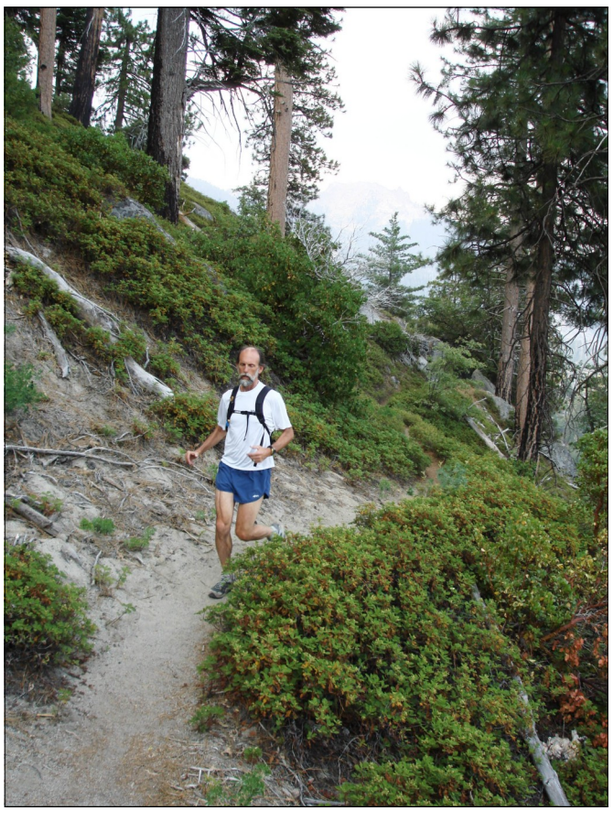
indepth
west virginia dep department of environmental protection
March 2010



Dan Lehmann, an environmental inspector specialist in the DMR's Philippi office, was instrumental in starting the West Virginia Mountain Trail Runners in 2003. He still serves as president of the organization, which has over 200 members from several states.

Happy trails to everyone

DEP inspector is man behind statewide club

By Tom Aluise

A little over 10 years ago, Dan Lehmann and his wife organized a competitive run near their home in Helvetia, Randolph County.

The 10-K race (6.2 miles) incorporated not only roads, but a favorite running venue of Lehmann's — scenic trails.

"Through that, I started meeting more and more people who liked to run trails," said Lehmann, an environmental inspector specialist in the Division of Mining and Reclamation's Philippi office.

One thing led to another and eventually Lehmann, his wife and four others were writing the bylaws on Jan. 4, 2003, for the West Virginia Mountain Trail Runners, a club for running enthusiasts who prefer mountain and backwoods paths over asphalt and concrete

See TRAILS, Page 5

This AML project 'stands out'

By Tom Aluise

There are not many Abandoned Mine Lands projects in West Virginia like the recently completed effort near Kempton, in Tucker County.

Officially named the Kempton Refuse and AMD AML Project, work at the site stretched from August 2007 through October 2009. It included a wide variety, as well as innovative, reclamation techniques to address both safety issues and environmental concerns on 60 acres of land that was underground and surface mined through the 1950s.

The work was completed despite construction difficulties related to geology, hydrology and geography. The land is located in an area where adverse weather typically reduces the construction season. Water sampling this spring required makeshift snowshoes to reach the site.

"This project was unique because of its size and the different issues involved," said Eric Coberly, Chief of the DEP's Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation. "There were a variety of AML-related problems and, in

Before (left) and after pictures of the Kempton Refuse and AMD AML Project show improvements made to the area in Tucker County. The two-year project will be submitted for national honors from the federal Office of Surface Mining.

See KEMPTON, Page 5

It's time to spring clean

By Gov. Joe Manchin III

It's been a tough winter for many parts of West Virginia. Few areas of the state were spared the record-level snowfalls or the recent flooding. Some experienced both.

Joe Manchin III
Governor

While I heard stories of heartbreak and loss, I also heard tales of heroic rescues and of neighbors helping neighbors that have touched my heart and made me proud.

As we emerge from these long and difficult winter months into spring, many of us are experiencing a renewed sense of optimism. People are emerging from their homes and cleaning up the debris left by the storms. Cities and communities are out removing the salt and cinders from the streets and making preparations for spring flowers in the landscape.

In addition, volunteer groups from around the state are gearing up to take part in two cleanup efforts that are coming up soon. The West Virginia Make It Shine Cleanup takes place the first two full weeks of April. All 55 counties have cleanups planned, and if you haven't signed up for one, I encourage you to do so. These cleanup events target streams and public lands such as parks and school grounds.

