEP staffers outline the Statewide Water Management Plan, which is due for completion by 2013.

Wilma McKown and Jenny Todd — are in the early stages of designing the Water Management Plan. It is scheduled for completion in 2013.

Stratton said more than half of the states have some sort of water management plan in writing. With population shifts, new industrial development and climate change potentially on the horizon, it was time West Virginia developed a plan, as well, to deal with increasing water needs.

"We've spent a lot of time gathering information that our agency has pertaining to water resources," Stratton said. "Now, we're taking it to the people and soliciting their input."

That, in fact, was the whole idea behind the Tygart Lake meeting. About 40 stakeholders — county commissioners, city planners, public service district representatives, etc. — in the Tygart Valley Watershed attended.

"The purpose of the meeting was to show them the data we had collected and to introduce them to the process and some of the concepts we're trying to use with regard to the Water Management Plan," Stratton said. "We wanted to ask them about activities and developments in their watershed and to form a support group for the Management Plan."

There are 32 watersheds in West Virginia and Stratton said the DEP hopes to meet with people living in the majority of those watersheds concerning the Water Management Plan. He'll also provide the Legislature with a yearly report on its progress.

"One thing the plan will do is identify any problem areas we might have, such as competing water supplies," Stratton said. "It will look at available resources and identify situations where we need to do something with our water resources and plan

for changes in things such as population and industrial development.

"Hopefully we'll have enough data to ensure that we have the water we need to maintain a stream's beneficial uses for any development we're looking at.

"Another thing we'll have to look at is how we're interacting with other states. We feed into the Ohio River, which feeds into the Mississippi, which feeds into the Gulf of Mexico.

"There are bigger issues out there and we need to have a plan to address those issues, not only internally but externally as well."

Other federal and state agencies are involved in developing the Water Management Plan, including the Division of Natural Resources.

"When you look at the plan, it's so broad it's almost daunting," Stratton said.

Stratton pointed to Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling in West Virginia as a prime example of the ever-changing needs of water.

Hydraulic fracturing methods that are being used to extract gas from the Marcellus formation require millions of gallons of water and issues surround where drillers are getting their water and how they're disposing of it after it's used.

"In my mind, this will be a document that never really dies," Stratton said. "This plan will have to be maintained. We'll need to adjust to new information as it develops."

DEP runners make solid showing in city's 15-miler

The Department of Environmental Protection had a solid showing at this year's Charleston Distance Run.

Five DEP staffers completed the challenging 15-mile run through the city of Charleston.



The group included Dennis Stottlemeyer (DMR), who completed

the course in 1 hour, 54 minutes, 51 seconds, a pace of 7:40 per mile.

The other four finishers and their times were Rich Boehm (DAQ), 2:03.31; James Robertson (DAQ), 2:17.44; Sandy Kee

(Administration), 2:45.09; and Josh Woody (DAQ), 2:54.49.

Boehm, Robertson and Woody are scheduled to run the Columbus Marathon (26.2 miles) on Sunday, Oct. 18.



Fola Coal's Mike Isabell gives U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials, including Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Jo-Ellen Darcy, center, a tour of Fola's surface mine in Clay County.

U.S. Army Corps officials tour W. Va. mining sites

Assistant Secretary Darcy visits coal mine, valley fill for the first time

The assistant and deputy assistant secretaries of the Army (Civil Works) were among several U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials to take part in a three-helicopter tour of mining-related sites in southern West Virginia on Sept. 23.

Assistant Secretary Jo-Ellen Darcy and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Terrence "Rock" Salt took in aerial views of several active surface mines, as well as reclaimed mines where an airport (Logan County) and a golf course (Twisted Gun, Mingo County) have been built.

The group also



Darcy and Terrence "Rock" Salt, deputy assistant secretary of the Army (Civil Works), listen to Fola officials describe highwall mining operations and a nearby valley fill.

touched down for a tour of the Fola Coal Company in Clay County and landed in Mingo County near the construction of both a portion of the King Coal Highway and a new school that will consolidate four of Mingo County's high

schools — Williamson, Matewan, Burch and Gilbert.

Bill Simmons and Lewis Halstead, deputy directors in the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Mining and Reclamation, also

participated in the tour and provided information to Corps officials.

Other Army Corps officials from its Washington D.C. headquarters on the trip included Meg Gaffney-Smith, regulatory program manager and William James, deputy regulatory program manager. Gaffney-Smith and James coordinate 404 (dredge and fill) permitting nationally.

Among those representing the Corps' district office in Huntington were head of command, Col. Robert Peterson, and Ginger Mullins, regulatory branch chief.

The tour came at the same time the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is asking the Army Corps to take a closer look at a number of pending coal mining

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Cornhole competition was popular during the Employee Recognition Event at Little Creek Park in South Charleston.

Employee Recognition Event

Close to 350 DEP employees turned out for the annual Employee Recognition Event on Sept. 16 at Little Creek Park in South Charleston. Organizer Kenna DeRaimo said plans are already underway for next year and she welcomes any suggestions on making the day even better.



Randy Taylor, right, and Jonathan Parsons pitch horseshoes.



Cheryl Lewis won the centerpiece competition with this entry and received a \$25 gift card from Elder-Beerman.



Colleen O'Neill was in charge of hospitality, offering up sun screen products to picnic goers.

Honoring years of service

DEP staffers photographed during Employee Recognition Event with Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman. Complete list on page 14



40 years: Charles Grafton, Brenda Fisher.



20 years: Phyllis Farley, Bob Fala.



35 years: Skip Amole, Sherry Hale, Sandy Kee.



15 years: Mike Rowe, Teresa Koon, Jennifer Pauer, Laura Crowder, Greg Null, Tammy Canterbury, Randolph Ramsey, Christine Daugherty, Sherrie Summers, Renu Chakrabarty, Fred Teel.



30 years: John Vernon, Don Martin, Alfred Azevedo, Jeanne Chandler, Frank Shreve.



10 years: Fred Tipane, Cindy Lawson, Pam Nixon, Jesse Hanshaw, Mike Egnor.



25 years: Rose Long, Dwight Given, Kay Holtsclaw, Peggy Kozak, John Tingley, J. Kevin Lilly.



