

WEST VIRGINIA WATER CONFERENCE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY CONGRESSMAN ALAN MOLLOHAN

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2010

9:00 AM

WATERFRONT PLACE HOTEL

MORGANTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA

**[Following an introduction by Dr. James P. Clements,
President of West Virginia University]**

THANK YOU, JIM, AND GOOD MORNING TO EVERYONE . . .

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO JOIN YOU. I'M ESPECIALLY PLEASED
TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH AN IMPORTANT DISCUSSION . . .

IN FACT, LOOKING AT THE AGENDA, I WISH THAT I'D CARVED MORE TIME
OUT OF MY SCHEDULE SO THAT I COULD ATTEND SOME OF THE OTHER
SESSIONS . . .

PAUL, I DON'T KNOW THAT YOU ARE ENTIRELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS AGENDA, BUT YOU AND YOUR TEAM HAVE REALLY PUT TOGETHER A WORTHWHILE COUPLE OF DAYS.

THE TITLE OF GEORGE CONSTANTZ'S LUNCHTIME TALK – "HOLLOWS, PEEPER, AND HIGHLANDERS" – IS REASON ENOUGH TO STICK AROUND.

I'D ALSO LOVE TO WATCH THIS AFTERNOON'S SHEPHERD UNIVERSITY-ALDERSON BROADUS DEBATE ON MARCELLUS SHALE DRILLING. I'M A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED HONESTLY THAT YOU DIDN'T INVITE ME TO HELP JUDGE, BUT I GUESS SINCE ONLY ONE OF THOSE SCHOOLS IS IN THE FIRST DISTRICT MY IMPARTIALITY MIGHT BE IN QUESTION.

ANYONE WHO KNOWS ME KNOWS OF MY LONG INTEREST IN WATER RESOURCES AND WATER QUALITY.

THREE REASONS FOR THAT –

FIRST – LIKE SO MANY WEST VIRGINIANS – I FELL IN LOVE AT AN EARLY AGE WITH THE OUTDOORS, WITH OUR STREAMS AND MOUNTAINS AND FORESTS.

I'VE NEVER QUITE GOTTEN OVER THAT FIRST CRUSH. TODAY, MY WIFE, BARBARA, AND I OWN A CABIN IN CANAAN VALLEY THAT HAS BECOME A REAL SANCTUARY. I'M NOT GOING TO START QUOTING THOREAU OR ANYTHING, BUT WALKING AROUND THOSE WOODS AND WETLANDS IS DEEPLY RESTORATIVE .

THE SECOND EXPLANATION FOR MY INTEREST IN WATER RESOURCES IS HOW CLOSELY THOSE RESOURCES HAVE BEEN LINKED TO WEST VIRGINIA'S ECONOMIC HISTORY.

IT'S A GREAT HISTORY, A POWERFUL HISTORY . . . BUT . . . AS WE WITNESS WHENEVER WE PASS A DEAD STREAM OR AN ABANDONED COAL TOWN . . . IT IS A MIXED STORY ALSO.

TOO MUCH OF OUR HISTORY IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES WAS THE HISTORY OF TAKING FROM THE LAND – A HISTORY, UNTIL RECENT DECADES AT LEAST, OF OUTSIDERS TAKING WEALTH FROM THE LAND.

IN THE EARLIEST DAYS, TRAPPERS FOUND WEALTH IN THE LAND – AND THEY TOOK IT.

THE TIMBER COMPANIES FOLLOWED. THEY FOUND WEALTH IN THE LAND – AND THEY TOOK IT.

THE COAL COMPANIES WERE NEXT. THEY, TOO, FOUND WEALTH IN THE LAND – AND THEY TOOK IT.

AND PROBABLY BECAUSE IT WAS FAR TOO OFTEN OUT OF STATE INTERESTS THAT WERE TAKING FROM THE LAND – CUTTING THE TREES OR DIGGING THE COAL – THE LAND ITSELF WAS ASSIGNED NO VALUE BEYOND WHAT COULD BE TAKEN FROM IT.

A MOUNTAIN SIDE WAS CUT CLEAR – AND THE TIMBER COMPANIES TOOK THEIR SAWS AND THEIR CREWS AND MOVED ON TO THE NEXT MOUNTAIN.