Also, the annual Adopt-A-Highway Statewide Cleanup takes place Saturday, April 24. All over the state, volunteer groups that have adopted one-mile stretches of West Virginia roadways organize efforts to pick up litter that day.

Last year, close to 8,000 dedicated volunteers participated in these two cleanup programs and made great strides in ridding our state of unsightly litter. During the Make It Shine Cleanup, volunteers collected 269,748 pounds of litter. They picked up 4,564 old tires and collected 344 appliances. Ninety-one miles of West Virginia's streams, 43 miles of its trails and 398 acres of its parks

See CLEAN, Page 7

Programs have Shahan's stamp

By Colleen O'Neill

Her interest in the environment can be translated into two successful environmental programs — REAP's Adopt-A-Highway and Operation Wildflower.

"I've been with both programs since their beginning," said the Department of Environmental Protection's Anna Shahan, the programs' state coordinator.

"Adopt-A-Highway just fell into my lap and I actually started Operation Wildflower," she said. "People contacted me, saying now that our highways were cleaned up, maybe we could do like North Carolina and plant wildflowers along the highway.

"I took that proposal to the Division of Highways and in 1990 a test site was planted at the first westbound I-64 Huntington exit with (literally) seed money donated by the West Virginia Garden Club, Inc.

"The program continues as a joint project between DEP, Division of Highways and the West Virginia garden clubs to this day.

The Department of Environmental Protection's Anna Shahan (fourth from left) has been the face behind REAP's Adopt-A-Highway and Operation Wildflower programs for over 20 years.

"Needless to say, the site was a success, DOH committed money and support to the project, and today we have about 250 one-half and one acre sites statewide."

The Adopt-A-Highway program began in West Virginia after the Litter Law Bill was passed in 1988 and money was appropriated for a litter program to be coordinated between the DOH and the Division of Natural Resources.

Last year, during the spring statewide cleanup, the Adopt-A-Highway program's roughly 6,000 volunteers cleaned up more than 4,000 miles of roadway, removing approximately 400,000 pounds of litter.

This year's spring Adopt-A-Highway cleanup is officially scheduled for April 24 but volunteers can work the week before and the week after that date.

"This year, I expect the numbers to be somewhat higher because of the heavy snow and

See PROGRAMS, Page 8

DEP Day at the Legislature

Several divisions from the Department of Environmental Protection set up shop on the second floor of the Capitol during DEP Day at the Legislature on March 2. Among the participants were the Office of Oil and Gas, Division of Water and Waste Management, Project Wet, Solid Waste, Division of Mining and Reclamation, Office of Explosives and Blasting, Division of Air Quality, Environmental Enforcement, Solid Waste Management Board, REAP and the Youth Environmental Program.

Mandirola is promoted to head of DWWM

Scott Mandirola is the new director of Water and Waste Management for the Department of Environmental Protection.

Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman appointed the New England native to the position in March after Mandirola had served as the DWWM's acting director since September 2008.

Mandirola joined the DEP in April 2006 to manage the statewide Water Quality Standards Program. He came to the DEP from a Charleston lab owned by SGS Environmental Services Inc., the largest testing and certification company in the world.

A look at DEP-related legislation

Three of the six pieces of legislation introduced by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection passed the recently completed Legislative session and were forwarded to the governor for his consideration.

In addition, the DEP Rules Bundle passed.

Following is a summary of those bills, along with bills introduced by others that passed in the Legislature and have an affect on the DEP.

■ Introduced by the DEP:

HB 4277 – NPDES Permit Signature Authority

The purpose of this bill is to transfer the authority to issue National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits from the director of the Division of Water and Waste Management to the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection.

HB 4187 – Extending Hazardous Waste Management Fund

The purpose of this bill is to continue the annual Hazardous Waste Certification Fee and the Hazardous Waste Management Fee Fund, which are scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2010, until June 30, 2015.

SB 382 – Authorizing Submission of Oil and Gas Data to State Geologic and Economic Survey

The purpose of this bill is to authorize the preparation and submission of geological reports incidental to oil and gas drilling and to require that logs and other valuable geological information obtained by oil and gas operators in the normal course of business be delivered to the State Geologic and Economic Survey.

The bill also provides for the delivery of core samples and well cuttings to the GES and assures the confidentiality of reports and other information provided to DEP and GES for a determined period of time.

SB 273 – DEP Rules Bundle

The purpose of this bill is to authorize the DEP to promulgate seven Air rules, three Solid Waste rules, six Water rules and one Oil and Gas rule.

■ Introduced by others:

SB 183 – Creating Diesel-Powered Motor Vehicle Idling Act

The purpose of this bill is to create a new article in Chapter 17C of the Code to prohibit diesel-powered motor vehicles engaged in commerce that have a GVWR of 10,001 pounds or more from excessive idling (more than 15 minutes in a continuous 60 minute period).

