



THE VOYAGE

COPPERHEAD NEWSLETTER

WE ARE HIRING!

- Biologist (Nashville, TN)
- GIS Technician
- Summer Technicians

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

February 12—Kelsie Eshler

March 8—Gregg Janos

March 13—William Porter

March 19—Geri Price

March 21—Theresa Wetzel

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

- **SAVE THE DATES:**
 - February 8—All Hands on Deck Staff Meeting
 - March 14—Daylight Savings Time Begins
- Remember to submit all timesheets by close of business day Monday.



COPPERHEAD
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING

Volume II , Issue I

THE VOYAGE
COPPERHEAD NEWSLETTER

WELCOME ABOARD!
CELEBRATING NEW MEMBERS OF THE CREW



ALEC FOUST
Environmental Planner/NEPA Specialist



Photo Credit: Price Sewell

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Written By: Mr. Drew Vankat, Environmental Planner

Copperhead is in the final stages of providing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) support for the US Forest Service as it reviews the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP). The pipeline would cross a portion of the Jefferson National Forest in Virginia and West Virginia, triggering the agency's review of the possible impacts on soil, water, threatened and endangered species, and other resources in the area. Our contract was awarded after a competitive bid process and the project has engaged many of Copperhead's areas of expertise, including NEPA, terrestrial and aquatic biology, water and wetland resources, and GIS.

Because of the high-profile nature of the pipeline and associated public controversy, the Forest Service is using a national NEPA strike team to manage the project. Copperhead's staff has worked hand in hand with the national strike team and agency specialists at the regional and local levels to ensure our work is accurate and defensible. In particular, we needed to address resource issues that the U.S. Fourth Circuit of Appeals found deficient in a 2018 ruling on the original environmental review. High-level federal agencies—such as the Forest Service Office of General Counsel, the Bureau of Land Management Solicitor General, the Justice Department, and White House General Counsel's Office—reviewed our draft document.

An added challenge was the accelerated timeline. Whereas a typical environmental impact statement may take 12-24 months to complete, our final document was published in the Federal Register only 6 months after the contract award! We published the draft in less than 3 months and the public submitted more than 7,000 comments during the 45-day comment period. We used a customized database to enter, organize, and track the public comments – a stringent requirement for these types of projects.

In addition to the main environmental impact statement, we prepared several supporting documents. For example, our biologists completed a Biological Evaluation (BE) to assess potential impacts on listed and sensitive species. The BE is a required component of Forest Service environmental reviews and ours looked at impacts on 16 species within the proposed pipeline corridor and broader watersheds. Our staff also wrote numerous resource-specific documents outlining current conditions, trends, and potential impacts associated with a particular resource, such as silviculture, public health and safety, and recreation. And our GIS department provided mapping for both our resource specialists and their documents to visually demonstrate critical issues.

With the environmental review nearly complete, the Forest Service will soon issue a decision on whether to approve the pipeline where it crosses the Jefferson National Forest. The MVP has been a whirlwind demonstration of Copperhead's ability to complete high-profile projects, and we hope to build on its success to support future endeavors.



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FROM THE CROW'S NEST

SAFETY MUSINGS

Written By: Mr. Jim Woolcott, Safety & Health Director

As we head into 2021, I thought it would be a good time to summarize the yearly performance of our safety program for 2020. As you know, the year started off fine, and then COVID struck and everything about our normal operations changed. The appearance of an infectious world meant we now had two main areas of S&H concerns – likely illness (COVID) and injuries (project and office accidents).

Since Environmental Consulting was thankfully designated an essential service early on, we were afforded both the opportunity and obligation to continue servicing client needs in a COVID environment. Copperhead's employees adapted exceedingly well and have done an outstanding job in flexing our operations to meet governmental directives, while preventing illness among our troops. To wit, I can't tell you how impressed I am at your adaptability during this challenging period! As of Dec 1st, we have collectively taken in excess of 125 COVID tests and have not received a positive test indicating infection. Lets keep our fingers crossed and masks on!

