



URL: <http://www.wvgazette.com/article/20140519/ARTICLE/140519328>

Editorial: Global climate change is local, too

The effects of climate change are literally global in size, easily dwarfing human notions of scale. While it is a global phenomenon, people, and the animals and plants around them, will experience climate change locally, as well. Indeed, they are experiencing it now.

That is the topic of “Climate Change and the Highlands: What’s at Stake —What’s at Risk?” a conference June 7 at Blackwater Falls State Park.

Scientists, students, policy experts, lawyers, activists and other interested people will gather to learn about changes that are coming to West Virginia’s Allegheny Highlands — Tucker, Randolph, Pocahontas, Greenbrier and Monroe counties.

Featured presenters are Lonnie G. Thompson, a West Virginia native and National Medal of Science winner; Charles Bayless, former president of WVU-Tech, who worked in the electric utility industry and is a board member of the Climate Institute; and Thomas Pauley, professor emeritus of biology at Marshall University who has studied West Virginia amphibians and reptiles for almost 50 years.

A dozen other presenters promise to address specific effects in West Virginia’s mountains. For example:

-- Nicolas Zegre, a forest hydrologist and professor at WVU, will share effects on wetlands and water resources in the Highlands.

-- Alton Byers, a geographer with the West Virginia Mountain Institute, will show photos of climate change impacts at high elevations.

-- Marc McDill of Penn State University will discuss the Pennsylvania Climate Impacts Assessment.

-- Elizabeth Byers will discuss the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources Climate Change Species Vulnerability Assessment.

Still more speakers will cover trees, crayfish, salamanders, fish, business and citizen science.

“We are going to look at the impacts and risks from climate change to the economy and ecology of one of the most precious — and temperature-sensitive — areas of our state,” conference organizer Tom Rodd told the Gazette.

Rodd, a lawyer long involved in environmental and social justice issues, plans to gather the papers and presentations at the conference to share with others. He hopes to develop a summary presentation to take to classrooms or interested civic groups.

West Virginians educating themselves on the effects of global climate change specific to this region can only make a better informed — and hopefully more demanding — electorate as people increasingly must deal with this reality. Regular registration for the conference ends Friday, May 23. For information, visit wvalleghenyclimate.org.