The bill also provides exceptions to the idling restrictions and creates criminal penalties for violation thereof.

SB 350 – Recategorizing Recycled Energy as a Renewable Energy Resource

The purpose of this bill is to redefine "recycled energy" as a renewable energy resource, rather than an alternative energy resource, for the purpose of purchasing energy resource credits.

SB 398 – Prohibiting Landfill Disposal of Certain Electronic Devices

The purpose of this bill is to prohibit the disposal of certain electronic devices, such as computers, monitors and television sets in landfills.

This legislation is a follow-up to legislation that passed in the 2008 Regular Session (SB 746), which created the Covered Electronic Devices Take Back Program within REAP.

The CED Take Back Program established a convenient and environmentally sound recovery program for the collection, recycling and reuse of certain electronic devices that have reached the end of their useful lives, maximize recovery of resources contained in discarded electronic devices and prevent improper disposal of the materials contained in electronic devices in the state's landfills.

SB 496 – Allowing Environmental Protection Advisory Council Certain Rule-Making Authority

The purpose of this bill is to authorize the Advisory Council, upon approval of a majority of its members, to submit recommendation for rulemaking to the Secretary of the DEP, who is then required to fully consider Council's recommendations when developing agency rules to be submitted for legislative approval. The bill also allows for meetings to be called upon unanimous request of Council.

SB 627 – Increasing Civil and Criminal Penalties for Littering

The purpose of this bill is to increase the minimum criminal penalty for littering up to 100 pounds from $50 to $100; to increase the minimum criminal penalty for littering more than 100 pounds from $500 to $1,000; to increase the minimum civil penalty for littering from $100 to $200; and to increase the civil penalty for failing to maintain litter receptacles from $15 per day to $30 per day.

The Division of Air Quality's Mike Rowe is the mastermind behind DAQ's collection of educational exhibits that teach the public about energy conservation.

HANDYMAN

Mike Rowe's vast talents are behind all of DAQ's exhibits

By Tom Aluise

Mike Rowe is a tinkerer.

"I've been building things of some variety for as long as I can remember," said the 16-year DEP veteran. Rowe works as an inspector in the Division of Air Quality.

It wasn't until three years ago, though, that Rowe brought his special talents to the DAQ's outreach program.

"They came to me because they needed help on one of their first projects," Rowe said.

It was a smoke generator that used two glass tubes to replicate smoke stacks. Dry ice produced smoke in one tube, while clean air escaped from the other.

"We wanted to teach kids about different air pollution control equipment and how it controls particulate emissions at power plants," Rowe said.

That was just the beginning. Rowe has been the chief engineer and architect on all 12 of the traveling educational exhibits the DAQ has constructed since it put that first smoke generator into service.

"It satisfies my need to build stuff," said Rowe, who grew up in Morgantown and has a degree in mechanical engineering. "And I like that kids enjoy them. I like the fact that when the kids are hanging around the DAQ's booth, it's because they want to see stuff and not because we're giving out candy."

Many of the exhibits are interactive and most deal with energy efficiency — using less energy means less emissions from power plants.

"We found out there is no good way of getting air quality ideas across that kids would remember," Rowe said. "Going the route of energy efficiency has worked really well. The kids are interested in it. They seem to remember it."

During DEP Day at the Legislature in March, three of Rowe's newest projects were on display in the DAQ booth. There was a diorama that features both a wind turbine and a solar panel to demonstrate alternative energy; a window display shows how different types of glass affect energy use inside a home; and three houses — two with different colored roofs and one with insulation — illustrate how temperatures inside a home and energy use are affected by its construction.

See HANDYMAN, Page 6

Earth Day festivities moving to Clay Center

By Tom Aluise

Close to 350 elementary school students from four counties are expected to take part in this year's DEP-sponsored Earth Day celebration.

The event, organized by REAP, is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on April 22 at the Clay Center in downtown Charleston. Activities will be conducted on the front terrace, but the Clay Center's grand lobby has been reserved in case of bad weather.

"That was a big selling point," said REAP's Travis Cooper, coordinator for 2010's Earth Day celebration. "The Clay Center has the facility to accommodate us if the weather is not nice."

The past several Earth Day celebrations were staged at Charleston's Coonskin Park, a good location but also one susceptible to bad weather, Cooper said.

"The first year I did it at Coonskin it was 60 degrees and sunshine," Cooper said. "The next year it was raining and 40 degrees. It was just miserable."

Another added bonus of the Clay Center is kids participating in Earth Day will be allowed to tour the facility that day, as long as their schools set up a visit with Clay Center officials in advance, Cooper said.