5 years: Xichun Sun, Sheri Richardson, Mike Moore, Jason Billups, Ray Franks, Tracie Kitchen.

BAT

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program with some guidance,” said Fala, who got DEP assistance on the project from the DMR’s Ashley Carroll, in addition to Quick. “And if they did their homework, they would get clearance.”

West Virginia’s plan, in fact, was so good that it was used as a model for the U.S. Department of the Interior’s recently released Range-wide Indiana Bat Protection and Enhancement Plan (PEP) Guidelines. The guidelines cover a 13-state region (including West Virginia) from the eastern United States through the Midwest that is considered the bat’s habitat.

“These guidelines provide coal mining companies a set of consistent and reasonable protective measures they can use when their proposed operations could impact the Indiana bat and its critical habitat,” Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said in a Sept. 2 press release. “This technical guidance was developed through extensive state and federal collaboration and will assist companies in complying with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act.”

The DEP’s Fala, along with Christy Johnson-Hughes from the USFWS West Virginia Field Office, helped establish the Indiana bat PEP Guidelines during June meetings in Atlanta. Representatives from other state coal mining regulatory programs attended the meetings, which were facilitated by the OSM. Peer review of the guidelines was coordinated by the Interstate Mining Compact Commission, a multi-state organization representing the natural resource interests of its member states.

The federal standards are very similar to the guidelines the West Virginia DEP helped develop nearly three years



Top, Ashley Carroll holds up copies of both the West Virginia Indiana bat guidelines and the recently released 13-state federal Range-wide guidelines. Bottom, Kevin Quick displays awards from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the DEP’s role in protecting the Indiana bat.

“For a while they were saying if you don’t have any (Indiana bat) guidelines, just do what West Virginia is doing. We think we set the mold.”

Bob Fala

ago. Fala said that is not a coincidence.

“We were certain we were invited down there (Atlanta) because of our program here,” he said. “It was kind of like, ‘If they can do it on the state level, why can’t we do it on a bigger scale?’”

“We were the model. We had gotten some awards. For a while, they were saying if you don’t have any (Indiana bat) guidelines, just do what West Virginia is doing. We think we set the mold. We like to think we started it here.”

Fala said West Virginia regulators also demonstrated how cooperation between state and federal agencies could lead to positive results with regard to the Indiana bat.

“Over the years, there had been a lot of friction between the states and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,” he said. “We think we broke the mold in that relationship and that became the template for the 13-state guidelines. The big issue was the parties were able to get together and say, ‘Let’s get something done here.’”

In a release, Glenda Owens, acting director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement said:

“These guidelines represent the culmination of important collaboration among the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Interstate Mining Compact Commission states, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and

Enforcement. The guidelines demonstrate what can be accomplished when different branches of government roll up their sleeves and work together.”

The insect-eating Indiana bat is medium-sized and its females bear and raise their young in maternity colonies. Bats form these colonies in wooded areas after leaving winter hibernation sites in the spring.

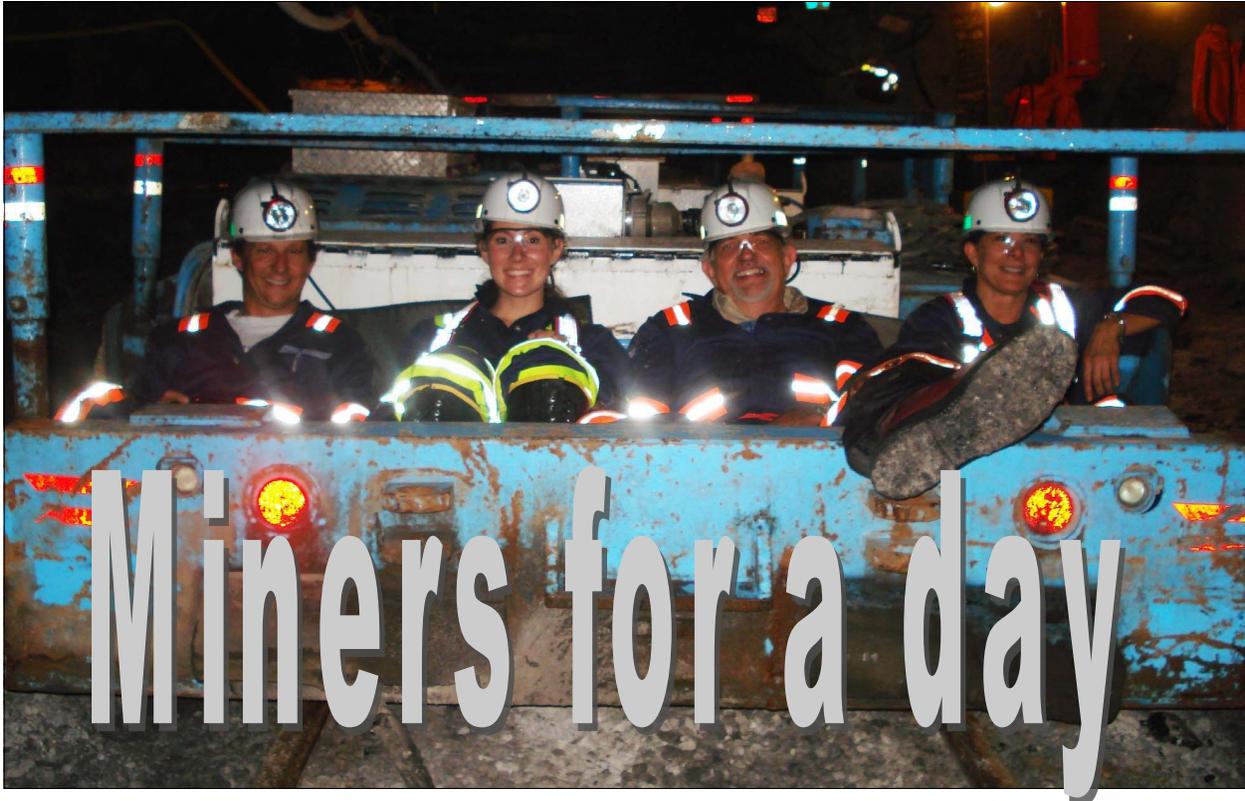
Surface mining operations could have adverse effects on the Indiana bat when located near a hibernation site, maternity roost or in forested land that might serve as foraging or roosting areas. Under the new federal guidelines, areas populated with the Indiana bat are documented by capture records, survey information or other sources.

Fala said netting practices in Boone County helped state authorities discover the first and largest Indiana bat maternity colony in West Virginia history.

“We’re still monitoring that colony and making sure mining has little impact,” Fala said. “It’s doing OK.”

In West Virginia, guidelines on protecting the Indiana bat include limiting tree clearing, which protects potential summer habitats and maternity roosts; providing buffer zones around streams and wetlands, where the bats often forage in search of insects and drinking water; installing bat gates over abandoned mine portals, which might serve as winter or roosting habitats for a number of bat species; and placing gates in the openings of caves where there is evidence of bats.

Fala said the DMR also is working with the DEP’s Office of Explosives and Blasting to make sure blasting doesn’t disturb nearby abandoned mines that might house the Indiana bat. “We’re trying to preserve the bat the best we can,” Fala said.



DEP employees, from left, Tom Aluise, Autumn Smith, Phil Mooney and Diana Haid visited Patriot Coal’s Speed Mining operation in Kanawha County. Mooney, a DEP mine inspector and underground veteran, organized the trip.

DEP staffers share experiences after trek into deep coal mine

By Autumn Smith

Always being one up for a work adventure, I agreed to go on an underground mine tour with co-workers Diana Haid, Tom Aluise and Phil Mooney.

We arrived on site at Speed Mining in eastern Kanawha County on a beautiful, sunny Tuesday morning. First was a quick review inside the mine’s office with “Safety Sam,” the mine’s safety supervisor, also known as Sam Morton. Then, it was time for our new wardrobe.

We each dressed in coveralls, steel-toed boots, hard hats and our unbelievably heavy belt, which held our air respirators and battery packs for the lights on our hard hats.

Being the weakling that I am, getting dressed in all the gear seemed like a job to me.

As we entered the elevator to head into the mine shaft, I immediately thought I was crazy for having agreed to go on this field trip. When the doors opened underground, my hesitations were con-

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By Diana Haid

When given the opportunity to tour a deep mine, I was excited with anticipation. Coal mining was an early way of life for my family. My grandfather worked in the mines in Boone County.

The intensity level was very high touring a deep mine. I knew we were 500 feet underground and five miles away from the elevator, but I tried not to focus on those facts. I was so alert and aware of my surroundings at all times while underground that it felt like I’d worked a 12-hour shift. It hit me when I arrived home that evening feeling totally exhausted.

Part of my fatigue came from the fact that I was dressed in coveralls and wore steel-toed boots that were too large. The emergency oxygen tank and battery for my head lamp were also very heavy to carry around.

It’s a good thing I was wearing a hard hat and safety glasses because I lost count of

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By Tom Aluise

Riding an elevator 500 feet underground and then stuffing myself into a mantrip for a dusty, five-mile trek into the bowels of a mountain was not on my “bucket list” of things to do before I die.

Traveling to Europe, check.

Attending a Yankees-Red Sox game at Fenway Park, check.

Venturing to the face of a longwall operation in an underground coal mine, not exactly.

So, what was I doing at Patriot Coal’s Speed Mining operation in eastern Kanawha County a couple of weeks ago with co-workers Diana Haid, Autumn Smith and Phil Mooney?

The short answer is I felt a sense of obligation. Considering I’m a public information specialist for the Department of Environmental Protection, I thought it might be wise to see for myself exactly what I’m informing the public about.

Mooney, a DEP mine inspector and a veteran sub-surface

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LOGAN

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“We’re busy,” said Campbell, a 29-year DMR veteran, who’s worked out of the Logan office for 20 years. “Last year, this office was extremely busy, with coal prices up and demand up.”

Under Campbell are Harold Ward, Dallas Runyan and Joe Hager, who supervise the Logan office’s inspectors and work in the field themselves. Larry Alt oversees Article 3 permitting and Terry Ramey heads up the office’s NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) section. Ramey is a Logan native and a former coal miner.

Ward said the Logan office has about 850 active mining permits and his unit of nine inspectors completes roughly 3,000 inspections per year. Ward said units elsewhere around the state average about 600 to 700 inspections a year.

“Fifty-seven percent of all statewide violations are issued out of the Logan office,” Ward said.

“What inspectors do in the northern part of the state are a different set of disciplines. Here, we don’t have as many water quality problems. But we have massive surface disturbances.”

Ward, who’s worked out of the Logan office for 10 years, said the job turnover rate is high. Many of the state’s veteran mine inspectors got their start in Logan.

“It’s hard to hold these boys down here,” said Ward, who grew up in Logan. “We’ve got to find some way to get over that hump.”

Campbell said the Logan office “hires people constantly” but remains consistent in its mission.

“Our main concern here is that when someone disturbs the land, they do it as environmentally sound as they can,” said Campbell, a St. Albans native. “That’s what our field guys do when they make inspections. Permitting is the first step to make sure that happens.”

“We want to ensure that environmental safeguards are in place before permits are issued.

“Our emphasis is if you’re going to mine, let’s make it better than it was. If you want a permit, tell us what’s going to be available to the people of the state after you’re done.

“I look at our folks in this office as trustees of the environment. We try to walk that fine line between right and left.

“We try to stay right in the middle of issues and try to accomplish that with the law as our



Francis Browning joined the Logan office in 1975. The self-proclaimed “coal camp girl” works as a secretary and says the office has a family atmosphere.

guide. We don’t regulate by emotion or by favoritism. Since I’ve been here, I’ve received no political pressure from anybody.

“I think we’re respected because we try to be very objective.”



FRANCES BROWNING has seen her share of inspectors come and go at Logan.

She joined the office in 1975 as a secretary and worked part of the time for her husband, Tracey, a forest ranger for the DNR who transferred to reclamation in 1971 when the Logan office opened.

“I’ve seen a lot of changes,” said Frances, who oversees the office’s bills, vehicles and uniforms. “When I first started, we were using typewriters and carbon paper.”

