

WHY IS FRIENDS OF THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY AN EXHIBITOR AT the AECOP Green Living and Energy Expo? What does protecting and promoting the Parkway have to do with energy conservation?

The Blue Ridge Parkway is threatened in many ways: by encroaching urban development that can spoil the views and ruin the ambience of America's favorite scenic drive; by ever-decreasing federal funding for needed maintenance, visitor amenities, and interpretive services; by the invasion of non-native plants that alter the ecosystem and pests that kill native species.

But there are two other threats that face the Parkway which are directly related to how we make and use energy. One of these is visible, obvious, and frustrating: AIR POLLUTION. Some estimate that the views from the Parkway have been reduced by as much as 60%. What's more, the problem is worst in the warm months when Parkway visitation is the highest.

The other is silent, insidious, and potentially the most serious threat of all: GLOBAL WARMING. Scientists predict that even a few degrees increase in the average temperature can have a dramatic impact on the ecosystems of the world. We are already seeing stress on the spruce-fir communities at higher elevations. There is a very real threat that significant extinctions of plant and animal species will occur if we are not able to curb the increase in global temperatures.

Both air pollution and global warming are caused by the same thing: the emissions from burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) for electricity generation and transportation. To preserve the Parkway as we know it, we must start to reduce these emissions. This is why FRIENDS of the Blue Ridge Parkway supports the efforts of organizations like Association of Energy Conservation Professionals and Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition (of which FRIENDS is the largest affiliate member) to promote energy conservation, efficiency, and clean, renewable energy.

We urge everyone who treasures the Blue Ridge Parkway as we do to join us in our efforts to ensure both the beautiful views and the wonderful web of life along the Parkway. We owe it to the Parkway, to ourselves, and to future generations.

You can help protect the Blue Ridge Parkway by joining FRIENDS (you'll find a membership brochure at our booth) or buying some of our logo merchandise. We also urge you to contact your elected representatives at all levels to tell them how you feel about these important issues and ask what they are doing to clean up our air and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming.