

# GEM SCOOPS



Vol. 49, No. 6

Pendleton District Gem and Mineral Society

June 2011

## Ponderings From the Podium

Where has the time gone? It's meeting time again and it seems like it was just last week that we were all together (except for those folks who missed a most informative presentation by not joining with the rest of us). This month's program looks like a good opportunity to learn about a topic we don't hear a lot about but could have a significant impact on our health.

We re-instituted the raffle program last month and I think that everyone enjoyed it and no one was disappointed with the specimens that they won. We are looking forward to greater participation this month and a larger assortment of "prizes". In that regard, we have a very small supply of donated specimens thus far - only three people remembered to go through their 'surplus stash' and bring in donations last month. Please folks, don't be bashful or forgetful this month, remember to bring in a goodly amount of "goodies". In the arena of gem and mineral collecting, one person's trash can truly be another's treasure!

In past years we varied the date of our club picnic between July and August. If my memory serves me right, we had previously decided to have that event in August this year, which means that the July meeting will be the regular format - program, refreshments, raffle, etc. The program will be announced at this (June) meeting and is one which I think you will enjoy - a number of members have requested something of the sort. So make sure you attend our meeting on 15 June and get the info first hand.

**DON'T FORGET TO BRING YOUR ROCKS AND MINERAL SPECIMEN DONATIONS FOR THE RAFFLE !!!!!**

Larry

### NEXT MEETING July 20, 2011

The July topic will be announced at the June meeting.

## JUNE MEETING

**DATE:** Wednesday, June 15, 2011, 7:00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Clemson-Central Library, 105 Commons Way, Central.

**TOPIC:** Is Radon Dangerous to Rockhounds?

**SPEAKER:** Bill Bridwell

**PROGRAM:** June's meeting will be about **Radon** which is a very heavy radioactive gas produced by the decay of uranium. Uranium is relatively common in the earth's crust but generally concentrated in ore bearing rocks. Higher concentrations of Radon occur in caves and mines and emanate from the ground wherever traces of uranium or thorium are found. Local gneiss deposits have been shown to contain uranium and thorium and are a reason for care while mineral collecting.

Radon produces the majority of "background" radiation we hear about and is the second leading cause of lung cancer (behind cigarette smoking). Bill Bridwell received an electrical engineering degree from Clemson in 1963 and worked in computer systems for 40 years. He has been an instructor for OLLI for 5 years in multiple subjects including the dangers of Radon in the home as well as testing and mitigation techniques.

Refreshments will be set up at 7:00 p.m. by Ed Overly and the meeting will start at about 7:15. Visitors are always welcome.

## What is Radon?

Radon is a chemical element with symbol Rn and atomic number 86. It is a radioactive, colorless, odorless, tasteless noble gas, occurring naturally as the decay product of uranium. It is one of the densest substances that remains a gas under normal conditions and is considered to be a health hazard due to its radioactivity. Due to its intense radioactivity, it has been less well-studied by chemists, but a few compounds are known.

Radon is formed as part of the normal radioactive decay chain of uranium. Uranium has been around since the earth was formed and its most common isotope has a very long half-life (4.5 billion years). Uranium, radium, and thus radon, will continue to occur for millions of years at about the same concentrations as they do now.

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## Pendleton District Gem and Mineral Society Minutes of General Meeting May 18, 2011

**Location:** Central/Clemson Library Meeting Room

**Attendance:** 14, including 3 visitors.

President Larry Boller called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and welcomed the visitors and intro-

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### 2011 Officers

President: Larry Boller	864-296-8077
V.P. : Ed Overly	864-328-3057
Secretary: Cecelia Jackson	864-261-3580
Treasurer: Phyllis Phillips	864-654-8514

### 2011 Directors

Dave Cicimurri	864-650-7115
Jim Duzenberry	864-654-5741
Fred Sias	864-654-6833
Rich Warner	864-654-0913

## General Meeting Minutes (Continued)

duced new members. Refreshments were provided by Fred Sias.

**Program:** Fred Sias provided a very interesting presentation on programs offered by the William Holland School of Lapidary Arts in Young Harris, GA and the Wildacres Retreat in Little Switzerland, NC. Fred provided a detailed description of the Facilities at each location and classes offered. Because PDGMS falls under the umbrella of the SFMS, costs for week-long workshops are offered at a discount to club members. More information can be found at [amfed.org/sfms](http://amfed.org/sfms), and in the SFMS Lodestar newsletter which can be found at [amfed.org/sfms\\_lodestar\\_newsletter.html](http://amfed.org/sfms_lodestar_newsletter.html). Fred indicated that there are very “thought provoking” articles in the Lodestar for members. A club member requested that we print the schedule for the workshops in the next GemScoops.