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If it's been set up by their schools in advance, kids at Earth Day festivities this year will be allowed to tour the Clay Center.

TRAILS

Continued from Page 1

roadways.

In 2003, WVMTR had 19 members. Today, there are close to 225, said Lehmann, the club's president. Ten different states and even a foreign country (New Zealand) are represented on WVMTR's membership list.

"West Virginia is such a great state for trail running," said the 59-year-old Lehmann, a 30-year DEP veteran. "We wanted to offer more trail venues for West Virginia runners and attract people to the state."

In addition to organizing non-competitive club runs, hosting social events and assisting other organizations with running events, WVMTR sponsors seven trail races from April through November throughout West Virginia. Of the seven races, four are ultra runs, meaning they're 50-K (31 miles) or more.

WVMTR's marquee event is the Highlands Sky Trail Run on June 19. The 40-mile race takes runners through both the Monongahela National Forest and Canaan Valley State Park.

Several of Lehmann's co-workers annually serve as volunteers at the Highlands run, manning aid stations that provide water, sports drinks and food to runners.

A new twist to the WVMTR race schedule this year is the West Virginia Trilogy. Scheduled to begin on Oct. 8, the three-day event features a 50-K race on day one, followed by a 50-miler on day 2 and a half-marathon (13.1 miles) on day three. The runs will be held in the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area, within the Monongahela National Forest.

Why is trail running so popular?

"First of all, it's such a major part of West Virginia — the rural beauty and the mountains," Lehmann said. "Trails are so much more enjoyable to run. You don't have to be concerned with traffic and although you must deal with roots and rocks, the running surface is more forgiving than pavement.

"What our members have in common is a love of the rural nature of our state and a desire to make use of the trails and some of the great parks and forests that we have in West Virginia."

Lehmann's running resume is not limited to his role as WVMTR president.

He has run the Boston Marathon three times and has completed 60 ultra runs since 1999, including five 100-mile races. His best time for a 100-miler is 21 hours.

Last summer, in 107-degree heat, Lehmann competed in the prestigious Western States 100-miler. It takes place on trails in California's Sierra Nevada and climbs 18,000 feet from the base of the Squaw Valley ski resort to Auburn, Calif. Lehmann completed the race in 29 hours and is believed to be the first-ever West Virginian to finish the run.

"You don't run for 29 hours," Lehmann said. "But you try to keep moving — even if you're walking — just to keep your forward motion."

Lehmann, who took up running in 1995 and competes annually on the DEP's Corporate Cup team, said 100-milers are a great way to help him stay focused.

"It motivates you," he said. "You know you've got a race coming up. It just kind of keeps you going and keeps you healthy."

To learn more about WVMTR go to: www.wvmtr.org.

KEMPTON

Continued from Page 1

turn, you had quite a variety of techniques and solutions out there."

The Kempton effort has already received notoriety and could land even more accolades. The $2.3 million project will be submitted by the DEP in April for national honors through the federal Office of Surface Mining's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Awards.

So far, it has been honored by the West Virginia Mining Association (Northern Reclamation Award for Outstanding AML Reclamation) and the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (Excellence in Reforestation Award).

"I think everybody who touched this project in any way is proud of it," said Dave Broschart, Northern Regional Engineer for AML. "You get these types of projects — ones that stand out — every once in a while."

Among the safety issues at Kempton were a dangerous highwall, two partially collapsed mine portals and two easily accessible surface impoundments.

The contractor, Cowgirl Up, backfilled the highwall, regraded the spoil areas, installed wetseals in the portals and drained and removed the impoundments.

Environmental concerns at Kempton included poor water quantity and quality in the tributaries that flowed throughout the property. Contaminated mine spoil was scattered throughout the site and acid drainage was flowing into receiving streams.

Among the fixes were reshaping, reseeding and reforesting un-vegetated refuse and spoil; relocating one mile of stream using natural stream channel design techniques to improve water quality and develop habitat; and installing a passive water treatment system that uses wetlands to neutralize acid drainage seeping from the two mine portals.

Jim Baczuk, an AML construction inspector out of the DEP's Philippi office and the final inspector on the Kempton project, touted the water quality improvements on the site.

"That's the main thing. There's a lot of water running through that site and what we're bringing across the site is getting improved.

"We're adding alkalinity and raising the pH with that wetland," said Baczuk.

indepth

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So, how good are DEP drivers?

Charleston native Brent Kessinger has been with the DEP since 1995.

He manages the agency's fleet of 369 vehicles, its landline telephone issues and supervises the maintenance section of Administrative Services.

Kessinger

He's worked in every area coordinated by Administrative Services, except inventory and mail.