New technology, of course, has changed the Logan office over the years.

Time, though, has done little to affect the makeup of the people who work here. Many of the employees are Logan County natives and prefer to live close to the office.

That common bond contributes to a family atmosphere.

“This is a very close-knit office,” said Browning, a coal camp girl who grew up in Earling, about 10 miles south of Logan. “We’ve always had a real good bunch of guys and girls working here.”

“We have our issues,” Campbell said. “But as a whole, if someone in this office needs help, they’ll get it. That’s one of the positive things about this office and historically it’s been that way.”

The Logan office has been involved with local trout stocking; has assisted in flood cleanups and stream mitigation; has prepared Christmas packages for troops in Iraq; and has given Ro-



Top: Former coal miner Terry Ramey heads up the Logan office’s NPDES section. Bottom, inspector supervisor Harold Ward (left) talks with Mike Gillum in the office’s break room.

tary Club speeches, to name just a few ways it has assisted both inside and outside the community.

“I don’t know of one problem — anything that couldn’t be worked out through discussion — I’ve had with anybody I’ve worked with,” Ward said.

“It just doesn’t happen here. They’re very good people. I think if you look at mining statewide you’ll find that. We’re a pretty tight group.”

And in Logan, they’re a pretty comfortable group, thanks to the move they made five years ago from a flood-prone, cramped building at Cherry Tree Bottom to their current location.

The Logan office’s previous

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REAP Director Danny Haught was on hand at Magic Island in Charleston for the 20th annual Great Kanawha River Cleanup.

Residents tidy up the Kanawha

Foreign exchange students lend a hand for Great Kanawha Cleanup

By Tom Aluise

The 20th annual Great Kanawha River Cleanup had an international flavor.

Three high school foreign exchange students took part as volunteers, picking up litter on Magic Island, on the banks of the Kanawha in Charleston.

The three girls, who attend Kanawha County schools, were from Indonesia, China and Ukraine. They're in the United States as part of an international program called Academic Year in America. Charleston resident Kay Thorsteinson, the girls' sponsor, saw an ad for the Sept. 12 cleanup and thought it would be



From left, foreign exchange students Leah Bai, from China; Diana Kravchenko, from Ukraine; and Zakia Syifa, from Indonesia, helped with the cleanup.

a good idea to get the students involved in the DEP-sponsored event.

Zakia Syifa, who lives in the small town of Kebumen, Indone-

sia, embraced the day.

"In our society, we come together with our neighbors and

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LOGAN

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building severely flooded over a Memorial Day weekend, just prior to the move to their new facility. Much of the DMR records were destroyed.

Luckily, backups were on file in Charleston.

"We're high and dry now," Campbell said.

"This was a breath of fresh air. I've heard nothing but positive comments about this facility."

Indeed, it has come a long way.

At one point, the DMR Logan office was housed in a trailer that included a live-in flying squirrel.

The staff then, which included Bill Simmons, the current deputy director of opera-

tions for the DMR, regularly fed its furry roommate.

"I remember one time that squirrel jumped out of a cabinet and onto Bill Simmons and it about scared him to death," Browning said.

Later, the squirrel got trapped in the trailer's toilet and drowned.

"Bill found that squirrel dead and had him stuffed," Browning said.

Exploring brownfields

Experts weigh in on pending projects across state

By Tom Aluise

MORGANTOWN — The second day of this year’s West Virginia Brownfields Conference was tagged by its organizers as a BYOB event.

And, no, it wasn’t that kind of get-together. BYOB meant “bring your own brownfield.”

Held at the Waterfront Place Hotel here in early September, the two-day conference featured a workshop on its final day during which selected community redevelopment projects were presented to a panel of experts.

The panel was stocked with representatives from a variety of fields including banking, regulatory, real estate, architecture and community planning. Ken Ellison, director of the Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Land Restoration, was among the panelists.

“The whole idea is for these folks on the panel to hear these projects, suggest resources that could help the project and to make comments that might help move the project along,” said George Carico, during a break from the workshop.

Carico is project coordinator for the West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center at Marshall University and helped facilitate this year’s conference, along with Patrick Kirby, director of



The West Virginia Brownfields Conference featured a second-day workshop that allowed participants to present projects to a panel of experts, including the DEP’s Ken Ellison.

“We’re very pleased with the creativity and innovation of the Brownfields Assistance Centers. I think the centers have greatly exceeded expectations with how they’ve facilitated communication and outreach with communities and brought experts together to share ideas.”

Ken Ellison

Director, DEP Division of Land Restoration

the Northern West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center.

“This is the first time we’ve tried this format,” Carico said. “We had folks saying it would be nice to do more case studies for West Virginia.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines a brownfield as “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or

potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant.”

Five brownfield plans were outlined for the panelists. They included a rails-to-trail project in Fayette and Greenbrier counties; a new library on a former dump site in Shepherdstown; redevelopment of an old rail depot in Webster County; revitalization in the Morris Creek Watershed in Fayette and Kanawha counties; and

redevelopment of the former Owens Illinois glass plant property in Fairmont.

Panelists listened to presenters and offered insights on potential funding sources; the best and quickest ways to obtain grants and other money for projects; methods to offset costs; overcoming environmental obstacles; ways to reach stakeholders; and polishing up their

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CLEANUP

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clean our village together,” said Syifa, who’s attending South Charleston High School. “If we need to build something, we build it together.”

Leah Bai, from China, and Diana Kravchenko,

from Ukraine, also helped at Magic Island, where about 30 volunteers picked up trash and removed old tires from the river bank.

Travis Cooper, coordinator for REAP’s Make It Shine program, said this year’s river cleanup attracted close to 100 volunteers at five sites in Kanawha, Mason, Fay-

ette and Putnam counties.

The volunteers picked up four tons of trash, which included 122 tires, and worked 341 man hours.

“This is kind of our big event at the end of the year,” said REAP Director Danny Haught. “It’s always been very successful.”

Part of its success comes from its ability to serve as an educational tool for youth, Haught said.

“They don’t get it until they do it,” Haught said. “If we can start out educating people at a young age, then it becomes normal to them. A responsible citizen cleans up their community.”

Coordinator not so new on the job

By Colleen O'Neill

Although the training coordinator at the Department of Environmental Protection is new to many employees, dealing with the DEP is quite familiar to her.

"I used to work for Homeland Security at the Capitol," said Nancy Frazier, an administrative services assistant III with Human Resources. She's the equal employment opportunity coordinator for DEP. She also handles grievances, training and staff development.

"The section of Homeland Security I worked in was created as a direct result of the Sago Mine incident," said Frazier, who started at the DEP in February. "From that particular incident it became law that mining companies had to call Homeland Security within 15 minutes of any type of injury.

"All the calls are recorded and companies are actually fined for exceeding the mandate of 15 minutes or for not reporting the incident. After Sago, the burden to



Department of Environmental Protection Training Coordinator Nancy Frazier just started in February but she dealt with the DEP often while at Homeland Security.

release the information in a very timely manner was put on the company in order to lessen the risk of loss of life.

"In addition, I also answered the DEP spill line. I became familiar with chemical spills, hazmat issues, and contamination of soil, air, and water. I was working the night of the Bayer Crop Science

explosion. That was a very busy night due to the lack of available information and the barrage of phone calls by the public wanting to know if they should evacuate.

"Whenever I contacted DEP I was always impressed with their quick response time and follow-

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BROWNFIELD

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presentations.

"Everything we have to do costs money, and that's what we're struggling with right now," said Carl Thompson, of the West Virginia State University Extension Service.

Thompson presented plans for the Meadow River rails-to-trail project that will encompass 16.7 miles of former CSX rail corridor.

"Anything you can do to put your thinking caps on, we'd appreciate that," Thompson told the panelists.

Audience members also offered tips.

"I thought it was very beneficial for someone like me who has such a big learning curve," said Shepherdstown Library Director Hali Taylor, who highlighted her town's ideas for construction of a new facility on a 4.5-acre site that was a municipal dump until 1969.

Taylor said the new library will cost approxi-

mately \$9.1 million, including cleanup, development and construction.

Panelist Joe Nowak, from the EPA, urged Taylor to apply for assessment grants now and to come up with cleanup options before applying for a Brownfields Cleanup Grant.

"You can stretch your cleanup dollars," he said.

"We were confident we were going to learn something," Taylor said. "Patrick Kirby has been shepherding us through this process, so we're learning as we go. I knew anything he was involved with would be helpful."

At the end of the day, Carico said the workshop couldn't have gone much better.

"This was our first year to try this and I wasn't sure if we'd have two people in the audience," he said. "I thought the panel and presenters connected wonderfully. We need to do more of that.

"I was telling folks we need to get this panel

together every two months and take it on the road. It really does help various entities out there just for someone else to take a look at a project and say, 'Hey, have you thought about this?' Sometimes it's a good way to get projects moving in the right direction.

"I'm sure we'll keep the workshop next year in some format. The panelists seemed to like it as well."

The DEP's Ellison said the workshop addressed the need to help make people aware of the various state and federal programs available for the redevelopment of brownfields.

"We're very pleased with the creativity and innovation of the Brownfields Assistance Centers," Ellison said. "I think the centers have greatly exceeded expectations with how they've facilitated communication and outreach with communities and brought experts together to share ideas."

Ellison said redeveloping brownfields is a

good way for communities to attract new businesses and people looking to escape crowded urban areas.

"I think these communities, by redeveloping brownfields, are really positioning themselves to provide a better quality of life and attract future residents who can take advantage of the technology to do their jobs and get out of the crowded cities," Ellison said.

In addition to Ellison and Nowak, workshop panelists were: Craig O'Leary, Ohio Valley Regional Economic Development Partnership; Mary Hunt-Lieving, Benedum Foundation; Martin Jenkins, Natural Capital Investment Fund; Laura Rye, FHL Bank, Pittsburgh; Cheryl Wolfe, USDA Rural Development; LaReta Lowther, WesBanco; and Peter Butler, WVU Landscape Architecture Department.

Kent Spellman, head of the West Virginia Community Development Hub, took session notes.

DEP Years of Service honors

Five years

Paul Ancion, DWWM; Jason Billups, DWWM; Jamie Chambers, administration; Michelle Falquero, administration; Ray Franks, executive; Thomas Gribben, DAQ; Mindy Hendrickson, DAQ; Mark Holstine, DMR; David Johnston, DWWM; Michael Kanehl, DWWM; Tracie Kitchen, DMR; Kenneth Marcum, DMR; Mike Moore, OOG; Leslie Oaks, DWWM; Sheri Richardson, administration; Lawrence Sirinek, DLR; Dennis Stottlemeyer, DMR; Zichun Sun, information technology.

10 years

Edward Andrews, DAQ; Alfred Carducci, DAQ; Chris Cartwright, REAP; Joseph Cochran, DWWM; Mike Egnor, DAQ; Reuben Gillispie, DMR; Catherine Guynn, DLR; Jesse Hanshaw, DAQ; Kim Henderson, administration; Cindy Lawson, DMR; Judy Lupson, DWWM; Ed McComas, DLR; Pam Nixon,

administration; Ruth Porter, DLR; Mark Proctor, DLR; Donald Rowe, administration; Joseph Sizemore, DWWM; Judith Taylor, DWWM; Jason Thomas, DAQ; Fred Tiplane, DAQ; Patricia Webb, DWWM; David Wheatcraft, executive; Jerry Williams, DAQ; Clarence Wright, DMR.

15 years

Thomas Bass, DLR; Tammy Canterbury, administration; Renu Chakrabarty, DAQ; Maureen Clemons, executive; Laura Crowder, DAQ; Christine Daughtery, DWWM; Mark Doyle, administration; Richard Fenton, DAQ; Patrick Grimm, DAQ; Amy Halstead, DMR; Gleason Horrocks, DMR; Dr. Douglas Kelly, information technology; Teresa Koon, DWWM; Karen Maes, DWWM; Cindy Maynard, executive; Ernest Mikles, DLR; John Moneypenny, DAQ; Greg Null, administration; Jennifer Pauer, DWWM; Margaret Porter,

DAQ; Randolph Ramsey, AML; Mike Rowe, DAQ; Paula Smith, administration; Sherrie Summers, DMR; Louis Tangeman, DMR; Fred Teel, DAQ; Jonathan Wharton, DAQ; Allen Wood, AML; Lisa McClung, administration.

