



Sandi Duncan, an inspector with the DMR’s Office of Explosives and Blasting, uses a range finder at a surface mine.

Just one of the guys



Mining inspector Cindy Cross, who works out of the DEP’s Philippi office, pulls a water sample on location at Wolf Run Mining’s Sentinel Mine in Barbour County.

It’s business as usual for DMR’s women inspectors

By Tom Aluise

There are not many women in the business of inspecting West Virginia coal mines. Of the roughly 100 inspectors in the DEP’s Division of Mining and Reclamation, only four are female. To which those women say, “no big deal.” Gender hasn’t been — nor do the women inspectors ex-



Adkins

pect it to be — an issue in their ability to effectively do their jobs in a male-dominated industry. For the most part, the women said, they’ve been treated fairly and professionally by both their peers and

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Philled up in Philippi

DEP field office has outgrown its walls

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

By Tom Aluise

PHILIPPI — There are plenty of positives about the Department of Environmental Protection's Philippi office.

For starters, it has a great view of the Tygart River, which cuts through this historic Barbour County community, site of the first land battle of the Civil War. The office is centrally located, within walking distance of the town's restaurants and stores and a short trek away from the famous Philippi covered bridge.

The DEP is housed in a three-story brick building that also includes the local branch of the U.S. Postal Service (first floor) and the county Board of Education (second floor). Mail delivery is a convenient two floors down for the majority of DEP folks, who occupy the entire third floor. A DEP permitting section shares first-floor space with the post office.

"For this town, this is a very good location," said Brent Wiles, environmental inspector supervisor and acting assistant director for the Philippi office. "It's just not big enough. When you get everyone in here at once, it's kind of like sardines."

DEP staffers here have been battling space

issues since they settled into the city-owned building for good about 15 years ago. Currently, there are roughly 80 DEP employees stuffed into the Philippi office. The Division of Mining and Reclamation has just short of 40 workers here, followed by Abandoned Mine Lands with close to 25 and Special Reclamation with just under 20. Several vacancies have not been filled in what is a very active office.

The building's third floor offers 6,880 square feet of space. The DMR's permitting staff of 10

"For this town, this is a very good location. It's just not big enough. When you get everyone in here at once, it's kind of like sardines."

— **Brent Wiles**

Environmental
Inspector Supervisor,
Philippi office

The DEP's Philippi office shares this three-story building with the U.S. Postal Service and the Barbour County Board of Education. Most of the DEP personnel are on the third floor.



Division of Water and Waste Management employee Bob Coontz, left, and blasting inspector Mike Kromer share a work area that's essentially in the office hallway.



Supervisor Dian Mitchell, left, and Brent Wiles, environmental inspector supervisor/acting assistant director of the Philippi office, say employees make the tight squeeze work.



has 2,952 square feet on the first floor in which to operate. It's simply not enough in either case.

Still, employees have made it work by taking

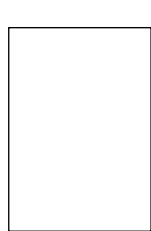
advantage of all usable space to store files, supplies, equipment and in some cases, work desks.

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PHILIPPI

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Bob Coontz, the lone Division of Water and Waste Management staffer here, shares third-floor work space with blasting inspector Mike Kromer in what essentially is the hallway. The two are tucked into a



corner, surrounded by office equipment and hallway traffic. “There just was-

Sheehan

n’t any place to put them,” said office Supervisor Dian Mitchell.

Coontz, who grew up in Philippi (population 2,800) and worked in the DEP’s Charleston headquarters for a time, is just happy to be home. He joked that he would move his desk into the restroom if he had to.

“I’m tickled to death to be here,” Coontz said. “We’ve got all the tools we need. I have no complaints.”

Neither does Kromer, who’s in the office once a week.

“The only time I pay attention (to the space issues) is when someone wants to use the scanner,” he said. “Then, I have to move out of the way.”

Like Kromer, most of the inspectors here spend the majority of their hours in the field and have limited time allotted for office work. That helps ease the daily crunch on the first and third floors, where many staffers share offices and desks.

Still, Mitchell said it’s not unusual for co-workers to stop by her office and ask what desks are vacant that day.

“Mining works well with it,” she said. “They just sit down wherever there is a place to sit down, get their work done and move on.”

“On a day-to-day basis, you just try to make

Top, close to 25 Abandoned Mine Lands staffers will move from the current Philippi office to this new location, just down the road. The building once housed an office of the state Department of Health and Human Resources. Right, David Broschart, northern regional engineer for AML, said he currently has six inspectors and a clerk working out of one room. “Right now, we’re playing musical chairs,” he said.

it work,” said Wiles, a 31-year DEP veteran. “Just finding a place to sit down, do your work and have a private conversation is tough. It’s frustrating. Basically, it boils down to wherever there is an empty seat, folks are told to take it.”

The good news is that temporary help is on the way. The even better news is that a permanent solution to the Philippi office’s space problems is in the works.

“Planning is underway to move the entire Philippi workforce to a facility that has adequate space to house all of the DEP employees in one location comfortably,” said Tammy Canterbury, the DEP’s Administrative Services manager.

“People are looking forward to us getting spread out,” Mitchell said. “They’re looking forward to something

bigger.”

Until then, AML will transfer its 20-plus employees to another building in Philippi that once housed an office of the DHHR. That move is scheduled to be completed this spring.

Mitchell said a new floor plan to address the subsequent added space in the current DEP office will be completed soon.