Regarding YTD accidents, we have suffered a total of 3 recordable incidents, listed below:

<u>Injury Description</u>	<u>Accident Classification</u>	<u>Field or Office?</u>	<u>Missed Days</u>
Sprained Ankle	Slip, Trip, & Fall	Field	0
Laceration	Slip, Trip, & Fall	Field	0
Wasp Sting	Biological	Field	0

While our goal is always to avoid all injuries while at work, we were fortunate that two of the three incidents were relatively minor, and the effect on employee was transitory. The most severe was the laceration which resulted from contact with the chain of a non-rotating chainsaw while carrying it and tripping, which highlighted the need for a Chainsaw Operation Training Program. We completed this Program in the summer and immediately implemented it – anyone assigned to use chainsaws must now take a formal training program and then demonstrate in a field assessment that they understand the training techniques. For further info, reference [u:safety portal/Part II SHE Procedures/Pro #25 – Chainsaw Safety](#)

In sum, we have had a challenging year, but have avoided major injuries and illnesses while fulfilling all client needs – good job!

Changing the subject, I would like to discuss my safety and health position and its importance (and permanency) within Copperhead. When I was hired last year, Mark and I agreed that I would use my experience to create the program's foundation, while planning to recruit and mentor an interested candidate, with the goal being to transition "ownership" of my Director position to the candidate whenever their training and knowledge base allowed. The S&H Director position is very important and will morph into a fulltime permanent management position at that time. Following this transition, I would remain available for continued support as unique questions arose.

Our preference is that a current employee from within our company will express an interest and I can slowly begin mentoring them for a few hours each week as they continue their current project tasks. If no suitable candidate emerges, however, we will look elsewhere – EKU recent grads, etc. I would like to mention that the field of occupational safety and health is expanding rapidly, with one or more S&H professionals employed within virtually every medium or larger Environmental Consulting or Arch & Eng. firm, as well as all construction and manufacturing firms nationwide. Additional positions exist within local, state and federal governmental organizations. The sister fields of safety and health each have professional governing bodies offering exam certifications, much like the P.E. licensure process in engineering, which upon attainment means instant professional credibility and higher salary and management advancement opportunities. If you are interested in this opportunity, please approach Mark, Heather or myself to discuss.

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LET'S CELEBRATE!

EMPLOYEE ACHIEVEMENTS & MILESTONES



Vicky Abrams celebrates 10 years at Copperhead!



Will Seiter earns his student pilots license!



Heather Ballinger was elected to serve on the Bluegrass SHRM Board as the Internal Communications Director!



Haven Sutton accepts a full-time position with Copperhead as the Executive Assistant to the CEO!

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NEW WEBSITE DESIGN

WRITTEN BY: HAVEN SUTTON

Hello all,

I am excited to announce that thanks to the collective effort of everyone, our website is nearing launch! As it has progressed it has only gotten better, and it is perfect for showcasing our full capabilities. This includes a better display of our services, Brandenbark, your research endeavors, and who Copperhead is.

This new site will be what brings us into the new year with a bang! With all the effort that was contributed to this I believe that this will mark a special time for Copperhead as it progresses as a company. When the website becomes accessible to all I encourage everyone to look at the site and let us know your opinion. This website was created through the efforts of multiple people and so this website not only displays your research, but your work as a whole. So, we want it to be a website that everyone can be proud of. I don't know about you guys, but I am ready to give the new year a big start!

FIRST OUT OF THE GATE:



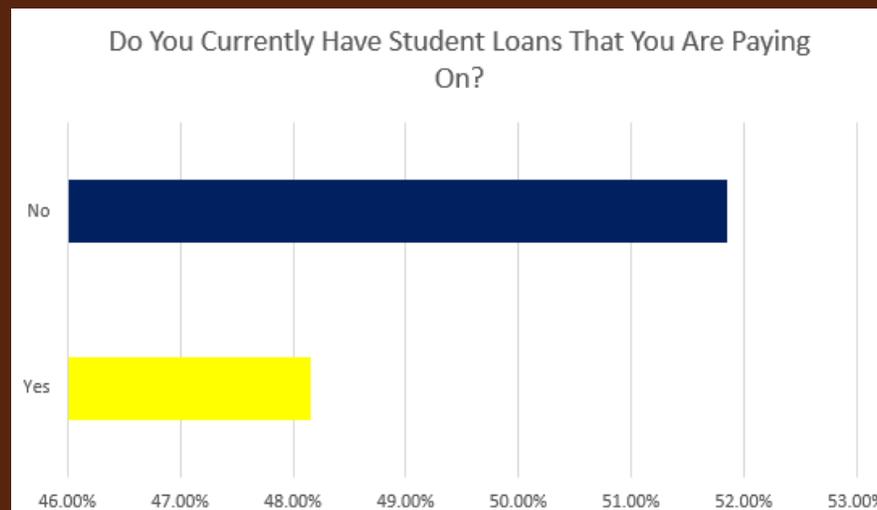
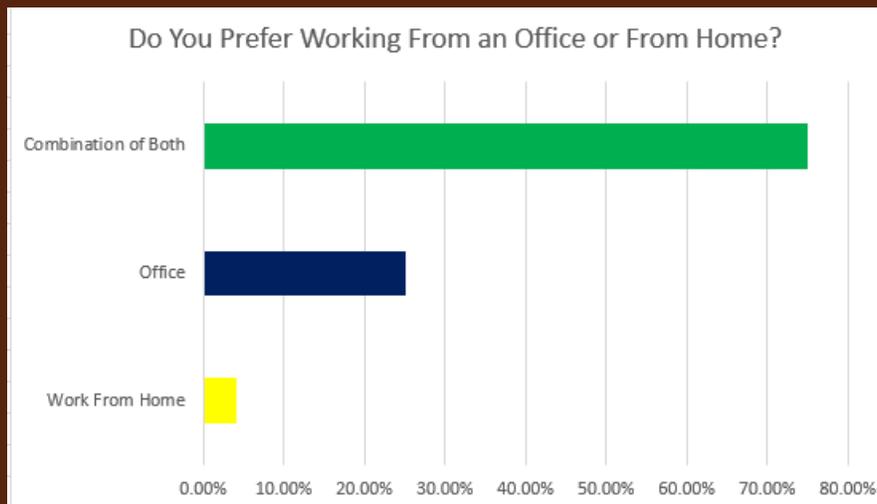
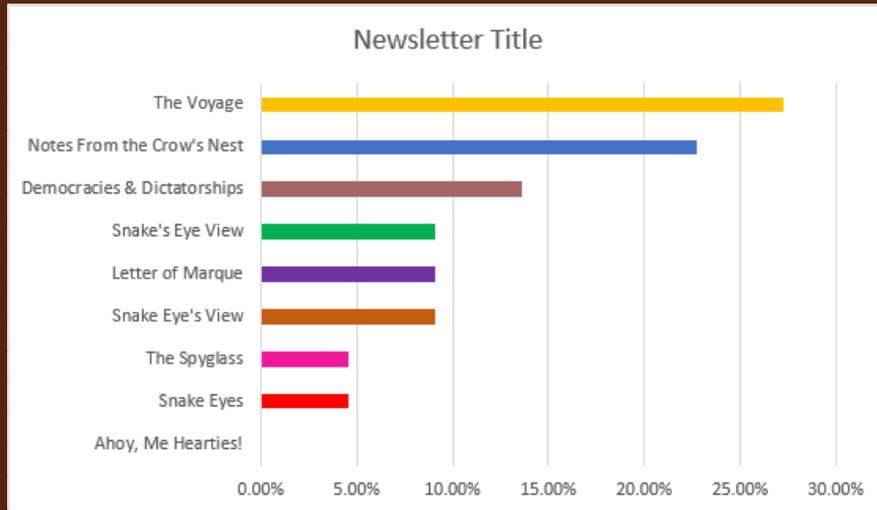
Logan Nutt, Lead Forester secured our first contract for 2021!!