A COAL SEAM WAS EXHAUSTED – AND THE COAL COMPANIES TOOK THEIR DYNAMITE AND THEIR GIANT SHOVELS AND BEGAN DIGGING ELSEWHERE.

THE LEGACY OF THAT TAKING – DENUDED LANDSCAPES AND RUINED STREAMS – REMAINS WITH US TODAY. MAURICE BROOKS – IN HIS WONDERFUL 1965 BOOK, *THE APPALACHIANS* – DISCUSSES A PIECE OF THAT LEGACY IN TUCKER COUNTY –

“A HUNDRED YEARS AGO” – HE WRITES – “VALLEY AND SURROUNDING RIDGES WERE COVERED BY RED SPRUCE FOREST OF A DENSITY THAT IS HARD TO IMAGINE TODAY. UNDER SUCH A FOREST THE SUN NEVER REACHED TO GROUND LEVEL, HUMUS ACCUMULATED THROUGH THE AGES, AND FIRE WAS NOT A THREAT.

“THE LUMBERMAN CAME, ULTIMATELY, AND IF TOTAL AND PERMANENT DESTRUCTION OF THE ENTIRE AREA HAD BEEN AN AIM IT COULD SCARCELY HAVE BEEN MORE FULLY REALIZED. AN OFFICIAL OF THE COMPANY BOASTED THAT IN 100,000 ACRES THEY HAD NOT LEFT ONE STICK OF TIMBER THAT WOULD MAKE A TWO-BY-FOUR.”

AND THEN BROOKS DESCRIBES WHAT WAS LEFT FOR TUCKER COUNTY

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“WITH ALL COVER REMOVED, ORGANIC MATERIAL AT GROUND LEVEL BEGAN TO DRY OUT; SOON IT WAS HIGH-GRADE FUEL, AND THE INEVITABLE FIRES GOT STARTED. THERE FOLLOWED SUCH A GROUND FIRE AS THIS STATE HAS NEVER SEEN BEFORE OR SINCE. . . .

“THE VILLAGE OF DAVIS WAS SAVED BY A SERIES OF DEEP TRENCHES AROUND IT. WHEN THE DESTRUCTION WAS COMPLETE, ALL VEGETABLE

MATERIAL THAT WASN'T SOAKED HAD BURNED, AND WITH IT ALL INSECTS, WORMS, SALAMANDERS, MICE, AND OTHER BURROWING FORMS OF LIFE. CANAAN AND ITS ENVIRONS HAD BECOME A DESERT.

“I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED IF THE PITTSBURGH COMPANY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS HAS BEEN PROUD OF ITS JOB, AND IF IT HAS ENJOYED THE RESULTANT WEALTH.”

THE AREA DIDN'T REALLY BEGIN TO RECOVER UNTIL THE 1930'S, WHEN THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS SPONSORED THE REFORESTATION OF CANAAN MOUNTAIN AND REPLANTED YOUNG SPRUCE TREES – AN INITIATIVE CARRIED ON BY DAVE SAVILLE IN MORE RECENT YEARS.

AND WHAT OF THAT WEALTH THAT WAS PULLED FROM OUR LAND? IT LEFT OUR STATE – IT WENT TO PENNSYLVANIA OR NEW YORK, TO VIRGINIA OR MARYLAND.

SURE, WEST VIRGINIANS GOT A PIECE OF THE ACTION. BUT WHAT PIECE? WE SOLD OUR LABOR – THE LABOR THAT WAS NECESSARY TO TRANSFER WEALTH FROM WEST VIRGINIA TO NEW YORK AND PITTSBURGH, TO BALTIMORE AND RICHMOND. PUTTING IT BLUNTLY, WE WERE PAID TO IMPOVERISH OURSELVES AS MUCH AS WE WERE PAID TO IMPOVERISH OUR LAND AND WATER.

AND FINALLY, THE THIRD REASON I'VE PAID SO MUCH ATTENTION TO WATER ISSUES, IS THAT OUR WATER RESOURCES WILL REMAIN CRITICAL TO WEST VIRGINIA'S ECONOMY GOING FORWARD.

AS EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM KNOWS, WE ARE FACING WATER CHALLENGES EVERY BIT AS IMPORTANT AS WE FACED IN THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TIMBER INDUSTRY OR THE COAL INDUSTRY.