“I think the general consensus is we’re going to miss seeing everybody,” Mitchell said. “We’ll still be communicating with them. But it will be a change for everybody.”

“The extra space will be welcomed and they’ll just be up the street,” Wiles said. “We’ll still interact and get together for Christmas parties.”

David Broschart, northern regional engineer for AML, is looking forward to this spring’s

move and eventually to the day the entire Philippi office is together again in a building large enough to accommodate all of its needs.

“We just need to spread out a little bit,” Broschart said. “We love it here. We just have to get some more room. We’ve got stuff stuck everywhere.”

“Right now we’re playing musical chairs. People are happier when they can come in and have their own office with a desk. We will be able to do our jobs better. There will be more privacy and better working conditions. I think productivity would go up.

“We’re just crammed in here. I’ve got six inspectors and a clerk in one room.”

The Philippi office cov-

PHILIPPI

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ers much of the northern part of West Virginia, encompassing more than 30 counties. It is not short on things to do.

“This is a very active area of the state,” Broschart said. “I’d say we (AML) do half of the work being done in the state.”

Since 2001, Special Reclamation here has reclaimed 89 forfeited mine sites, has treated water at 56 sites and still has 53 to reclaim, said Assistant Director Mike Sheehan.

“Our goal is to get more people into the office working on designs to get property reclaimed,” Sheehan said.

The DMR’s cramped first-floor permitting section has 548 active permits on file and 305 under review, said Office Assistant Betty Cinalli.

Although ePermitting has helped reduce the paper stream, finding room for files — and anything else, really — remains an issue for Cinalli and co-worker Kathy Scott.

“We’re always looking for ways to reduce paper,” Cinalli said. “Kathy and I have scanned a lot of permits and put them on an external hard drive, just in an effort to eliminate paper.”

Cinalli admits having more space someday will be nice.

“But I’ll hate to lose the view of the river,” she said.



Part of the Philippi office’s permitting staff includes, from left, Jeanie Funk, Kathy Scott, Betty Cinalli and Pam Drooger. Ten people work in the Philippi permitting office.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Recent DEP hires:

- Dwight Robinson, DMR, Feb. 1
- Stephanie Ferrell-Martin, DWWM, Feb. 1
- Pamela Drooger, DMR, Feb. 8
- Valinda Neal, Admin./Executive, Feb. 15
- Susan Rose, DWWM, Feb. 16

Recent DEP retirees:

- Pat Boyd, DWWM, March 20, 1989-Feb. 19, 2010
- Bob Grafton, DMR, March 1, 1974– Feb. 26, 2010



DEP Environmental Advocate, Pam Nixon, lived near some of the Kanawha Valley’s chemical plants.

Personal experience called Nixon to DEP

By Colleen O’Neill

The Department of Environmental Protection has an environmental advocate who knows first-hand how a chemical release can negatively affect your life.

“I lived in Institute between 1979 and 1990,” said Pam Nixon, the DEP’s environmental advocate since 1998. “In Au-

gust 1985, there was a large chemical release from — at that time — Union Carbide that sent 135 of us to area hospitals and urgent care facilities.

“I was satisfied just being a wife and mother, and working as a laboratory technician at the hospital.”

But it took a per-

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Joe Manchin III
Governor

Randy Huffman
Cabinet Secretary

Kathy Cosco
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by coal operators, who are more accustomed to dealing with male inspectors.

"Now, is there bias out there? I'm sure there is," said Sandi Duncan. "But



Duncan

I don't focus on that." Duncan, who grew up in Logan County and watched her home wash away in the Buffalo Creek disaster, has been an inspector in the DMR's Office of Explosives and Blasting since 2001. She is based out of Oak Hill.

The DMR's other three female inspectors are Nancy Hieb, Tatum Adkins and Cindy Cross. Hieb works out of Oak Hill, Adkins out of Logan and Cross out of Philippi.

A Lincoln County native, Adkins has three years of experience as an inspector. Cross, who spent the majority of her childhood in Clarksburg, has been with the DEP one year.

A former health inspector in Randolph County, Cross wasn't aware just how few women mining inspectors there were when she joined the agency.

"Truthfully, once I did learn that, I was a bit concerned about acceptance," she said. "But I have to say all the inspectors in my unit and other units have been absolutely great to work with."

So has industry, Cross said.

"You just have to earn their respect and let them know you know what you're doing," she said. "I think that's true with any woman in a male-dominated position."

Duncan, a 22-year DEP veteran, rose from clerical work in Logan's permitting office to her current position. A former inspector supervisor in Logan, Darcy White,

I don't focus on that."

Duncan, who grew up in Logan County and

watched



Mining inspector Tatum Adkins walks a valley fill spillway. Adkins, a Lincoln County native, has been with the DMR Logan office for three years.

sparked Duncan's interest in blasting.

"Darcy said I would make a good inspector," said Duncan, who did permit reviews on blasting plans before joining the OEB. "They posted this job and I applied for it. It just said 'blasting inspector.' It didn't say it preferred a male."

"My gender didn't hold me back in my advancement."

Duncan has a no-nonsense approach in dealing with complaints from the public. Blasters know where she stands, as well.

"They know I expect them to do it right," Duncan said. "They know honesty with me is their best policy. The blasters I work with know what I expect. They know I don't care to write a Notice of Violation."

"I'm a warrior," Duncan added. "I'll fight for what is right. I'm more choosy with my battles

in old age. But I'll go nose-to-nose with you. I don't care if you're male or female."