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COPPERHEAD 2020 SURVEY RESULTS

PREPARED BY: HEATHER BALLINGER



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**INTRODUCING
MR. JAY MCCHORD**



Jay McChord is a highly requested speaker, trainer and consultant to companies, institutions, and organizations globally. He is recognized as an authority on the *Multi-Generational Workplace* and the emerging, *Remote Work/ Virtual Environment*,

Jay brings a unique perspective to his work as a former Global Senior Sales Trainer for a multi-billion-dollar international technology company, an elected official, published author and military artist.

Because of Jay's high energy, encouragement, enthusiasm, and passion he has become known by the title, "Your Chief Encouragement Officer". Jay and his wife, Jennifer, have two children, Riley and Davis, and make their home in Lexington, KY.

Copperhead has engaged Jay to assist in developing greater Leadership and Communication skills across our organization. We recognize that while Copperhead is doing some amazing things, to go to the next level of success as individuals and as a company, we need to lean on others who have expertise in these areas.

We are excited for you to get to know Jay and for what 2021 has in store!

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CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Copperhead Crew,

January 2021

As we launch into this new year let me first say, "THANK YOU!" Thank You to every member of this amazing crew. It is because of your daily efforts that Copperhead has not only survived the unprecedented challenging storm of 2020 (a global pandemic and economic meltdown) but has truly thrived.

While other businesses were forced to make painful cuts and lay people off (or even shut their doors for good), Copperhead added staff, seized new opportunities and was able to remain profitable. With so much negativity, fear, uncertainty and doubt all around us it is easy to forget how blessed we have been, from being identified as "Essential" to ending the year strong with momentum heading into 2021.

Although we've had a growing year, let me also acknowledge up front that there is no shortage of frustrations, irritations, and serious challenges, both behind us and ahead. With that acknowledgment though, it is my goal to be more transparent, accountable, and open throughout the year. *The Voyage* newsletter will serve as one way I will be communicating more openly about what is happening in our company as we move forward.

As we begin 2021, I am focused (daily) on navigating a course that will eventually see us become a full-service consulting firm, while at the same time never compromising our core values. Whenever you see changes happening at Copperhead, remember those changes are in some way designed to lead us to that destination. However, changes can often cause some to see what is not real.

By definition, a mirage is "an optical illusion caused by something in the atmosphere." Simply put, mirages look to be something they are not. In business, changes often times spark mirages.

Sometimes changes *appear* to be one way but in reality are very different. Business mirages can be caused by an "atmosphere" of poor communication, miscommunication, a lack of all the facts, a limited vantage point, negative attitudes, or a skewed perspective. Regardless of the cause, it is critical to know that mirages create problems that can, if not addressed, cause tremendous harm, mutiny, and even sink the ship. Over the years we have succumbed to many mirages, but the following seem to be the most reoccurring.

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1.) In the past, some have felt I do not care (or care enough) about the health and safety of our employees. This is absolutely a mirage and is totally false.

Because I view the Copperhead crew as an extension of my family, I spend a great deal of time and energy thinking about how to keep us safe. One tangible way you can see this (but may not have considered it before) is in our benefits package. If you notice, our benefits are centered around your physical (health insurance, TASC FSA, etc.), mental (vacation, flexible time after long trips in the field, etc.), and financial safety (401-K, etc.). While you may not fully understand, appreciate, or utilize all the benefits offered at Copperhead, please know they were thoughtfully chosen to protect you in one way or another.

Another way my focus on your safety shows up is in our corporate policies. Consider how quickly our policies shifted to focus on the safety of in-person encounters, office protocols, remote work, creative ways to continue to conduct fieldwork and remain safe, etc. due to COVID-19.

And finally, my consideration of your safety can be seen in the development of proper safety training for each of us to do the jobs we are responsible for or that Copperhead needs you to perform. This is an area we will be diving deeper into starting in 2021 (check out Jim's article about our H&S program).