20 years

Robert Bates, DWWM; Tim Bennett, OOG; Arthur Boyd, DWWM; Twilla Cassell, DMR; Carroll Cather, DWWM; Bob Fala, DMR; Phyllis Farley, REAP; Chris Gatens, DWWM; Carrie Grimm, DWWM; Gary Guthrie, AML; Donald Jackson, DWWM; Margaret Miller, DMR; Joyce Moore, DWWM; Mary Nicely, AML; Wilma Reip, DWWM; Tim Richard, DMR; Dallas Runyon, DMR; James Summers, DWWM; Ocie Tackett, DMR; Harold Ward, DMR; Stanley Wolfe, DWWM.

25 years

Rodney Dillon, OOG; Michael Dorsey, administration; Dwight Given, DMR; Kay Holtsclaw,

OOG; Rusty Joins, administration; Peggy Kozak, DWWM; Kevin Lilly, DWWM; Rose Long, DWWM; Rhoderic Mills, DWWM; Darlene Nestor, AML; Manuel Seijo, DMR; John Tingley, DWWM; Judith Weese, administration.

30 years

Alfred Azevedo, DAQ; Charles Carico, DMR; Jeanne Chandler, DAQ; Grant Connard, DMR; Greg Henger, DWWM; Susan Kershner, DWWM; Don Martin, DLR; Gary Meade, DMR; Stephen Moore, DLR; Sandra Mounts, DMR; Frank Shreve, DMR; Thomas Sowers, DWWM; John Vernon, DMR; Deborah Walker, administration.

35 years

Howard Amole, administration; Sherry Hale, administration; Pam Hayes, DLR; Sandy Kee, administration; Greg Smith, AML.

40 years

Brenda Fisher, DMR; Charles Grafton, DMR.

TRAINING

Continued from Page 13

up on dealing with an incident.”

Frazier has a master’s degree in Industrial Relations and a bachelor’s degree in marketing.

She’s spent most of her career working in private industry in management and non-management positions, in union, as well as non-union, environments.

“Most of the training I conducted was with Bell Atlantic,” Frazier said. “When a salesperson sold equipment I was the person who went out to talk with the customer and actually pro-

grammed the system to work on the day of the cutover.”

Frazier said she wanted to work in human resources because people are the most valuable asset of any organization.

“What better way to make a positive impact on an organization than through training, and staff development,” she said.

“We recently offered training on the application Outlook.

“It’s an application that has been around for a while and many employees only use it for e-mail but it does so much more.

“It is actually a tool

that is designed to get you to be more organized with the thought that if you become more organized, you will become more productive.”

Frazier also is offering training in Excel.

“It’s another application that has been around for a while.

“Excel is a wonderful tool that can make your life easier at home, as well as work because it can do so much for you by saving you time and work.”

All training, however, isn’t just for computer applications.

“Currently we are developing training that will deal with the three generations presently in

the workforce,” Frazier said.

“Some organizations actually have three distinct generations, and the way they interact and connect is proving to be important because of the differences in what motivates each group, as well as what their expectations are in the workforce.

“The concept of three generations working together in one place is a challenging but exciting one. I think that training should prove quite interesting.”

To contact Frazier, her phone number is 304-926-0499 ext. 1556. Her email is: Nancy.L.Frazier@wv.gov.

Youth Environmental Conference set Oct. 9-11 at North Bend

For young people ages 13 to 18, mid-October means the arrival of the Youth Environmental Conference. This year it will take place Oct. 9-11 at North Bend State Park.

“We’re hoping to have

75 kids,” said Diana Haid, coordinator of the Youth Environmental Program.

“The weekend is packed with enjoyable activities that, besides being fun, teach something about the environ-

ment.”

Activities include visits to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge and the Blennerhassett Museum and Mansion. Events culmi-

nate Sunday with a sharing of community project ideas and a conference evaluation.

Contact Diana Haid at 304-926-0499 ext. 1114, or e-mail: Diana.K.Haid@wv.gov.



DEP employees lined up for seasonal flu shots offered at the agency headquarters in September. The vaccine, however, does not protect people from the H1N1 virus, or swine flu.

Biting back

DEP has plan in case of swine flu outbreak

By Colleen O'Neill

Talk of a flu pandemic has been burning up the airways and printing presses.

Many of the health Web sites have sections dedicated to it. The flu virus identified in this pandemic is the H1N1 or swine flu. It is called the swine flu because it originally was thought to resemble a flu virus that afflicted pigs in North America.

A flu pandemic differs from the seasonal flu.

"Seasonal flu is the flu that comes around every year," said Tammy Canterbury, safety coordinator for the Department of Environmental Protection.

Her job requires her to be up on the health news.

"Flu season is from the beginning of fall until early spring, or September until early April," Canterbury said. "A flu pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges.

"Since it's new, people don't have immunity to it. It spreads from person to person, quickly. Soon, it's making its way around the world, affecting people.

"The pandemic flu is different be-

cause healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications. The symptoms are similar to the seasonal flu but may be more severe and complications more serious."

Being prepared is thought to be one form of defense.

The DEP has put together a plan of action, should the pandemic affect West Virginia government operation. The plan was prepared by Michael Dorsey, Homeland Security advisor.

"The plan identifies absenteeism as the biggest challenge the agency will have," Dorsey said. "It lists eight options the agency may use in its attempt to conduct daily operations.

"In developing these options, consideration was given to parents who might have to stay home with the kids, should schools close; to inspectors having to travel to various counties; and to the employee who is fearful of becoming sick.

"Having an outbreak will force the agency to think on its feet. Having the plan is definitely a step toward being prepared."

See PLAN, Page 16

Staying healthy

Tips for avoiding the flu

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If one is not available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve not your hand.

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze, handle trash or animal waste, use the bathroom, or when getting ready to eat. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. These are the way germs can enter your body and infect you.

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

- Stay home if you are sick for seven days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.

- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social gatherings.