Duncan often visits coal field residents' homes to investigate complaints against nearby blasting activities. Much like the industry workers she deals with, Duncan said most homeowners treat her with respect.

"I do think sometimes a man feels more comfortable talking to another man about job-related stuff," she said. "But I don't think they're being disrespectful to me."

Early on in their current jobs, the women inspectors said they were more concerned about learning a new trade than how they would be treated by their mostly male co-workers and the coal industry.

"It wasn't because I was female that I was worried," Duncan said. "The only doubt I had

was my field experience. I didn't have as much field experience."

"My focus was on my safety, not whether they would accept me. The whole environment was foreign to me."

"I wasn't so much worried about how I would be treated as I was trying to learn everything about the job," Cross said. "It was a completely new industry for me. I really didn't know what to expect."

"Initially, it was an overwhelming feeling, like, 'Wow, how am I going to learn all of this?' I can honestly say the people in this office have been absolutely wonderful with training and offering advice."

"I love being out in the field. I truly, truly love this job."

Adkins, who comes from a family of teachers and planned to be a doctor until she found out

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Fiscal services has new boss

By Colleen O'Neill

Fiscal Services is up one employee and the Department of Environmental Protection has gained another Mountaineer fan.

Jean Sheppard is the new face. She came from the Department of Health and Human Resources, where she was with the Bureau for Children and Families (BCF).

Sheppard is the DEP's new head of Fiscal Services. She replaced Ramona Dickson, who retired in July.

"BCF is composed of three main programs: Early Care & Education, Children and Adult Services and Family Assistance," Sheppard said. "Their services include child care subsidies and provider licensing, child and adult protective services, foster care, adoption, domestic violence, and the monthly family assistance checks, to name a few."

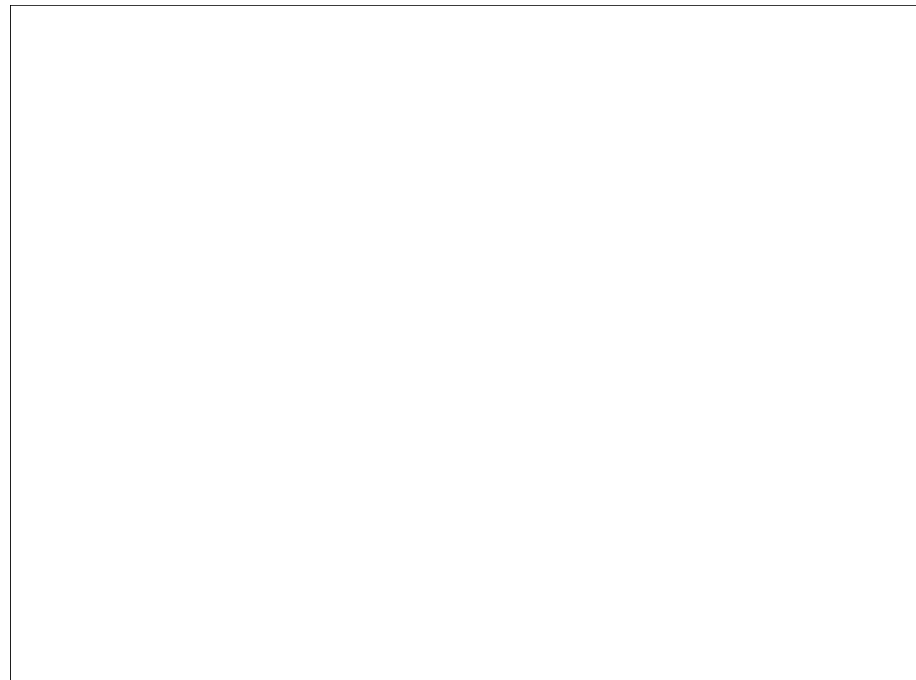
Sheppard has an education and work experience in accounting and management.

"DHHR is composed of five bureaus and BCF alone has the same budget as DEP does for the entire department," she said.

"The budget is composed of mostly federal and state dollars, with very little special revenue."

"I was in charge of the budget and reporting for the entire statewide operation with offices in 54 of the 55 counties and 2,649 employees."

A numbers person, one of the companies for



Jean Sheppard came to the DEP from the Department of Health and Human Resources.

which Sheppard worked had her performing duties that were a far cry from accounting.

"I worked at McDonough Caperton Insurance for 11 years, where I did financial reports for the property and casualty part of the company and for the Professional Liability Division," Sheppard said.

"I was in data processing for eight of the 11 years, doing systems analysis and computer programming assignments with an emphasis on accounting-related projects."

"I managed their first computer help desk, trained people on computer software packages and wrote manuals on how to use the various programs."

Besides working at McDonough Caperton, Sheppard's private sector work experience includes working at two Charleston accounting firms, an electronics repair shop in Hawaii and a Toyland in Maine.

She joined the DHHR in April 1998, where she worked for close to 12 years until a new challenge at the DEP presented itself.

"The most challenging aspect of the job will be learning all of the various programs, the terminology and all of the acronyms," Sheppard said.

When she's not playing with numbers or managing people, Sheppard is playing sports, cheering for them, or traveling.

"I play volleyball twice a week right now in leagues at the YMCA," she said. "I enjoy all sports, especially football. My husband and I go to a lot of sporting events — any kind. I'm a big WVU fan. I root for Marshall when they're not playing WVU."

"I'm a big animal lover. We have three dogs — a bloodhound, a boxer and a boxer mix. The last two came from the animal shelter."

Sheppard also likes to travel.