Kessinger is engaged to be married to Anita Chapman, who works in DEP's Environmental Enforcement.

1. What do you like best about your job?

The paycheck, but there's room for improvement there, too.

2. What is your most memorable work-related experience at the DEP?

I'm not sure I could choose just one. Two might be receiving the first Partner in Purchasing Award from the Purchasing Division in

With Brent Kessinger

2000. Another is probably being told that my voice is "like chocolate." I wanted to play a Barry White record for her and say, "THIS is a real voice!"

3. How do people react when you tell them where you're employed?

With a lot of folks, there's a silence and a certain look in their eyes that tells me they don't know what I'm talking about. Others will start complaining about certain restrictions on their septic tank or on the coal companies. I always manage to specify that my job is administrative and not involved with regulations or enforcement so I don't have to hear it.

4. What have been the biggest challenges in managing 369 state-owned vehicles and the DEP's landline telephone issues?

With vehicles, it is without question the annual vehicle order. We have to constantly justify why we are ordering the types of vehicles and options we're ordering. This, plus the fact that we usually have to make changes. It's rarely approved the first time. The landline telephone issues are fairly easy, especially when compared to fleet issues.

5. Why are state vehicles white?

All state vehicles aren't white, but some years ago DEP management decided that DEP vehicles would be more recognizable if they were one color. I think they just randomly picked the color white.

6. Are DEP employees good drivers?

For the most part, I think they are. With the large fleet we have, we could easily have a lot more accidents than we do each year. A large number of the accidents occur because of the rough conditions in which most DEP drivers have to drive. However, I would advise anyone driving a state vehicle to refrain from using a cell phone while they're driving. Not only is it against DEP policy, but it also puts each driver at risk if they're in an accident and found to be at fault. They are personally liable for any damages.

7. Do you know yet how your job will change in light of the state's decision to create a Fleet Management Office within the Department of Administration?

Unfortunately I don't. I am not looking forward to the changes if they are what I think they're going to be. I want to stay with DEP.

8. You often make announcements over the DEP building's intercom system. People often comment about your "good voice." Have you ever thought about doing some broadcasting on the side?

Yes, I've thought about it and would love to get involved in it. Getting your foot in

See KESSINGER, Page 7

HANDYMAN

Continued from Page 4

Also on display at the Capitol was Rowe's favorite exhibit — the crank generator.

It helps people understand the different amount of energy needed to light a more energy-efficient, 60-watt compact fluorescent versus a 60-watt incandescent bulb.

Turning the crank to power up the incandescent bulb is five times more difficult.

"The crank generator is my favorite, just because the kids like it so much," Rowe said. "It's very interactive. The number one comment we get after people use it is, 'Wow, I didn't realize there was that big of a difference in bulbs and the amount of energy they use.'

"Kids will bring their parents back and explain to them how it works. So, they're remembering, which is important."

Rowe works mostly on his own time to build the projects — it took him about a month to finish the three newest displays — and gets plenty of help from co-workers. They try to come up with new, kid friendly exhibits every year.

"I do a lot of the construction, but there are specialty things I don't know how to do," Rowe said.

"A lot of people help with that. Otherwise, it wouldn't come together. And none of this would come together without (DAQ Director) John Benedict's support."

MOVING

Continued from Page 4

"I think this is going to be a good move," Cooper said.

"Hopefully it will be something we do at the Clay Center every year. I think it's great for the schools. They can take advantage of the things the Clay Center has to offer.

"I think this is a win-win situation for everybody."

Cooper said the number of students is down this year because so many school days were lost to snow.

Last year, close to 1,100 kids participated in the Earth Day celebration.

"A lot of counties aren't allowing or have cut back the number of field trips," Cooper said.

In addition to several DEP divisions, among those expected to participate in Earth Day this year are the Three Rivers Avian Center; the Ah Ha Butterfly Ranch; the Division of Forestry; and the Division of Natural Resources.

Day set aside for kids

April 22 is National Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

By Colleen O'Neill

Going to work with our parents was considered an unaccustomed pleasure. It meant we were "big."

Now, such an occurrence is a national event. National Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day is April 22 and the Department of Environmental Protection is joining in the festivities.

The day is a special way of sharing a part of ourselves with today's youth.

Showing where we spend our day and what we do is a way of planting seeds for tomorrow and perhaps will inspire a young person to do better in school.

"Last year, we received an announcement that the West Virginia Women's Commission, in conjunction with the Governor's Office, was having a Proclamation Ceremony, highlighting National Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day. We decided that we should plan some activities to take place at DEP," said Kenna DeRaimo, an administrative secretary with the DEP and the coordinator for this year's event. "With the help of several volunteers within the agency, our first event was a success."

