



# WENOCA SIERRAN

Newsletter of the  
Western North Carolina Sierra Club

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

March/April 2005

## Upcoming Programs

- Unitarian Church
- Corner of Charlotte and Edwin, Asheville
- Social 7 PM, Program 7:30

Thursday, March 24th

Ben Prater,  
Southern Appalachian  
Biodiversity Fund

\*\*\*\*\*

Thursday, April 28th

Douglas Ruley,  
Southern Environmental  
Law Center

\*\*\*\*\*

Thursday, May 26th

Thomas Rain Crowe  
Author and Environmen-  
talist

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## Ben Prater to speak at March program

"National Forest Restoration - a New Paradigm for Forest Management"



Ben Prater, an ecologist with the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project, will speak on the role of forest restoration in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, at the March Wenoca Sierra club meeting.

Mr. Prater hales from upstate South Carolina. He attended Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina where he earned a degree in Environmental Science and was awarded the 2004 Environmental Science Award. Upon graduation from Catawba he attended graduate school at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences in Dur-

ham, North Carolina. At Duke he earned a Master's of Environmental Management specializing in ecosystem management and geospatial analysis.

The focus of his research was on developing a tool-based approach to monitoring natural resource management in North Carolina's national forests.

After graduating from Duke, Mr. Prater moved to Asheville, North Carolina where he now works as an ecologist with the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project.

Mr. Prater serves as the North Carolina State Delegate for the National Forest Protection Alliance. He is also a board member of the Clinch Coalition, a grassroots forest protection organization in southwestern Virginia.

See "Upcoming Programs" for details.

## Doug Ruley to speak at April Meeting On I 26 Interstate through Asheville

Doug Ruley will speak at the April Wenoca Sierra Club meeting. His talk is titled "**Transportation Decisions and the Quality of Life**". Mr. Ruley is a senior attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center. He is an honors graduate of Harvard Law School. At our April meeting, he will give a presentation concerning Inter-

state 26 through Asheville and the impact of our transportation decisions on our community and quality of life. Mr. Ruley will discuss how citizens who are interested in this project can participate in and influence this decision and other transportation decisions that affect Asheville and western North Carolina.

See "Upcoming Programs" for details.

# Save the Smokies Hike draws 75 Hikers

By Natalie Foster

Seventy Five hikers from the Appalachian region attended the "Hike to Save the Smokies" on Tuesday, Feb 22, 2005 and well over a hundred people attended the subsequent Park Service public meeting in Bryson City, North Carolina.

The meeting was the final round of public input on the proposed North Shore Road before the draft environmental impact statement is released later this year. The Club's goal was to publicize the cash settlement as an alternative to the destructive forty mile road through the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains. The hike was a cooperative effort of the Sierra Club and several other environmental groups.

This cooperation is in itself was a great accomplishment. For example, the Appalachian Trail Club sent the first postcards ever to members inviting them out to an event.

The Sierra Club was well represented. Five Knoxville activists drove across the mountain to attend, and besides North Carolina and Tennessee, members arrived from



Georgia, and South Carolina. Norm Sharp from the national Wildlands Committee came from South Carolina and took part in the hike. Will Skelton led off the

question and answer session with an astute question about the Park Service alternatives and the 1943 Agreement.

The success of the effort to save this vital area of the Smokies from road-building was marked by:

- More than 5,000 postcards sent to Sierra Club homes in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee.
- More than 100 people attended the hike or the public meeting in Bryson City, NC (the beginning of the proposed road).
- Extensive media coverage. Four media outlets took part in the hike: The Charlotte Observer, The Asheville Citizen Times, The Smoky Mountain News and WLOS TV
- The Sierra Club was the lead story on WLOS/ABC for the 5:30, 6:00 and 11:00 news.

# Nuclear Materials Shipped Through Asheville

by Margaret Sticpewich

Mary Olson, Director of the Southeast Office of Nuclear Information and Resource Service, will speak on the shipment of nuclear materials through Asheville, on April 19th at 5:30 pm in Lord Auditorium downstairs at Pack Library (no charge).

Asheville is a crossroads -- and this is the Nuclear Heartland of the United States -- so it is really not surprising that nuclear shipments come through here on a regular basis. What may be of surprise is the number of types, sources and destinations and the fact that new policies of the Bush Administration are going to greatly increase the numbers of these shipments -- by orders of magnitude.

Unlike chemical spills, like the one that caused the mass evacuation of the tiny town of Graniteville, SC, killing eight of the town's residents in January of this year, a nuclear

accident with long-lived high-level radioactive waste could render Asheville uninhabitable for thousands of years.

"Putting high-level waste casks on our rails and roads is effectively a Mobile Chernobyl and exposes millions to the potentially catastrophic risks of severe transport accidents and even terrorist attacks on shipments," said Ms. Olson.