"I have been in all but four of the United States and outside of the country a few times," she said.

"My favorite trip was a whirlwind 16-day trip from Charleston to San Francisco and back, seeing all the main attractions along the way."

Sheppard feels it is important to enjoy your job and have fun at work, while getting a lot accomplished.

She was born and raised on the West Side of Charleston. She has one son.

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sonal event to trigger her call to activism. She volunteered many hours to educate her neighbors and others about the risks of living near toxic chemicals.

"I considered myself a 'clean air and community safety advocate.' And I even had business

cards made with that as my title," Nixon said.

During the 11 years that Nixon lived in Institute, she said there were numerous chemical releases. Some of the agents were carcinogens and skin irritants.

This sparked an interest in Nixon to learn more about the environment and how industry officials made decisions.

Nixon returned to college and in 1994 earned her master's degree in environmental science from West Virginia Graduate College, which is now Marshall University Graduate College.

Nixon's job requires her to interact extensively with the public.

"I love working with the pub-

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6



Oil and gas inspector Dave Gilbert, right, talks with workers aboard a gas well drilling rig in Nicholas County.

A real eye opener

Trip with oil and gas inspector learning experience for novice

By Tom Aluise

You can learn a lot by riding with a DEP oil and gas inspector for a day.

You will better understand the importance of monitoring abandoned wells (for starters, they can leak and adversely affect the environment).

You will uncover another meaning for “boom” that doesn’t directly involve an explosion (a containment device used when oil spills into a waterway).

And you will learn cool drilling rig terms like “tool pusher” (the rig manager who’s responsible for all operations) and “worm” (usually the most inexperienced worker on the rig).

Perhaps the most important thing I learned during a recent excursion with inspector Dave Gilbert, of the DEP’s Office of Oil and Gas, is to plan my

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Gilbert checks a Clay County creek for any signs of a recent oil well spill in the area.



Gilbert takes a look at a pit constructed to collect waste materials at a Nicholas County gas well drilling site.

Lawrence Burgess, administrative secretary for the DEP's Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation, hopes to sell a screenplay for his master's thesis.

History major turns to the arts

DEP's Lawrence Burgess aspires to sell screenplays

By Tom Aluise

Lawrence Burgess is no different than any young artist.

He's looking for a break.

And you get the feeling from talking to the 29-year-old Department of Environmental Protection employee that he's in for the long haul when it comes to pursuing his dream of selling screenplays.

"I finally found something I'm really good at," Burgess said. "Sitting in an editing room gives me pleasure. Writing screenplays brings me even more pleasure."

Burgess is an administrative secretary for the DEP's Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation. A Charleston native, Burgess joined the DEP in March 2008 after working in the state Tax Department, where one of his duties was to produce a detailed history of boxing in West Virginia for the State Athletic Commission.

The study was intended to show boxing's economic impact on the state. It also included this interesting fact: Muhammad Ali's pro debut came against Fayetteville, W.Va., police chief Tunney Hunsaker in 1960.

Burgess has an undergraduate degree in history from West Virginia

State University and is currently working toward his master's in media studies (filmmaking) at State.

"I was a history major and had a bunch of electives," Burgess said. "So, I took filmmaking and scriptwriting. My teachers commented to me that I might reconsider my intended path."

Burgess's intended path was law school.

"I took the LSAT (Law School Admission Test) and did well," Burgess said, "but when it came time to make a decision, my wife Kristen said, 'What do you really want to do with your life?' I liked the law, but I didn't love it. I couldn't see myself working 60 to 70 hours a week in a firm."

What Burgess really loved, and still does, is the arts.

"I was in a few productions when I was very young and I always enjoyed the way books and movies made me feel," he said. "Betty Burgess, my grandmother, was an angelic person and her singing voice could rip through steel with its beauty. My father is a master of the spoken word and my mother loves to work with her hands. My aunt Regina and cousin Lee are master-

NIXON

Continued from Page 6

lic," she said.

"However, it is frustrating at times not to be able to provide the assistance that some communities and individuals really need. But it is so fulfilling when someone calls back to say thanks for helping."

Nixon said her job can be challenging because some callers have several concerns that can involve the DEP, as well as state and federal agencies and local governments.

She feels her office is a clearinghouse.

She describes the responsibility of each entity in a way that the public can easily understand it.

During her time at the DEP, water has always been a major area of concern.

Nixon said the hot topics for mining and oil and gas drillings are water quality and water use issues.

Complaints can vary, depending on what type of business it is, where it's located and what season it is.

There are air quality issues resulting from industry emissions and dust from haul roads and development, unsightly illegal dumps, blasting complaints, hazardous cleanups after accidents, and flooding.

Nixon receives many e-mails and phone calls. One unforgettable call came from a woman regarding bugs.

The woman was angry and wanted to file a complaint against the DEP. She said the DEP was flying across her property and dropping millions of lady bugs on her home.

"For some reason that struck my funny bone," Nixon said. "And I began laughing and couldn't stop, which didn't help matters at all because she was very serious."

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Red all over



DEP employees gathered in the Kanawha City headquarters to show off their red.

DEP offices join fight against heart disease

Friday, Feb. 5, was a red day. Employees of the Department of Environmental Protection — its Charleston headquarters and field offices — wore red to raise awareness for women's heart disease.

National Wear Red Day is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the American Heart Association.

Although it's largely preventable, heart disease is the No. 1 killer of American women.