So, to tie off the line of this first "mirage," let me say I certainly recognize my personal need for improving in the areas of diplomacy, leadership, and communication (which I will speak to shortly) and want to let each of you know your health, safety, and well-being are on the very top of this Captain's priorities.

2.) A second mirage that has plagued Copperhead is how the addition of new staff seems to send the message to current employees they are possibly being replaced or are not valued.

This is the ultimate mirage in my opinion, as the addition of new staff is a direct reflection of how much we DO value the current staff. It is because of the incredible workload so many of you carry in this company that I spend so much time looking for ways to grow the company and our efficiency without burning out our employees. One of the best ways I see to reduce the growing workload burden is by hiring more people to share the load.

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With that in mind, overlapping skills across multiple employees provides us greater overall strength, an ability to learn from one another, expanded client interaction, and depth of security to the company. A great example of this overlapping is with Drew and Marty. Because of their backgrounds in NEPA and environmental planning, they share responsibilities and workload. In three short years they have not only grown our NEPA program into a major contributor but, because of COVID, a real differentiating asset in gaining new clients and revenue. This is a great step toward that overall goal of a full-service firm.

3.) One additional mirage for me to address is that I am “controlling and a bit of a dictator.”

The reality is, as Captain of this ship (pirate ship, merchant ship, or military ship), it is ultimately my name that stands behind every promise made to our banks, our clients, our permits, and each of you (and your families) as employees. When it is your name on the line, you have to be a bit “controlling and a dictator.” It just comes with the territory. With that said though, let me be very open about what I am personally doing to address this issue.

First, to remove myself from controlling every personnel issue at Copperhead, we made an amazing hire in Heather as our HR Director. Because of her tremendous work, I am now able to release large areas of the business allowing us to work on creating policies and systems that not only keep us compliant but help us to grow.

Heather has taken on the role of developing Leadership and Communication training to be rolled out to the Management Team in 2021 (details to be coming next week). By offering this professional development opportunity to our leaders (including myself), we can spread more responsibilities and reduce the level of need for me to control every aspect. While I wished I had hired Heather years earlier, her work has been a game-changer for us over the past year, and I am so grateful to have her on board.

Along with Heather we also hired an amazing talent and asset in Jim as our Safety Director. How could we have known the critical role he would play in 2020? While the pandemic adversely affected our industry, you as employees, our clients, as well as our ongoing contracts and projects, its hardships would have been so much more dire had Jim not piloted the ship through those waters.

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Jim's experience allowed him to pull together safety plans and strategies rapidly to create a company-wide COVID-19 plan. Many of our clients and the regulatory agencies we work with now require such a plan to even be considered for a project. It is because of Jim that we not only had a plan but were able to leverage that plan to gain business that we otherwise would have lost. I am excited Jim is building a program that will now incorporate health and safety into our company's core values.

So, as we set sail into 2021, please know how aware I am of our company's (and my own) flaws and shortcomings. BUT... despite those flaws and shortcomings, Copperhead did weather the global pandemic storm of 2020 that sunk many other ships. That is because of every one of your efforts. For that again, I thank you!

Please also recognize, there are going to be changes we will experience that will require each of us to pause before becoming angry, insensitive, or negative. That pause allows us to evaluate the change and make sure it is not a "mirage" (an optical illusion created by something in the atmosphere).

Make no mistake, we are not completely through the storm with the beginning of the new year. It is the darkest right before the dawn and I fear that we will be dealing with COVID-19 for a good part of 2021. However, 2021 stands to be an amazing year of growth and opportunity for each of us individually and as a company. As the Captain of this ship I am excited to specifically see how growing in the areas of Leadership and Communication will not only keep the ship upright but improve our odds for successfully navigating the waters ahead.

As we grow, experience changes, and develop our new skill sets, I would ask you to please not allow any "mirage" to unnecessarily create instability or uncertainty that would knock us off course from all we have to achieve, enjoy, and celebrate. If you see something change in the atmosphere, please come to me or Heather to discuss how tangible it really is.

Cheers, for having the most incredible voyage TOGETHER!

Mark