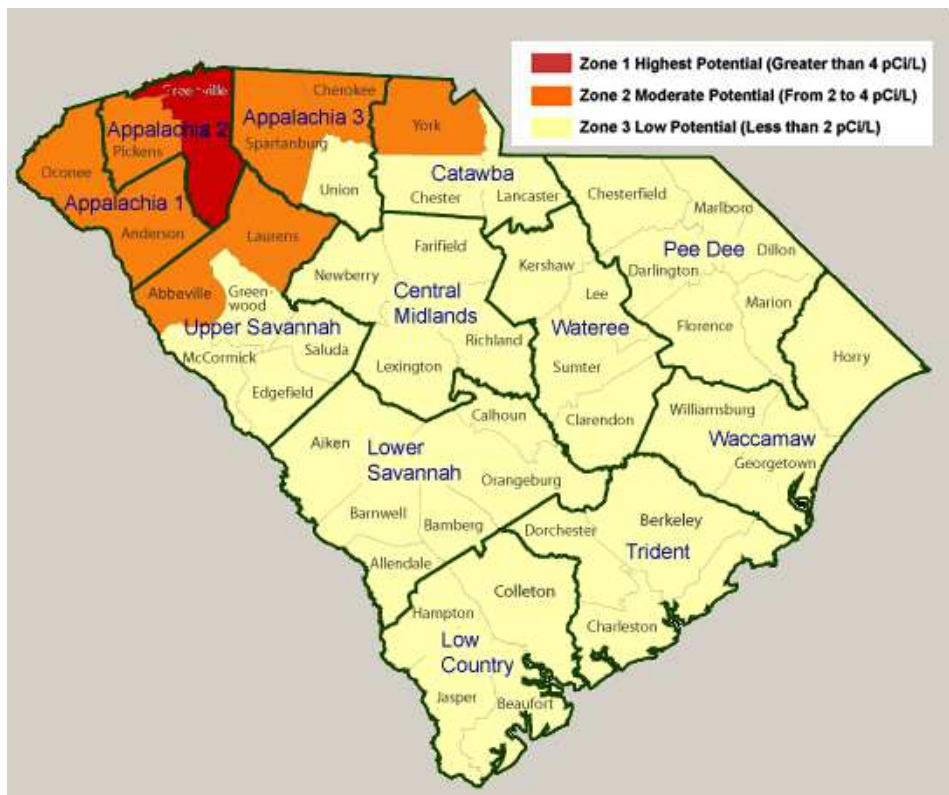
**Break:** Raffle tickets were sold for rocks, gems, and minerals donated by club members.

**Business Meeting:** Previous meeting minutes were approved with the exception of one correction. Knight Cox’s name was spelled incorrectly. Larry Boller read the monthly report provided by the Treasurer. Cecelia Jackson, Secretary, collected \$50 annual dues in the absence of the treasurer.

**Old Business:** Larry addressed the issue of Committee Chair vacancies once again. Chair vacancies include the following committees: Field Trip, Door Prize, and Youth. He also indicated that the VP – Ed Overly needs an assistant for the Programs Committee. The club also needs a media specialist to handle audio/visual for presentations.

Larry reminded the membership to bring specimen/mineral donations to be raffled at each meeting.

**New Business:** Fred Sias distributed a draft of the new tri-fold PDGMS brochure for consideration by the membership. Only one phone number



Areas of high levels of Radon in Northwest South Carolina. The dark or red area represents the highest concentrations of Radon while the light or yellow area is low. (The illustration is from documents modified from state government documents.)

correction was necessary. The brochure was approved by the membership.

Raffle Winners included: Ed Overly (Apache tears), John Palmer (gemstone belt buckle), Cecelia Jackson (tumbled stones), Greg Burns (jasper), Jeanne Overly (gold ore), Michelle Stevens (silver lace onyx), Larry Boller (Alaskan jade), and Regina Kerns (Diamond Hill crystal).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cecelia Jackson,*  
Secretary

## What is Radon?

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Radon is responsible for the majority of the public exposure to ionizing radiation. It is often the single largest contributor to an individual’s background radiation dose, and is the most variable from location to location. Radon gas from natural sources can accumulate in buildings, especially in confined areas

such as attics, and basements. It can also be found in some spring waters and hot springs.

Epidemiological studies shows a clear link between breathing high concentrations of radon and incidence of lung cancer. Thus, radon is considered a significant contaminant that affects indoor air quality worldwide. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, radon is the second most frequent cause of lung cancer, after cigarette smoking, causing 21,000 lung cancer deaths per year in the United States.

[Editors Note: Radon is a potential threat to Rockhounds in the Northwest Corner of South Carolina. See Map. It probably collects in caves or mines and would be a serious danger only with long exposure.]

### 2011 SFMS WORKSHOP DATES

William Holland June 12 - 18  
Wildacres August 22 - 28  
Wildacres September 12 - 18  
William Holland October 9 - 15