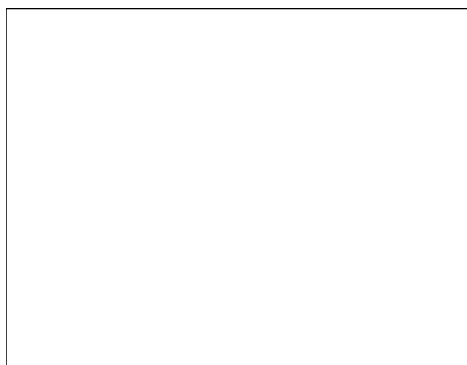
While risks begin to rise in middle age, heart disease develops over time and can start at a young age. It's never too early, or too late, to take action to prevent and control the risk factors for heart disease.



At right, staffers at the DEP's Logan office got into the spirit of National Wear Red Day. From left are, Terry Ramey, Kelli Adkins, Sandy Mounts, Patsy Bailey, Dee Rainwater, Jennifer Hollars, Marvin Journell, Terry Meade and Jim Meade. Pictured left, from the Philippi office staff, are Dianna Wright, Gregg Smith, Carla Poling, Betty Cox and Jeff Bartlett.



Ann Baker, right, and Diana Haid were singled out for their impressive red attire.



Division of Water and Waste Management employees gather for a red group shot.



ARTS

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ful dancers. So, honestly, art is in my DNA."

Burgess has written close to 30 screenplays of varying lengths and genres, from horror to drama.

One of his writings deals with a woman who comes to terms with her abusive childhood to become a mentor to others.

"I've always wanted to write a story from the feminine perspective because it's exceptionally challenging," Burgess said.

For his master's thesis, he is writing a feature-length screenplay, complete with a marketing and distribution plan. He intends to enter the screenplay — Burgess said its plot is a secret for now — in competition and hopes to eventually sell it to a production company. It will be his first crack at selling one of his works.

"I've got four or five others I'd like to sell," said Burgess, who's scheduled to graduate in December.

Writing mostly at night and sometimes scribbling notes on napkins when an inspiration hits, Burgess said he gets his ideas from a variety of sources.

"I use a lot of things when I create work," he said. "I use my frustration from being poor to write powerful things. I listen to the absurdity of life to write funny things. I use my feelings for my wife to write beautiful things."

"I see life differently. I see it through an artist's eyes. I write from the gut and I write from the soul. I'm not afraid to take risks. Writing films is what makes me a human being. I crave the pleasure of creating a meaningful story and making my wife proud of me."

Burgess said he wants to create film people haven't seen before.

"I want to make you smile, laugh, cry and cringe," he said. "Most of all, I want to make you think."



The Department of Environmental Protection hosted a reception for DEP staff, consulting engineers, accountants and other state officials associated with the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. With the help of federal stimulus money, 39 projects were funded in 2009 through the CWSRF.

Twenty-two counties helped by CWSRF

By Tom Aluise

A total of 39 projects funded by West Virginia's Clean Water State Revolving Fund will provide improved wastewater treatment service to thousands of citizens in the Mountain State.

Two of the projects will bring sewage treatment facilities to communities for the first time.

Administered by the state Department of Environmental Protection, West Virginia's CWSRF normally issues low-interest loans for 12 to 15 wastewater-related projects across the state each year. But because of \$61 million in federal stimulus money added to the state's CWSRF in 2009 through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), 39 projects in 22 different West Virginia counties are now under construction contracts.

State officials had a Feb. 17, 2010, deadline to have all of West Virginia's CWSRF federal stimulus money under contract.

"We made it with two weeks to spare," said Mike Johnson, program manager for West Virginia's CWSRF, which typically receives about \$10 to \$20 million per year in federal funding, although \$31 million has been allocated for 2010. The fund also relies on state contributions.

"All West Virginians deserve clean water and the best possible sewage treatment systems where they live," said DEP Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman. "Over the years, through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, we've been able to provide low-interest loans to help communities improve their wastewater treatment systems and subsequently their citizens' quality of life. With the infusion of stimulus funds in 2009, not only were we able to ramp up our efforts to reach more homes in the state, but existing jobs were saved and new ones created."

Gov. Joe Manchin said, "This administration remains highly committed to providing the fundamental infrastructure needs such as sanitary sewer service to the people across the state. This basic utility is important to the families and communities that deserve it, and need it. And it's a building block to our future."

The 39 projects are worth \$139 million. West Virginia's CWSRF will loan \$111 million in state and federal dollars — \$28.7 million is supplied by other sources — for the projects, \$50 million of which will be repayable. All debt is forgiven on stimulus money.

The projects also created or sustained over 300 jobs, with

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Cleanup program drawing workers

By Colleen O'Neill

Close to 85 projects are registered and scheduled for the 2010 Make It Shine statewide cleanup.

"More will trickle in," said Travis Cooper, Make It Shine coordinator. "We normally have around 125 projects scheduled and involve approximately 2,500 volunteers."



Cooper

Earmarked for the first two weeks in April, the volunteer-driven effort is a popular event.

During this time, volunteers can receive assistance in conducting cleanups on public lands. The resources available include gloves, bags, hauling in conjunction with the Department of Highways, and landfill fees.

"For this event, we ask that individuals and groups register," Cooper said. "This helps us know what assistance is needed and we can make plans to accommodate those requesting help. The advance notice helps us, but if you didn't register and are interested in participating, please let me know."

Any public lands or streams in the state are included within the cleanup.

This includes school grounds, city parks, state parks, cemeteries, lakes, rivers and streams.

"There are actually several areas that are very popular in this cleanup event," Cooper said.

