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CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT SAYS WEST VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS ARE "ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK"

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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One day before the West Virginia State Board of Education takes up a controversy over proposed changes to West Virginia climate change science teaching standards, the conservation group Friends of Blackwater is releasing a new report titled "On the Chopping Block," that evaluates the impacts of climate change on the State's most mountainous region.

The report, which is online at <http://www.alleghenyclimate.org/documents/FINAL%201-10-15%20On%20the%20Chopping%20Block%20Report%20WITH%20EMBARGO%20LANGUAGE.pdf> says that the historic climate, ecology, and economy of the Allegheny Highlands region, which includes Canaan Valley, Dolly Sods, and the Blackwater Canyon, is already being damaged by the impacts of climate change -- and that the threat of much greater damage is rapidly growing, as global warming accelerates.

The "On the Chopping Block" report will be officially released at a press conference on Tuesday, January 13 at 3:00 PM in the West Virginia State Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia, in the Governor's Cabinet and Conference Room.

On the next day, the report will be presented to the West Virginia State Board of Education on the next day, at the Board's Wednesday, January 14 10:00 AM meeting in Charleston at Building 7 of the Capitol Complex.

The Board recently revised proposed science teaching standards to suggest that global warming and climate change are not necessarily caused by human activity, causing a substantial controversy that has attracted national attention.

"Human-caused climate change is real and the impacts are already being felt in the Highlands -- and they are getting worse," said Tom Rodd, Director of Friends of Blackwater's

Allegheny Highlands Climate Change Impacts Initiative. "We could lose our spruce and hardwood forests, our ski industry, and many important wildlife and plant species, including 'Ginny,' the West Virginia Flying Squirrel. We have to start reining in global warming before it's too late."

The report summarizes the presentations of more than a dozen scientists at a June 2014 conference at Blackwater Falls State Park in Davis, West Virginia, on the topic: "Climate Change and the Highlands: What's at Stake, What's at Risk?" and cites to a number of studies and reports by federal and state agencies, including the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

The "On the Chopping Block" report, and a list of speakers, photos, and other resources from the Blackwater Falls 2014 conference, are available at the group's website, [www.alleghenyclimate.org](http://www.alleghenyclimate.org).

"This ground-breaking report is based on dozens of peer-reviewed scientific studies. It is the first comprehensive look at the impacts of climate change on the Highlands," Rodd said. "We hope this report will be useful to the State Board of Education as they discuss how our children should learn about the best science on global warming and climate change."

Angela Anderson, Director of the Climate and Energy Programs of the Union of Concerned Scientists, praised the group's work and the Blackwater Falls conference as a "strong, science-focused program." Her comments are at [http://www.alleghenyclimate.org/documents/UCS%20signed%20Friends%20of%20Blackwater%20Letter%20of%20Support%20\(1\)%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.alleghenyclimate.org/documents/UCS%20signed%20Friends%20of%20Blackwater%20Letter%20of%20Support%20(1)%20(1).pdf).

Friends of Blackwater's Allegheny Highlands Initiative is one of 450 organizations and institutions affiliated with the UCS that are sharing information and best practices on ways to communicate about the effects of climate change in ways that motivate people to collaborate, instead of polarizing the debate.

The report cites a recently released National Climate Assessment reporting that extreme precipitation events in the Highlands region have already increased by 40 percent, due to climate change caused by increased greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere.

The report also cites U.S. Geologic Survey and University of Virginia studies that say that rising temperatures are damaging habitat for the Eastern Brook Trout, the state fish of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia; and Penn State studies saying that the region's ski industry is at risk.