

NEWS FROM THE MID-ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS

ECHO

CANAAN VALLEY INSTITUTE



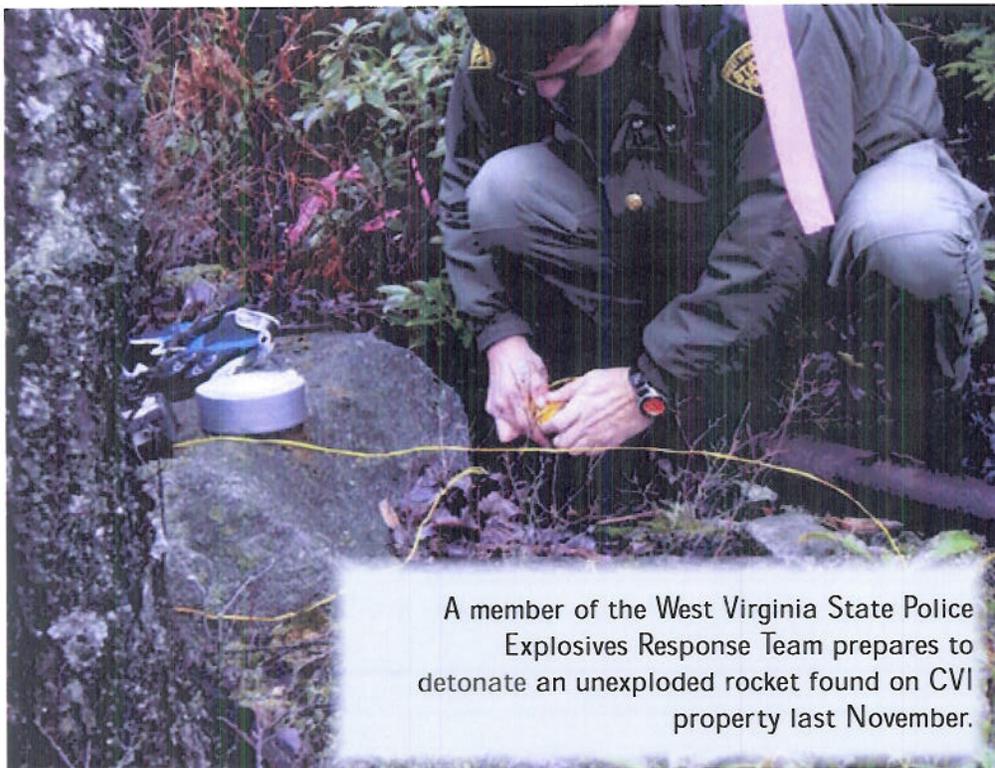
Keeping West Virginia Out of the Floodplain: FEMA Project Continues From Gilmer to Preston County

Improperly planned development in floodplains can wreak havoc on a community. In Gilmer County, West Virginia, floodplain damage is estimated to cost \$382,300 annually, and the financial cost is not the only result. Many times personal injuries and even deaths occur. Communities in the Mid-Atlantic Highlands are at particular risk to flooding because river valleys and floodplains often seem to be the only suitable place to build. To reduce the threat and cost of flood damages nationwide, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) creates and updates maps of flood boundaries for counties and municipalities to use in managing development within the floodplain.

In 2003, with funding provided by WV Congressman Alan Mollohan, CVI began building a partnership with local community organizations, the WV Office of Homeland Security and Emergency

Management, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to reduce flood damages in Gilmer County, by updating their flood maps. The entire county lies within the Little Kanawha River Watershed, and has experienced significant flooding dating back to 1900.

CVI Geologist, Ryan Gaujot, began the flood map update process by gathering existing watershed information and conducting community focus meetings to assess community floodplain management needs. Local stakeholders guided Gaujot on a tour of problem sites, such as undersized culverts and bridges, structures in the floodplain, and eroded streambanks. The locations of these problem sites, along with detailed topographic information obtained using LiDAR (light detection and ranging) and data, were captured and compiled in a geographic information systems (GIS) database (*continued on page 3*)



A member of the West Virginia State Police Explosives Response Team prepares to detonate an unexploded rocket found on CVI property last November.

Military Training from the 1940s Still Impacts CVI Property Use Today

Outdoor enthusiasts in the Mid-Atlantic region are familiar with the Dolly Sods area of the Monongahela National Forest and should also be aware that unexploded ordnance (UXO) have been recovered from this area. UXO are projectiles fired from military weapons (usually cannons, mortars, or rockets) during the course of normal military training. For unknown reasons these projectiles did not detonate upon impacting the target area. Canaan Valley Institute's (CVI) property, approximately four miles from Dolly Sods on the opposite side of Canaan Valley, was also a training site, and UXO have been found on CVI property as well.

During WWII, the United States Army leased more than 2,000,000 acres in north central West Virginia to train soldiers for combat in Europe. Referred to as the West Virginia Maneuver Area, the land was used extensively in 1943 and 1944 with the last rounds fired in 1945. Since then, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has put forth considerable effort to locate and destroy UXO in the maneuver area. Despite these efforts, UXO are occasionally found by recreational users of these areas.

In August 2004, the first article of UXO was found on CVI property. The device was found in the stream bed of Yellow Creek by a CVI employee. Because of significant recreational use of that area and construction plans adjacent to the area, CVI initiated a search for additional UXO. American Geosciences, Inc. was contracted to search 45 acres near Yellow Creek and all campsites for UXO. Thirty-one objects fitting the description of the known types of UXO were identified, but after roughly three days of careful digging and sifting, no additional UXO were found.

In November and December 2006, additional UXO were found on CVI and adjoining property. The first article was located by a hunter who had read

the information regarding the UXO posted on the property kiosks—he knew not to disturb the article and to alert the appropriate authorities. At least two more articles were found by the Corps on adjoining property while traveling to and from previously identified location sites.

It is important to note that (1) the suspected UXO have all been located in the Yellow Creek watershed; (2) all UXO have been removed by the correct authorities; and (3) during disposal, only one of the suspected UXO articles exhibited characteristics suggesting it may still be capable of exploding.

With the coming of summer, recreational use of CVI property will begin to increase. Users need not be overly concerned due to the finding of UXO on the property, but users should exercise caution in the Yellow Creek watershed area and be familiar with what to do if suspected UXO are found. To date, no suspected UXO have been found near any marked trails, campsites, parking areas, or the Blackwater River.



For more information, or to report UXO on the CVI property, please contact Ken Dzaack, Land Manager, at 304.463.4739 (ext. 233).