"They include state parks, rivers and school grounds.

"The most numerous groups that we have register are watershed associations, civic groups and municipalities."

For more information about the Make It Shine program or to register for the statewide cleanup, Travis Cooper can be reached at 304-926-0499 ext. 1117, or e-mail at Travis.L.Cooper@wv.gov.

Time for a tune



Photo courtesy of Bob Wojcieszak/Charleston Daily Mail

By Tom Aluise

DEP webmaster Ken Stevens, far right, was part of a barbershop quartet that delivered a singing Valentine to House Speaker Rick Thompson on Feb. 12. Stevens sings tenor.

Florists aren't the only people busy on Valentine's Day.

Just ask Ken Stevens. Stevens' regular job is webmaster for the Department of Environmental Protection. In his spare time, he sings with two chapters — Greater Kanawha Valley and Huntington Tri-State — of the Barbershop Harmony Society.

DEP's Ken Stevens is a veteran of area barbershop singing crew

The 50-person Charleston-area chapter calls itself the Kanawha Kordsmen Chorus. Stevens has been a member for close to 22 years.

The Kordsmen, who deliver singing Valentines, are in high demand every year around

Feb. 14.

"We send out multiple barbershop quartets on Valentine's Day," Stevens said. "It's one of our major chapter fundraisers for the year."

This year, Stevens was included in a Kordsmen close harmony

quartet that delivered 15 singing Valentines on Valentine's Day. That's on top of the five he helped deliver for the Huntington chapter on Feb. 13 and the 14 he was part of with the

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Fairmont office to the rescue

The Department of Environmental Protection's Fairmont office extended its holiday tradition of collecting for the needy into January and February.

It also decided to collect items for the Marion County Humane Society, in addition to the Marion County Soup Opera, a local homeless shelter that Fair-

mont DEP employees have been contributing to for close to 10 years.

This year, the Fairmont office of 26 staff members collected over 100 items for the Humane Society and homeless shelter.

Above, is a sampling of goods collected for the local Humane Society, which is a no-kill shelter.

U.S. census form coming this month

U.S. census questionnaires are scheduled to be sent to homes this month.

The U.S. Constitution requires a national census once every 10 years to count the population and determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives. All U.S. residents must be counted — both citizens and non-citizens.

Households that do not complete and mail back their census questionnaire upon receipt may receive a replacement questionnaire in early April. Census takers will visit homes that do not return questionnaires.

Part-time jobs are available for the 2010 census, including census takers, census crew leaders, recruiting assistants and census clerks. For information call 1-866-861-2010 or go to: www.2010censusjobs.gov.

OPENER

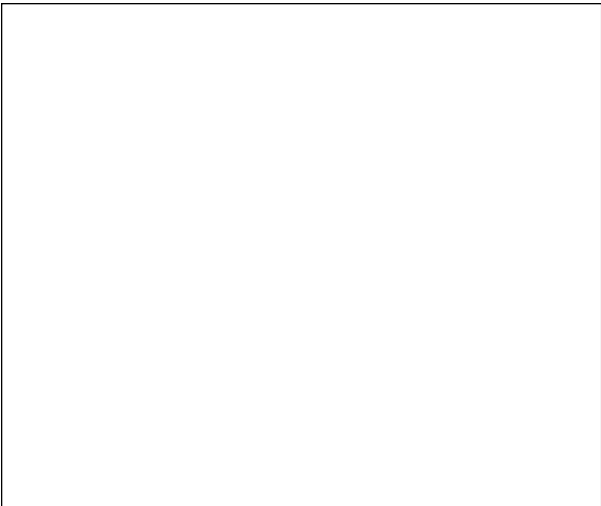
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next trip with Gilbert when snow and frigid temperatures aren't in the forecast.

"Nothing changes in the winter for us," Gilbert said. "We do the same things."

DEP inspectors are sort of like your mail carrier. Through rain, sleet and snow, they push forward. Something tells me, though, that the typical mail carrier doesn't visit the same spots I saw during my venture with Gilbert to the hinterlands of Clay and Nicholas counties. Accessibility doesn't always go hand-in-hand with oil and gas well sites.

"Getting there is half of the battle. Some of these sites we go to can be challenging, even in



DEP oil and gas inspector Dave Gilbert, right, has been with the agency three years. He worked on a rig in high school.

good weather, because of the terrain," Gilbert told me after I hopped into his four-wheel drive truck at the Wallback exit off Interstate 79.

It was around 8 a.m. and a recent heavy snow in the area had left the

roads a mess. "You're going to see some snow today," Gilbert said with a chuckle, as a plow roared by our spot in the park-and-ride lot.

After a couple of phone calls, Gilbert pointed his truck toward

Granny's Creek in Clay County and we headed up a slippery Route 36 toward our first stop of the day. An oil well had been vandalized, causing a small spill into a local creek. Gilbert wanted to make sure the cleanup was progressing.

On the way, he told me he has been with the DEP almost three years and covers Clay, Nicholas, Webster, Pocahontas, Greenbrier, Summers and Monroe counties. Gilbert, 54, grew up in Roane County and now lives in Clay County.

During his senior year of high school at Walton, Gilbert attended class for half a day and worked midnights on a drilling rig. His move to the DEP felt natural.

"It was just like com-

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COUNTIES

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stimulus funding directly responsible for nearly half of those.

Fifteen of the 39 projects are extending sewer service to an additional 2,903 customers (about 6,700 citizens) who presently rely on septic tanks or have direct discharges into streams.