This year, a couple of presentations have been planned, as well as some educational and fun activities.

One presentation will include Geocaching, which involves the use of a global positioning system unit. Whether the activity is indoors or outside depends upon the weather.

A total of 18 children and grandchildren of DEP employees, including Caleb Taylor (above), participated in last year's Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day at DEP headquarters.

The age limit is 8 to 18. The event is open to immediate family members, as well as any child that you are a mentor to, like a neighbor or a friend's child. When the children are not attending a presentation or activity, the parent/sponsor is encouraged to show the children what their job involves.

Lunch will be provided.

Phil Pfister, the 2006 winner of the World's Strongest Man Competition and a Charleston native, is coming by around noon to chat and sign autographs.

It is asked that the children are registered beforehand.

"We need to have a head count, in order to properly plan for the activities and to purchase enough food for lunch and snacks," DeRaimo said.

An e-mail notice will go out soon that will give the details about registering, along with the deadline for registration.

CLEAN

Continued from Page 2

were cleaned up by volunteers, who worked a total of 6,448 hours.

The Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup was a success as well, and met its objectives of saving taxpayers money by increasing public awareness and focusing on the consequences which result from unchecked litter. Over 5,000 volunteers picked up 409,070 pounds of litter and collected 797 tires from West Virginia's scenic roadways during the Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup.

I hope that everyone — especially those who were fortunate enough to have been spared the challenges of this winter — will make the time to help clean up around their communities. Without dedicated volunteers, it will be very difficult to meet the worthwhile goals of our cleanup programs and to fulfill our commitment of making West Virginia the cleanest state in the country.

The spring and summer tourist season is approaching fast, and we have company coming. Let's work together and clean up so our guests can see what a beautiful home we have.

New additions

Recent DEP hires:

- Mark Alt, DMR, March 1
- Laura Maxfield, DWWM, March 1
- Edward Sheehan, DMR, March 1

KESSINGER

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the door is difficult, however. I actually did a brief stint with WMUL, Marshall's radio station, for a couple of semesters when I was a student there.

9. What was your favorite job before you started at the DEP?

Believe it or not, my favorite job before DEP (and there are some days here when I'd like to go back to it), was being a cook at Ponderosa Steakhouse on Washington Street. Getting paid to grill isn't bad work if you can find it!

10. What's the most interesting thing about you that people might not know?

There are actually two things and what might make it interesting is that they are both true. First, I'm a drummer/songwriter and I am in a band called "Poor Man's Gravy." We're currently working on our third CD, but we don't play live anywhere at the moment.

Our music is a mixture of retro/70's Hard Rock and Heavy Metal with a Southern Rock flavor.

Second, even though I probably look like a left-winger, I'm actually a conservative Republican.

I believe in the free market, the Constitution, and the principles upon which America was founded, like individual liberty, self-reliance, limited government, and the right to keep what we earn.

I even maintained my conservatism through four years of earning a degree in political science, which made for some interesting classroom discussions with certain liberal professors!

PROGRAMS
Continued from Page 2

rains," Shahan said. "All that water washes the trash out of the gutters and off the hillsides."

Anyone who wishes to participate in the Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup must register in order to get supplies and for the trash they collect to be hauled away.

Interested persons should call 1-800-322-5530. The Adopt-A-Highway program is giving an LED flashlight to anyone who participates this year.

In addition to Adopt-A-Highway, the DEP's Make-It-Shine Statewide Cleanup is scheduled to run the first two weeks of April.

Adopt-A-Highway began in Tyler, Texas in 1988. A citizens group asked the Texas Department of Transportation what they could do to fight litter on Texas highways.

The program grew statewide and spread to Oklahoma, Missouri, Florida and West Virginia. What began as a state program quickly became an international program. Similar cleanup programs exist in Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Japan, France, England, Australia and New Zealand. "The English call their program 'Tidy Britain'," Shahan said.

"I have also served on the Board of Directors of the International Adopt-A-Highway Association for 10 years. And I have served three terms as president of the organization."

For more than two decades, Shahan has been coordinating West Virginia's Adopt-A-Highway and Operation Wildflower programs.

As both programs are a cooperative effort between at least two agencies, she learned a few things.

"West Virginia's Adopt-A-Highway program is different from any other state because it is a joint project between DEP and DOH," Shahan said. "In all other states, the program is operated by the DOH only.

"This put me in the unique position of working with and giving direction to employees in another agency. In the beginning, I had no idea how any of this would was going to work.

"As it turned out, the DOH has been extremely cooperative. They taught me a lot and they have been great partners in what I feel are beneficial and positive state programs — the Adopt-A-Highway and Operation Wildflower.