Ms. Olson, ([www.nirs.org](http://www.nirs.org)) will be giving a briefing and discussion of the situation and what Asheville residents can do about it at this meeting.

"Putting high-level waste casks on our rails and roads is effectively a Mobile Chernobyl"

For more information, contact Olson at 828-675-1792 or [nirs@main.nc.us](mailto:nirs@main.nc.us)

Additional material for this article is from the NIRS website, ([www.nirs.org](http://www.nirs.org))

# NORTH SHORE ROAD – GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

By Ted Snyder

## Part One– The History of the Road

A few days after Pearl Harbor, Congress passed an act authorizing the Tennessee Valley Association (TVA) to build Fontana Dam on the Little Tennessee River in western North Carolina. Work commenced immediately. TVA quickly learned that the reservoir would flood about three quarters of the length of a state road, NC 288. That road was the only access for owners and residents of land along the northern shore of the reservoir. The War Production Board refused to release manpower or materials for the reconstruction of the road above the water line.

Faced with the inability to rebuild the road, TVA decided to acquire all the private land serviced by it. That would extinguish all rights to the road. The land serviced by NC 288, some 44,400 acres, was in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park acquisition boundary, but had not been acquired due to lack of funds. In any event, Swain County was entitled to compensation for the taking of its road, the bonds for which it was still obligated to pay.

To accomplish its task, TVA, The Department of the Interior, the State of North Carolina and Swain County, NC entered into a contract, known as the 1943


Agreement. TVA agreed to acquire the 44,400 acres of land, and to transfer them to Interior, for incorporation in the Park. Interior agreed that after the war it would build a new road, part of its “Around the Park” project, having a width of at least 20 feet and a dustless surface. North Carolina agreed to donate \$100,000 toward the acquisition costs of the land.

Swain County agreed to accept the new road instead of monetary compensation.

In 1948 Interior built a 0.93 mile segment of the proposed road at the end of Fontana Dam. By 1962 it had built, in several segments, an additional 6.2 miles at the other end of the project, near Bryson City, NC. Interior was worried about the damage being caused by the construction, and convened a panel of experts to examine it. In April 1962 the panel reported “[T]he damage to the landscape and natural park values is so severe and

the future maintenance will be so great that the Service should hold in abeyance the plans for [the] project. . . .” And it further concluded: “The committee is of the opinion that continuation of such damage to natural park values is indefensible from either the standpoint of conservation or visitor use.”

Part Two– Alternatives to the Road, in next month’s newsletter.



“The Committee is of the opinion that continuation of such damage to natural park values is indefensible...”

## WENOCA Set New Agenda for 2005

Fifty people who attended the March Wenoca Sierra Club heard a panel of local activists including Brownie Newman, City Council Member, Robin Cape, Chair, Woodfin Water Board, and Cecil Bothwell, Editor, Mountain Xpress. The discussion about local environmental issues included the I-26 connector, local development and developers, area watersheds, pedestrian friendly greenways and public transportation. The conversation was frank, lively, contentious and engaging. As a result of the energy and interest demonstrated at this meeting, the Sierra Club ex-

“If we can’t do it in Asheville, it can’t be done anywhere.”  
Cecil Bothwell

ecutive committee voted to develop a vision for Asheville and the region to become a beacon for environmental sustainability. The immediate result of this decision is that the WENOCA Sierra Club will put its efforts into helping elect candidates who are environmentally sensitive, dedicated and aware for the Fall, 2005 city election. WENOCA will be coordinating our efforts with local groups who have already begun to develop this vision for the area.

If you are interested in being involved contact political chair, Susan Stewart, ryonen@main.nc.us.

**WENOCA SIERRAN is the newsletter of the Western North Carolina Sierra Club. The newsletter is published bi-monthly. If you have an article you’d like us to publish, please send it to the editor. Your comments are also welcome.**  
Editor: Russ Palmeri, rpalmeri@mindspring.com



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The Executive Committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM at EarthFare in Asheville. All WENOCA members are invited to attend. For more information, please contact Don Baker at 299-4171 or at woodlandgnome@yahoo.com

**WENOCA OFFICERS 2005  
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Don Baker– Chair 299-4171  
David Wallace, Vice Chair 626-2216  
Susan Conner, Treasurer, 350-1136  
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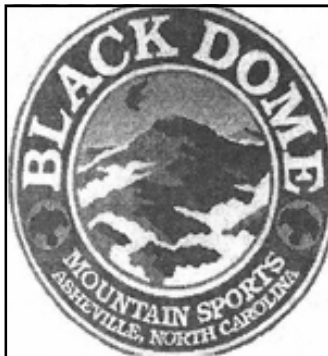
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