Other projects include new

sewage treatment facilities for the towns of Kermit in Mingo County and Leon in Mason County, which presently have none. There are also "green" projects under contract, such as rain gardens in Morgantown; upgrades to more energy-efficient equipment in a treatment plant in Bluefield; and the elimination of a pump station in Shepherdstown, which will save energy.

In all, about 198,000 West Virginia citizens will see benefits from the projects, Johnson said.

Johnson said West Virginia will find out by March 8 if any states failed to allocate all of their stimulus funds under the CWSRF. Remaining ARRA money will be reallocated to the states that were able to commit all of their funds by the February deadline.

TUNE

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Kordsmen on Feb. 12. Included in that batch of deliveries was one to House Speaker Rick Thompson on the House floor.

A singing Valentine cost \$55 and includes two songs, a box of candy, card, silk rose and photograph. This year, Stevens' quartet sang two songs — "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" and "The Story of the Rose."

"People just love it," said Stevens, who's a tenor.

Well, most people. There are rare instances where folks aren't so receptive to the quartet's singing and refuse to accept

the valentine, Stevens said.

"Then you get the people who think they're going to hate it and about halfway through they're saying this is really neat."

Singing Valentines are just a small part of what the Kordsmen do.

They perform at birthday parties, weddings, anniversaries, company parties, churches and civic and social clubs. Customers can book the entire Kordsmen chorus, part of the chorus, or a quartet.

Kordsmen chapter meetings are held every Monday at Columbia Gas in Charleston. Their annual show is set for

May 8.

Stevens, whose singing roots stretch back to church choirs, got interested in barbershop quartet 26 years ago while working at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio.

"I was walking down the hall one day and I heard harmony coming out of one of the rooms," Stevens said.

It turned out to be a group of barbershop singers who got together once a week during lunch.

Stevens has come a long way since then.

He was recently named "Barbershopper of the Year" for the Huntington chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society.

The award is based on service to the chapter.

"They think I'm a good guy, I guess," Stevens said.

Last year, Stevens and his wife, Sharon, both received a Presidential Award of Merit for the work they do for the local district (Johnny Appleseed District) of the Barbershop Harmony Society.

Ken is the ticket and registration chairman and also creates the program for district conventions. He is a past district secretary.

Sharon helps prepare badges for the conventions and also sings with the Charleston-area chapter of the Sweet Adelines.

OPENER

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ing home,” Gilbert said as he pulled off the road to show me a map of the area. It highlighted the multitude of active and inactive oil and gas wells in the region. In his seven-county area, Gilbert covers 4,800 wells. Not many of them are the lucrative Marcellus gas operations.

“Sometimes it’s difficult to figure out what site you’re on,” Gilbert said.

Snow is not all bad for an oil and gas inspector. Old wells, for example, stand out against the white backdrop.

“You spot things you’ve never seen before,” Gilbert said. He slowed down to point out a couple of reddish, rusted-out wells on a hillside. “A leak will really stand out in the snow.”

To get to our first stop, we turned off Route 36 and headed back into a hollow. The snow-covered road looked like it had barely been traveled. Gilbert’s truck churned on.

At the well site, there were no visible signs of oil in the creek. The leak had not been significant.

“Vandals cut into an active line,” Gilbert said. “It was just people out trying to steal stuff. The company did a good job cleaning it up.”

It wasn’t long before several angry dogs from nearby property loudly

“Wells are just like people. They all have their own personality.”

Dave Gilbert

Oil and Gas inspector

voiced their displeasure over our visit and moved closer with teeth bared. Undaunted, Gilbert reached out to pet the dogs.

After one more stop at the well’s water injection site to check on a reported gas leak, we headed back toward the interstate and started our trek to Nettie, in Nicholas County, where Gilbert wanted to visit a drilling rig in operation.

Part of his job entails witnessing drilling and casing cementing. He also visits drilling sites to observe pit fluid treatments and discharges. Pit fluid is the water and other waste materials that are byproducts of the drilling process. The fluid is stored in a pond on the drilling site.

“I like being outside and you get to work with all the different aspects of drilling,” Gilbert said. “I like all the different challenges involved with it. It never gets to be routine.”

“It seems like every day something different comes up. I’m almost 55 years old and I learn something new almost every day.”

“Wells are just like

people,” Gilbert added. “They all have their own personality. They’re the same, but they’re so different.”

Driving conditions worsened on Route 19 and were equally bad on Route 39 into Nettie. We pit-stopped for gasoline, just down the road from our third stop of the day. Triana Energy was drilling a natural gas well. Eventually they would go down 8,000 feet.

“They’ve been here for a week,” Gilbert said as we parked to take a closer look at the drilling rig.

It was 13 degrees at the site, but felt much colder because of strong winds.

Gilbert spoke with the rig operators, including the tool pusher, who’s required to live on site until the project is complete. He also gave me a tour of the rig’s control room and explained how some of the instruments and gauges work.

Gilbert had visited the rig not long before our stop after workers mistakenly drilled through an abandoned mine shaft. Gilbert was concerned about water flow

out of the mine.

Future visits were planned to deal with the pit fluid and reclamation of the site, which is located on timber company property. Most of Gilbert’s wells, in fact, are on coal- and timber-owned lands, rather than individually owned property.

“Because of that,” Gilbert said, “I don’t have a lot of complaints. I’m very fortunate.”

The last stop of the day was a remote gas well drilling site not far from Nettie. Gilbert wanted to show me a site in the early stages of development.