- To disinfect areas, you may use a fresh mixture of one-quarter cup bleach in 1 gallon of water. To make smaller amounts, use 1 tablespoon of bleach in 1 quart of water.

Brannon is DEP August Employee of the Month

Bill Brannon is the Department of Environmental Protection's August Employee of the Month.

Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman made the announcement at the DEP's annual Employee Recognition Event on Sept. 16 at Little Creek Park.



Brannon

A 33-year veteran of the agency, Brannon is the deputy director of the Division of Water and Waste Management and provides direct support to the division director in matters of policy and management for the division.

Brannon also serves as the DEP's representative on several interstate commissions and currently is the chairman of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin Co-Op.

"Bill delivers presentations, chairs meetings and prepares reports and other correspondence on issues related to environmental policy," Huffman said. "He attends meetings, seminars, workshops and other training opportunities to maintain an adequate level of knowledge and expertise on environmental issues. He's also been a dependable liaison with the agriculture agencies, diplomatically addressing many controversial topics over the years.

"It's impossible to mention all of Bill's great accomplishments and contributions to the agency, but his work has been exemplary throughout the years and he's always had the ability to keep everyone smiling."

NEW ADDITIONS

Recent DEP hires:

- Jason Ely, DWWM, Sept. 1
- Jeffrey Ginger, DWWM, Sept. 1
- Jeremiah McCoy, DMR, Sept. 16
- April O'Dell, administration, Sept. 28
- Stephen McBrayer, AML, Sept. 28

Walking for Wellness helps create fitness fans

By Colleen O'Neill

Although the Walking for Wellness program has ended, the wellness benefits of walking live on.

"Many folks felt their participation in Walking for Wellness has been beneficial to their health," said Teresa Weaver, Wellness coordinator for the Department of Environmental Protection. "They plan to continue walking for exercise."

Bob Barnes topped all DEP employees in the number of steps taken during the 12-week program. His cumulative total equaled an average of 12 to 13 miles of walking a day.

During week one of the program, participants averaged just over 7,000 steps per day.

By week 12, the average was up to 10,000

steps or five miles per day. Prizes were awarded to the walkers who handed in their weekly progress reports and had their name drawn.

The \$25 cash prize went to Roy Kees, of the Charleston office, the leather bag to Carol Throckmorton of the Charleston office, and the DEP chair to Annette Minor of the Logan office.

There also were prizes for the two participants who complied with all of the deadlines, had a consistent increase in weekly steps and had the highest step increase in the program from start to finish.

The slushy/snow cone maker went to Chris Daugherty of the Charleston office, and the ankle/wrist weights and heart rate watch went to Steve Graley, of the Charleston office.

DEP Youth Program will be part of Forest Festival

The Department of Environmental Protection's Youth Environmental Program is participating for the first time in the Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins.

The YEP will have a display through Oct. 3.

"This is the first year that the YEP has participated," said Diana Haid, coordinator for the YEP program.

"About three years ago, the festival committee decided it wanted more substantial exhibits, to have more interactive, hands-on displays. They want to

bring a renewed conservation message to the festival."

The YEP display will feature Junk Jeopardy, a game that involves asking questions about litter control, recycling, and other solid waste management issues.

The Mountain State Forest Festival is one of the state's largest festivals. More than 30,000 people attend each year.

"Our focus will be on Oct. 1, when 1,000 school children will be attending," said Haid.

PLAN

Continued from Page 15

Everyday precautions can keep you healthy. "Those things your mom used to say to you are the things that really work," Canterbury said. "Like

washing your hands, covering your mouth or nose when you cough or sneeze — little things like that.

"This is important because influenza viruses can live for 24 to 48 hours on nonporous surfaces and less than 12 hours on porous

surfaces.

Canterbury said she has spoken with Human Resources about the question of absenteeism and needing a doctor's excuse if an employee misses three or more consecutive days. "They have informed me that the De-

partment of Personnel is working on an emergency rule regarding these issues," Canterbury said. "If you're sick, we want you to be able to stay home."

For more information about the seasonal flu or the flu pandemic, go to: www.wvflu.org.

SMITH

Continued from Page 9

firmed.

We were about 500 feet underground and getting ready to head close to five miles into a mountain on a mantrip, the only source of transportation aside from our legs.

We all crammed into the front of the mantrip to begin our very uncomfortable, hour-long journey deep into the mountain.

Being inside a mine is obviously dark, but it's a dark unlike anything you can imagine.

We stopped occasionally to walk around and look at different areas but you constantly had to watch your noggin.

The ceilings were low, very uneven and contained wires juiced with 12,000 volts of electricity. In some areas, one touch of those wires and you were a goner.

I was naturally a nervous wreck.

As we walked around, hunched over in most areas trying to avoid



Autumn Smith (left) and Diana Haid are geared up before their trip to the face of a longwall mining operation.

risky spots, crumbling walls and dips in the ceiling, I found it hard to believe there were people under here for 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

We were just touring and I was already exhausted.

After a while, we reached our destination, the face of the longwall operation.

We climbed over large

jacks that are constantly moving and back into an extremely narrow cave where we waited for a giant shear to come tearing through the rock.

As I stood there stooped over in my heavy gear, in between two moving jacks, a ceiling crumbling just behind me and a shear coming toward me cutting coal out of the

mountain at super speed, I looked at the men who were toiling all around me and couldn't help but think it takes an incredible person to do this type of work.

These men and women are extremely smart, fearless and strong.

The stereotype of miners is completely wrong. What they do on a daily basis so we can have electricity is quite admirable.

I doubt I will ever go back into a mine, but this experience was an eye-opener and I'm grateful for having had the opportunity.

Having witnessed firsthand the difficulty of their job and the environment in which they work, my desk job seems like a vacation!

I have a new appreciation for the men and women who face physical risks daily so we can enjoy the benefits of electricity.

Thanks, coal miners.

Smith is an executive assistant for the DEP.

HAID

Continued from Page 9

the number of times I hit my head on the mine roof. I could walk straight up for a good bit of the journey, which is more than I can say for some of the others in our group.