"These programs are like my fourth and fifth children. I have watched them grow, nourished and cared for them; suffered through their growing pains; and enjoyed their successes.

"I remember when I first took the job, someone said to me 'Why would you want to take that job? It's dirty, no one will want to pick up someone else's trash and what are you going to do when you work yourself out of a job?'

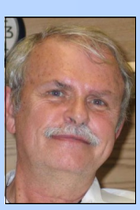
"Well, as hard as I've tried, I haven't been able to work myself out of a job but I've loved every minute of trying to do it."

What's next

- April 3 — Governor's Easter Carnival at the Capitol, 1 p.m.
- April 5-18 — Make It Shine Statewide Cleanup
- April 22 — Earth Day Celebration, Clay Center, 10 a.m.
- April 22 — Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day, DEP offices
- April 24 — Adopt A Highway Statewide Cleanup
- May 5-6 — Corporate Cup Committee Recycle Sale, DEP Headquarters, 10 a.m. -2 p.m.
- May 14-16 – Youth Environmental Day, North Bend State Park
- May 20 – CPR/AED training, 8 a.m.-noon, DEP Headquarters

DEP March retirements

Leslie Mullins
Division of Land Restoration
Date of hire: Dec. 1, 1974
Last day: March 31, 2010



Bob Barnes
Office of Administration/Fiscal Services
Date of hire: May 2, 1983
Last day: March 31, 2010

Barnes says: It is with both an abundance of joy and a modicum of trepidation that I will be ending my marriage to the great state of West Virginia on March 31, 2010 after having consummated our union on March 7, 1976.

I am joyful for my retirement because it will allow me, if good health permits, the opportunity to continue my passion for world travel.

As many of you are aware, I have travelled to many areas of the world, having been to all of the continents with the exception of Antarctica. I still have an itching to see more of this beautiful Earth. Retirement will allow me more time to do just that. For the record, I will be traveling to the Holy Lands in Israel and Jordan this October.

I am somewhat apprehensive about retirement because I am going to be venturing into unchartered waters.

With the exception of classes in graduate school at WVU, I have been actively employed since 1961. I have enjoyed my years as a faithful servant and spouse to the great state of West Virginia and I shall cherish the many fond memories of my co-workers over the years. I count everyone I have worked with as friends and I hope many consider me one as well.

On the future: Life is change, both quick and gradual. Even though there may be some truth to the adage "the older you are the more difficult it is to accept change in your life," I plan to overcome that difficulty by constant planning for my next travel venture, staying physically active, and by finding some sort of work in my retirement years. Perhaps I may be a hospital volunteer, but not a Wal-Mart greeter.

Thank you and thanks to everyone for an enjoyable career.

The DEP's Fiscal Services "rePORTAL" team was honored in March at the Capitol by the state Employee Suggestion Award Board. Pictured with Gov. Joe Manchin are (from left) Connie Dunlap, Scott Fairchild, Craig Hatcher, Dewayne Harless, Greg Null, Ramona Dickson, Barbara Miles, Ann Baker, Jennifer Paxton and Randy Taylor.

DEP Fiscal Services team recognized by Gov. Manchin

Ten current and former employees from the Department of Environmental Protection's Fiscal Services were honored by Gov. Joe Manchin for developing a cost- and time-saving system to run financial reports for the agency's divisions.

The 10-person "rePORTAL team" was honored during a March 3 ceremony in the Governor's Reception Room at the State Capitol. Gov. Manchin presented the team with a $10,000 check from the state Employee Suggestion Award Board. Each team member received $1,000.

Using rePORTAL software, the team came up with an electronic reporting mechanism several years ago that automatically runs reports without human intervention and during non-critical times, when rates are cheaper. The system not only reduces staff time and equipment upgrades but also eliminates paper reports.

Savings were calculated at $66,883 for its first year alone (2006) and have continued since.

Ramona Dickson, who retired from the DEP in July, was head of Fiscal Services when the plan was implemented. Dickson was the mover and shaker behind the project.

"We met for several months working on this," said team member Randy Taylor.

"It was something Ramona thought we needed and it turned out to be a good idea."

In addition to Dickson, former DEP employees Connie Dunlap and Scott Fairchild worked on the project.

Along with Taylor, other rePORTAL team members were Craig Hatcher, Dewayne Harless, Greg Null, Barbara Miles, Ann Baker and Jennifer Paxton.

In memory

David L. Smith, an inspector working out of the Department of Environmental Protection's Philippi Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation, died on Feb. 28.

A native of Ada, Ohio, Smith had over 30 years of experience. He lived in Philippi. Smith is survived by a son, daughter and one grandchild.