There was no visible heavy equipment on location and a passable road had yet to be cut to the well.

To get us as close as possible, Gilbert guided his truck down a steep, snow-covered road with a dangerous drop off on one side and no guardrail to keep a vehicle from tumbling over the hillside.

For Gilbert, it was a Sunday drive. I, on the other hand, squirmed in my seat like I was on the witness stand.

“This isn’t anything,” Gilbert said. “We have one worse than this to go.”

He was right. But realizing that I was prepared to get out and walk, Gilbert shifted into low gear on the next hill and inched down to the main road.

“You had a pretty good day,” he said.

DAQ issues permit for coal-to-liquid plant

The Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Air Quality issued an air quality permit for the state’s first commercial scale coal-to-liquid plant in Mingo County.

TransGas Development, LLC, submitted the permit application in 2008 for a 756,000 gallons-per-day gasoline plant near Wharncliffe.

It is estimated the plant will use three million tons of coal per year to convert coal into

gasoline.

The application to construct the facility has been reviewed by senior staff for more than a year, and was the subject of a public meeting on Dec. 17 in Gilbert, W.Va.

“The security of our nation is one of our greatest priorities, and West Virginia is at the forefront by using one of our domestic natural resources to achieve this goal,” said Gov. Joe Manchin. “I applaud TransGas

for their commitment not only to investing in our state with this technology, but also for helping us secure our national energy independence.”

The air quality permit is the only permit the company has applied for at this point. As the project progresses it is likely more permits will be required.

The final permit, along with supporting documentation, is available on the DEP’s Web site at www.dep.wv.gov/daq.

GUYS

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she was pregnant her senior year of college, has a master's degree in safety and figured she would end up working in a chemical plant or in another industrial setting.

When she joined the DEP, Adkins thought "I'd be taking some water samples."

Instead, she's reviewing permits and ground water protection plans, walking ditches and valley fills, sampling ponds, and inspecting prep plants and refuse impoundments, just to name a few of an inspector's duties.

"I didn't dream I'd be doing what I'm doing now," Adkins said. "I didn't realize all that would be involved. But I have no second thoughts. I love it. I just like the idea of learning something new every day."

"This job isn't at all what I thought it would be. But I've never been disappointed at any time."

Adkins, whose husband works in the coal business, said her first week on the job included a grueling half-

"You just have to earn their respect and let them know you know what you're doing. I think that's true with any woman in a male-dominated position."

Cindy Cross

Mining inspector

mile trek on a valley fill. Looking back, Adkins said she put pressure on herself to prove she was tough enough to handle the job.

"Walking that fill, there's no way I would have complained or whined," she said.

"I still feel like that from time to time, but I don't feel like anyone else puts that pressure on me."

Duncan said she sometimes feels the need, as well, to stretch beyond her limits.

"With all the snow we've had, I've pushed myself to travel through some of these back roads because I thought it would be sissy if I didn't," Duncan said.

As her experience grows, Adkins said the

days of feeling like she's being tested by industry folks are rare.

"There were a couple of times where I didn't know if they were trying to take advantage of me because of my lack of knowledge or because I was a female," she said. "Of course, the longer I'm here, the less I see that. Everybody has been completely respectful. They may say things behind my back and that's fine. I just don't want to hear it."

Cross said, "I've had a couple companies test me but I don't know if it was because I was female or because I was new. I can't say it's something they wouldn't have done with a new male inspector."

For the most part,

companies go out of their way to help, Adkins said.

"I have been really surprised by the hospitality," she said. "I didn't expect that at all. I expected there would be a lot more of a hurdle I would have to overcome."

Duncan's experiences have been similar, although she said occasionally men aren't sure how to act around a female inspector when it comes to certain manners.

"The majority of guys are not going to reach down and help another guy up a steep slope," Duncan said.

"Sometimes, they struggle with whether they're supposed to help me. They don't know whether to do what they were raised to do — which is be gentlemen — or treat me like one of the guys."

That's not an issue with their fellow inspectors, the women said.

"I can see a difference," Adkins said. "People don't watch what they say as much as they used to."

"It's a good group up here," Cross said. "I just feel like I'm one of the guys."

InDEPth briefs

Kick-boxing, aerobics class offered at DEP

When it comes to keeping that New Year's resolution to be more physically fit, the Department of Environmental Protection has your back. Or in this case, your exercise.

Beginning Feb. 25, the DEP started offering an aerobics and kick-boxing class. It is offered two days a week — one day aerobics, one day kick-boxing — in the Cooper's Rock Room at

noon and employees are invited to join.

The class goes until June 30.

There are no sign-ups or enrollment fees. Employees are free to come and attend when it suits them.

Philippi office raises \$625 for efforts in Haiti

The DEP's Philippi office raised \$625 to help fund a group of six Morgantown-area doctors who went to Haiti to lend their services to

the earthquake-stricken country.

The Philippi office held two luncheons and asked for donations from employees. The doctors are part of a group called Interplast WV, which provides reconstructive surgery to children in poor countries.

DEP issues NOV for black water spill in Raleigh County

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection issued

a Notice of Violation (NOV) for a black water spill at Pioneer Fuel's Horse Creek surface mine near Clear Creek.

The Raleigh County spill was first reported to the DEP by an anonymous caller at 8:30 a.m. on Feb. 23.

A failure in a sedimentation ditch at the Horse Creek mine caused black water to be discharged from a permitted outlet into an unnamed tributary of White Oak Creek.

The spill affected approximately 2.5 miles of White Oak Creek and Clear Fork.