Standing at the face of a longwall gave me a tremendous amount of respect for those making a living in a deep mine. Positioned between huge hydraulic jacks that are literally holding the roof of the mine up so that 900 feet of mountain doesn't bury us alive and watching a shearer's large tines with carbon heads chew into the 1,000-foot wide, 16,000-foot long coal seam just 20 feet in front of me was staggering.

I experienced something that very few people, who are not coal miners, get to experi-



The mantrip ride from the shaft elevator to the face of the longwall operation took close to an hour on these tracks.

ence. I will never forget it.

Last year, I scheduled a tour to a high-wall surface mine for the Youth Environmental Conference participants. Touring a deep mine offered a different perspective on mining than what I had seen from the surface mine.

However, the common thread between the two is that it's no longer

the process my grandfather experienced.

Coal mining now is very computer technical, from the huge dump trucks, shovels and bulldozers on the surface mine to the deep mine's shearer, hydraulic jacks and power station that controls emulsion mix that keeps the coal dust down. All are now operated by computers.

As coordinator of the

Youth Environmental Program, I have the privilege of working with West Virginia's young people by providing an atmosphere of sound environmental learning.

My goal is to raise their awareness of the environment and encourage them to enter into environmental fields. I don't tell them which field to enter, nor do I influence their opinions. I help put the information out there for them to see, interact with and experience, all the while allowing them to form their own opinions.

The upcoming generation's graduates entering environmental fields need a great deal of computer intellect as part of their environmental knowledge, regardless of the field they enter.

Haid is Youth Program Coordinator for the DEP.

DEP investigators link algae to fish kill

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection believes a golden algae bloom is linked to a large fish kill on Dunkard Creek, in northern West Virginia and southwestern Pennsylvania.

DEP staff members investigating the incident narrowed down the causes of the fish kill after consulting with algae experts from West Virginia University, North Carolina and Texas.

The algae found in Dunkard Creek has been tentatively identified as *Prymnesium parvum*, commonly called golden algae,

which occurs worldwide, but primarily in coastal waters that have higher salt or mineral content.

The algae produces toxins that can affect gill-breathing organisms and the most visible result of a fish kill caused by golden algae is dead and dying fish and mussels of all species and sizes.

"Narrowing down the cause will allow us and anyone who may be found to be responsible to find a solution," said Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman.

"Some members of our investigation team are now turning

their attention to finding ways to minimize or eliminate the algae bloom."

All available information indicates that golden algae is not known to cause human health problems, and no immediate harmful effects have been recorded in mammals and birds observed eating dead and dying fish and drinking the water in areas with golden algae.

To avoid the possibility of spreading the algae, the DEP requests all entities refrain from transporting water from Dunkard Creek to other watersheds.

ALUISE

Continued from Page 9

traveler, arranged the trip. Diana and Autumn, like me, were curious rookies. By the end of the enlightening day, all three of us had a new appreciation for a grueling and dangerous profession only a select few can do.

I wouldn't be one of them. I like daylight — and driving over mountains, not under them — too much. I'm also not particularly partial to the underground miner's dress code. The typical miner lugs about 15 extra pounds of gear to his job.

Before descending into the darkness, we donned heavy coveralls with reflective strips, steel-toed boots, a hard hat with a light at-

tached, a self-rescuer respirator just in case we ran out of breathable air and batteries for our lights.

I kept thinking of that scene from the movie "October Sky" when Homer Hickam, after dropping out of Big Creek High School to work in the mines, enters the elevator for his first trip down under. A grizzled voice in the background says, "Turn your light on, boy."

I turned mine on and didn't turn it off until our guide, Sam Morton, suggested we all shut our lights off to see just how dark it really was deep under the earth. It was as black as the coal that covered us.

The journey to the face of the longwall in the battery-powered mantrip took close to an

hour, with some stops along the way. We saw some lunch boxes hanging from the ceiling to keep the rats out and we passed another mantrip filled with exhausted miners headed home for the day.

As our afternoon wore on, I began to understand better how those guys felt.

Venturing around the face of the longwall was a fatigue-inducing tight squeeze and excruciatingly difficult.

The wall from which the coal was being sheared and dropped onto a conveyor belt stretched 1,000 feet. We must have walked 500 feet of it, bent over like poor souls searching for a lost contact lens.

As if that weren't taxing enough, we were constantly stepping over

and around moving parts of huge hydraulic jacks like they were copperheads snapping at our ankles.

The jacks are there to keep 900 feet of mountain from burying us like worms.

For me, the whole atmosphere was both disconcerting and amazing.

I had this urge to leave and hug my kids, but at the same time I was mesmerized by the enormity of the operation, the modern technology that tied everything together in a safe and efficient system and the dedicated miners who personify hard work.

Now, I try to think of those guys every time I turn the lights on.

Aluise is a public information specialist for the DEP.

TOUR

Continued from Page 5

permits in the Appalachian Region.

Mullins helped coordinate the Mountain State trip, which began at Yeager Airport in Charleston, where Gov. Manchin greeted the group.

Mullins said Corps officials from Washington wanted to see different types of mining activities and valley fills in West Virginia up close.

Darcy was just appointed to her current position on Aug. 11 by

President Obama.

During the bus tour of CONSOL Energy's Fola operation, which encompasses almost 10,000 acres, Darcy said she had only flown over coal mining sites before.

"That was one of the reasons for doing this (ground tour)," she said. "This has been quite an education for me. The enormity of this operation wasn't what I was expecting."

Darcy's visit to Fola included her first up-close look at highwall mining and valley fills, as well as examples of post-mining land reclama-

tion and stream restoration.

"I have a better appreciation for contour mining. It's enormous," she said.

Darcy also praised Fola officials.

"The people who own and operate this mine obviously have a sense of pride in what they're doing," she said.

Cathy St. Clair, public relations manager for CONSOL's Central Appalachia Operations, said her company was eager to host Army Corps officials.

"We were pleased that U.S. Army Corps of Engi-

neers and West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection officials took the time out of their busy schedules to visit our Fola mine to see first-hand our reclamation efforts and stream building projects," she said.

"It presented us with a good opportunity to answer questions about mining methods and reclamation practices and we hope the tour helped to give them a better understanding of how responsible mining is conducted and how good reclamation practices are carried out."