COAL, FOR EXAMPLE, IS STILL OUR COUNTRY'S MOST IMPORTANT ENERGY SOURCE. IT WILL REMAIN OUR COUNTRY'S MOST IMPORTANT ENERGY SOURCE FOR DECADES TO COME. THAT'S JUST REALITY, LOVE IT OR HATE IT.

AS A PARENTHETICAL ASIDE, IT'S A REALITY THAT THE MOST ARDENT ENVIRONMENTALIST AND THE MOST ANTI-REGULATION COAL OPERATOR WOULD EACH DO WELL TO ACKNOWLEDGE. IN ADDITION TO LOWERING FRUSTRATED EXPECTATIONS IN THE ONE AND EXAGGERATED FEAR IN THE OTHER, SUCH AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT WOULD ALSO LEAD TO MORE REASONED POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND MORE EFFECTIVE POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS.

IN WEST VIRGINIA, OF COURSE, THAT REALITY RAISES CRITICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR WATER RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY WITH SURFACE MINING OPERATIONS.

E.P.A., AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, ANNOUNCED AN ENHANCED REVIEW OF SURFACE MINING PERMITS LAST YEAR AND, JUST THIS PAST APRIL, ISSUED A GUIDANCE MEMO ON STANDARDS FOR NEW PERMITS.

MY OWN VIEW ON THE PERMITTING ISSUE IS THAT EPA NEEDS TO CONCLUDE ITS REVIEW AND SHOULD WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH WEST VIRGINIA STAKEHOLDERS ON MORE BALANCED GUIDANCE FOR NEW PERMITS.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, HOWEVER, I AM CONFIDENT THAT SURFACE MINING OPERATIONS WILL REMAIN A MAJOR COMPONENT OF COAL PRODUCTION IN WEST VIRGINIA. AGAIN, THAT'S JUST REALITY.

ANTI-COAL ZEALOTS – WHEN VISIONS OF WIND TURBINES STOP MAKING THEIR EYES SPIN, ANYWAY – POINT TO NATURAL GAS AS A SAFER, CLEANER ENERGY SOURCE.

NO QUESTION, NATURAL GAS HAS A BRIGHT FUTURE, BUT, IN WEST VIRGINIA ANYWAY, IT POSES EVEN LARGER QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR WATER RESOURCES THAN DOES THE COAL INDUSTRY.

AS THE U.S.G.S NOTED LAST YEAR, WHILE EXTRACTION TECHNOLOGY HAS ADVANCED – QUOTE – “THE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW THIS EXTRACTION MIGHT AFFECT WATER RESOURCES HAS NOT KEPT PACE.”

TO HELP CLOSE THAT GAP, THE INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON WHICH I SERVE INCLUDED \$4 MILLION IN THE 2011 BILL TO STUDY THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF FRACKING.

I WAS ALSO PLEASED WHEN I LEARNED ABOUT THIS CONFERENCE’S EMPHASIS ON NATURAL GAS DRILLING AND HOW FRACKING IMPACTS BOTH GROUNDWATER AND SURFACE WATER QUALITY.

IF THE U.S.G.S. CAN’T ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, I CERTAINLY CAN’T. BUT OVER MY YEARS IN CONGRESS, I HAVE DEVELOPED SOME THOUGHTS ON THE BEST WAY TO APPROACH THESE SORTS OF ISSUES – ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES, YOU MIGHT CALL THEM, OF A NEW APPROACH.

THE FIRST IS AN EMPHATIC REAFFIRMATION OF THE VALUE OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES – THOSE TRADITIONAL ASSETS PULLED FROM THE LAND.

BUT OUR APPROACH ALSO RECOGNIZES THE VALUE OF THE LAND ITSELF . . .

– A RECOGNITION THAT OUR QUALITY OF LIFE DEPENDS ON THE HEALTH OF THE LAND AND WATER. . .

– AND A RECOGNITION THAT THE GROWTH OF SUCH NEW SOURCES OF ECONOMIC VITALITY AS RECREATION, TOURISM, AND DEVELOPMENT DEPENDS ON THE HEALTH OF THE LAND AND WATER . . .