Focus is on slips, trips,falls

"Slips, Trips and Falls."

It sounds like a segment from the popular television show "America's Funniest Home Videos."

Actually, it's no laughing matter. From Jan. 1, 2009 to Feb. 1, 2010, the Department of Environmental Protection filed 18 Workers' Compensation claims, 11 of which resulted from injuries sustained during a slip, trip or fall.

Tammy Canterbury, Safety and Loss Control manager for the DEP, said the agency's Safety Committee is focusing in 2010 on reducing the number of slips, trips and falls among DEP employees. Canterbury said signs and various reminders will be posted throughout agency buildings to make employees more aware of potential hazards inside buildings, in parking lots and out in the field. She also hopes to offer training in some form.

The winter months are particularly dangerous because of snow- and ice-covered walks and parking lots.

"Sometimes it's things people don't even think about — like getting in and out of their cars," Canterbury said. "We had a lot of people falling in the parking lot."

Some simple suggestions for avoiding falls include wearing shoes with good traction; avoiding shortcuts and taking the sidewalk or a cleared pathway instead; and watching out for wet and slick floors inside of buildings during periods of precipitation.

"Sometimes, just by making people think about it, will help reduce the problem," Canterbury said. "We're going to direct our attention to it and try to bring our numbers down."

Steady on stage

DEP job helped singer gain confidence

By Colleen O'Neill

With "American Idol" burning up the airways and being the buzz around the water cooler, many people fantasize about singing in front of an audience.

One DEP employee gets to live that dream.

"There is a certain 'rush' I get when I am up there singing and the crowd is really getting into it and it just makes you feel good," said Amy Halstead, lead singer for the Charleston-area band, "Split 6."

During the day, Halstead works as an environmental resource specialist for the Department of Environmental Protection in its Division of Mining and Reclamation. But on weekend nights, she becomes the flashy vixen who entertains with sultry tones.

"Actually, my job here at DEP has helped me gain the confidence to get up and sing in front of people," said Halstead, whose husband, Lewis, is the DMR's deputy director.

"I teach ePermitting classes and sometimes to rather large audiences. I don't know that I could have done this 10 years ago. I would have been mortified at the thought of getting up in front of a crowd to speak, much less sing."

Growing up with music all around her, Halstead naturally gravitates toward music.

"My mother started playing piano in church when she was 9 years old and still plays at the same church," Halstead said. "My father always sang in church and at weddings, funerals and always around the house.

Amy Halstead, an environmental resource specialist with the Division of Mining and Reclamation, grew up in a music-oriented family. It's no surprise she sings in a band.

"Now, my sister Mollie and I are in the same band and my other sister Betsy sings opera in New York City."

When she was younger, Halstead preferred to listen to her tunes than watch television or talk on the phone.

"I am the oldest of three girls and when I got my driver's license, I would take Betsy (the troublesome middle child) to my grandmother's and take Mollie (who was 5 at the time) driving around with me, listening to the music I liked to listen to," Halstead said.

"Over the years, we have been out driving around or just sitting around and a song would come on. We would start singing and Mollie would automatically sing one part and I would automatically pick another. So, singing together just came naturally for us."

What began as a favor has fast become a second calling for Halstead.

"Well, I definitely don't do it for the money," she said. "So, I guess I do it because I really enjoy music and singing.

"Mollie had been in the band for a couple of years and another woman sang with them for a while," Halstead said.

"When that woman left, she asked me if I wanted to help out and I did. I have been in the band ever since."

The band is made up of everyday working people who have been bitten by the auditory bug. In addition to Halstead and her sister, Mollie Camargo, band members are: Randy Crouser, lead guitar, vocals, Dow Chemical; Stan Lynch, bass, vocals, West Virginia Auditor; Ric Malvis, drummer, vocals, cabinet/countertop installer; Johnny Sargent, rhythm guitar, vocals, school bus driver; and Giles Watson, keyboards, vocals, Dow Chemical (retired).

The band plays a variety of Rock from bands like Fleetwood Mac and AC/DC and includes songs by newer artists, such as Maroon 5.

Halstead's husband and kids are very supportive. It's not uncommon to see her husband in the audience.

"I don't think they think it is a really big deal," she said. "I am always singing around the house, and truth be told, I probably annoy them a lot of the time."

The schedule for the band's upcoming shows can be found at: **http://www.myspace.com/split6band304**

Swine Flu protection

The Kanawha-Charleston Health Department conducted an H1N1 influenza vaccination clinic on March 3 at the Department of Environmental Protection headquarters.

Close to 75 DEP employees took advantage of the clinic, as well as 15 of their family members, who were offered the shot as well.