Appalachian Alternatives

Appalachia – Science in the Public Interest

Forest Project

We are pressing forward on a number of regional and local forest fronts:

a) Appalachian Citizen Monitoring: In mid-May ASPI represented Kentucky at a gathering of the Appalachian Forest Watch Coalition of six groups of citizens and scientists who met to discuss monitoring of the Mixed Mesophytic Forest, which runs from southern Pennsylvania to northern Alabama. It always comes as a surprise to many that this is the most varied and oldest mixed hardwood/evergreen forest in North America and is a treasure worth celebrating and knowing better. The May training workshop was held in West Virginia (you may have read the Associated Press story) to consider methods of collecting data to help determine whether the Forest is healthy, sick or perhaps actually --as some suspect-- dying.

Paul Kalisz (of University of Kentucky), Allen Crabbe (Horse Logger) and Janet Melton (ASPI Volunteer), Anderson County, KY 1994.

ASPI is launching its portion of the monitoring program immediately after July 4th. We are funding Wade Davidson, a senior forestry student at University of Kentucky. He will work as part of a team composed of forest expert Paul Kalisz and one of his associates, Jason McGoy. At carefully selected forest sites the team will examine soil health and understory conditions, along with the condition of existing trees and estimates of trees that have fallen during the past decade. The information will be standardized and made public in due time.

The data collection to be used by this team differs somewhat from that of other Coalition members, who received separate funding from the Moriah Fund through Trees for the Planet. The larger coalition's emphasis is on using volunteers to create the plots and send data to a centralized office for data processing. In contrast, ASPI stresses the importance of professionally chosen and laid out plots, with citizen monitors being enlisted for two key tasks: to solicit oral history of the condition of the local forests over a period of time; and to perform ongoing monitoring of the selected site. In addition we plan to film the individual sites for future reference. This summer we will concentrate of seven locations of varied terrain and tree communities, where we have received permission to monitor. At the end of the summer we will take stock of results and confer with other Appalachian groups on establishing a uniform protocol.

b) The Wildcat Battle Continues: Since the last newsletter a private logging interest has leased timber at the actual Wildcat Mountain Civil War Battle Site. We had the sorrowful duty of pointing out to print and electronic media representatives the places where skidders have pulled logs right over the embankments and ditches dug by Federal troops of the Cleveland Battalion 133 years ago. We patiently gave an elementary history lesson to the public and the loggers -- and that was quite a sight. However, economics rather than the glare of television lights, may have saved the day, as repossession proceedings were conducted on some of the heavy equipment. How long will the lull last before the next struggle?

During this tragic episode, several things became evident, for one: off-road vehicles (ORVs) are not alone in the destruction of our forests. In a very short time damage from high-impact logging can far exceed what the