OUR APPROACH ENCOURAGES ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND UNDERSTANDS THAT INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL WILL DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THIS CENTURY.

OUR APPROACH CALLS FOR WEST VIRGINIANS TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF OUR ECONOMY, TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF OUR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS – AND THEIR SOLUTIONS – AND TO TAKE CONTROL OF OUR OWN WEALTH-PRODUCING POTENTIAL.

AND THAT IS THE KEY ELEMENT OF THIS NEW APPROACH – THAT WEST VIRGINIANS CAN IDENTIFY, ANALYZE, AND SOLVE WEST VIRGINIA'S PROBLEMS – AND THAT WEST VIRGINIANS CAN DEVELOP A KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE THAT WILL BE TRANSMITTED TO OTHER AREAS.

WE AREN'T WORKING TO IMPOVERISH OURSELVES ANY MORE, WE ARE WORKING TO BUILD OUR OWN WEALTH AND BETTER OUR STATE AND OUR COUNTRY.

WVU AND THE WATER RESEARCH INSTITUTE ARE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THAT EFFORT. YOUR ONGOING WORK IN MINE LAND RECLAMATION, COAL COMBUSTION BYPRODUCTS, WATERSHED PROTECTION, AND BROWNFIELDS REDEVELOPMENT, ALONG WITH YOUR MORE RECENT RESEARCH INTO RECYCLING OF FRAC WATER, FOR EXAMPLE, IS BUILDING THAT HOME-GROWN INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL I JUST MENTIONED.

THE CANAAN VALLEY INSTITUTE HAS MADE SUCH AN ELOQUENT STATEMENT BY TURNING WEST VIRGINIA INTO A LEADER IN MITIGATING DAMAGE FROM ACID DEPOSITION – A PROBLEM SO CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH OUR HISTORY.

OUR NEW APPROACH ALSO REJECTS THE OLD ZERO-SUM GAME THAT PITS ECONOMIC INTERESTS AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY. THESE TWO

WALK HAND IN HAND RATHER THAN FIGHT TOOTH AND CLAW – NOT ALWAYS, OF COURSE, NOT ONE HUNDRED PERCENT OF THE TIME. BUT ON THE LARGE ISSUES AND OVER THE LONG RUN, ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS WALK TOGETHER.

A RELATED ELEMENT OF THIS NEW APPROACH RECOGNIZES THAT THE BEST SOLUTIONS GROW OUT OF COOPERATION AMONG ALL STAKEHOLDERS. NONTRADITIONAL PARTNERSHIPS OFFER GREATER OPPORTUNITY FOR INNOVATIVE – AND EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS . . . WHETHER IT'S THE CANAAN VALLEY INSTITUTE'S WORK WITH FARMERS AND PROPERTY OWNERS ON STREAM RESTORATION, OR THE HIGHLANDS ACTION PROGRAMS WORK WITH STATE AND FEDERAL AND PRIVATE INTERESTS.

THESE ARE THE PRINCIPLES THAT HAVE INFORMED MY WORK IN CONGRESS OVER THE YEARS, WHETHER IT'S BEEN MY SUPPORT FOR . . .

- THE HIGHLANDS ACTION PROGRAM . . .
- THE CANAAN VALLEY INSTITUTE . . .
- STREAM RESTORATION ACTIVITIES FUNDED BY N.O.A.A. . . .

- THE CREATION OF A WEST VIRGINIA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION OFFICE, OR . . .

- THE PASSAGE OF THE NORTHERN WEST VIRGINIAN ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM, WHICH PUTS USES CORPS OF ENGINEERS FUNDING TO HELP OUR COMMUNITIES DEVELOP WATER AND WASTEWATER PROJECTS.

THE BOTTOM-LINE QUALITY THAT TIES THEM ALL TOGETHER IS A PREFERENCE FOR PRODUCTIVE WORK OVER STALE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE.

THAT PREFERENCE IS WHAT ALSO TIES TOGETHER THE PARTICIPANTS IN THIS ROOM AND EXPLAINS WHY THIS CONFERENCE IS SO VALUABLE.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR ASKING ME TO JOIN YOU, AND PLEASE ACCEPT MY BEST WISHES FOR A TERRIFIC EVENT.