

*Protecting, preserving and restoring the Indian Creek
and greater Youghiogheny River watersheds.*



Highlights:

- We're welcoming Stephanie Novak, our current AmeriCorps Volunteer, to our full-time staff! Stephanie has accepted our Community Organizer position. More on page 2.
- Save the date! Our 2014 Yough Defense Party will be on Thursday, Nov. 20 at the Falls City Pub.

MWA Opposes Rustic Ridge Deep Mine in Donegal/Saltlick Townships

The first public notice for the proposed Donegal/Saltlick mine known as Rustic Ridge #1 appeared in the Tribune Review on July 3. According to the notice, LCT, the company that wants to mine in our beautiful community, has applied for a “Coal Mining Activity Permit, related NPDES permit and request for a new blasting plan. The proposed Rustic Ridge #1 Mine will consist of approximately 2,886.5 acres in the underground permit area. The proposed subsidence control plan area will consist of approximately 2,780.6 acres.”

Note they are calling the proposed mine #1, which suggests they intend to apply for additional sites if they succeed in getting this permit. In the northern, headwaters portion of the watershed, Indian Creek is a clean stream that sustains a healthy fishery. In the southern portion, however, the stream is struggling to survive. What is the difference between the stream north of Melcroft and the stream south of Melcroft? Answer: coal mining.

We have information available on possible associated hazards including

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MWA Assumes Management of the Youghiogheny River Water Trail

Earlier this year, MWA, through our Youghiogheny Riverkeeper program, assumed management of the Youghiogheny River Water Trail. The 74 mile trail, created and previously managed by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, is divided into two sections, north and south. The water trail initiative (a program of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission) provides maps and guides for the portion of the river downstream of Confluence to help enhance paddling trips on the river. As manager, MWA’s goals include patrolling the river, expansion of public access and the development of overnight paddling trip opportunities. Information on the water trail is available at www.mtwatershed.com/youghiogheny-river-water-trail

The Youghiogheny River (Yough for short) rises in northern West Virginia before flowing northward 132 miles through Maryland and into

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Staffing Changes

It is with mixed emotions that we write to tell you our Community Organizer, Kathryn Hilton, has departed after a year and a half of working on our Marcellus Citizen Stewardship Project. Kathryn brought a lot of great energy and ideas to the project and has been an invaluable supporter for many community members dealing with negative impacts from shale gas development. She will be missed, but we're happy to report Kathryn has accepted a job with the Dakota Resources Council and will continue organizing around oil and gas issues. Our AmeriCorps Volunteer Stephanie Novak will be stepping into Kathryn's position on August 15 where she will continue the work Kathryn started.



Stephanie preparing to take water samples for our Swimmable Waters Project.

MWA Becomes a Member of USX FEDERAL CREDIT UNION[®]

The USX Federal Credit Union is a financial cooperative owned by its more than 20,000 members. Among many services, it offers free transaction services, loans at affordable rates, and other financial management tools.

Through our membership, members of MWA can now join the USX Federal Credit Union and

participate in its many benefits. Visit www.usxfcu.org for a complete list of products and services offered, office hours and locations and ATM locators. You can also call 888-219-3159, and credit union staff will be happy to discuss things you can do to improve your financial future.

Ginseng Article Correction

In the last newsletter, we reported that the start date for harvesting Ginseng in Pennsylvania is August 1st. As of July, 2013 DCNR changed this date to September 1st. Harvesting ginseng in Pennsylvania before September 1st is against the law. MWA

sincerely apologizes for the misprint and encourages anyone interested in harvesting Ginseng to review and follow all of the laws and regulations. Thanks to our readers for bringing this error to our attention.

Construction of Donegal Trail Bridge to Begin Soon

Hiking and biking trails add economic value to the communities through which they pass. Residents can use the trails for exercise and enjoyment at no cost to them. Visitors come to use the trails and spend their money at the various businesses along the way. Businesses can expand which is a boost to the local materials suppliers and economy.

Once complete, the Indian Creek Valley Trail will run from Route 31 to the Youghiogheny River. We are in the process of building a bridge in Donegal Township to allow trail users to cross Indian Creek near Route 31. Through generous contributions from our members and trail users

as well as several small grants, we have raised about \$60,000 to build Phase I and begin Phase II of the bridge.

We are currently securing materials for the completion of the bridge. Please see the table below for an inventory of our needs.

If you are able to assist us with securing any of these materials please contact Beverly. Please also

consider sponsoring a deck plank on the bridge at a cost of \$250. Donors will be recognized on a plaque at the bridge site.

This bridge is an important link in the completion of the Indian Creek Valley Trail. Please consider making a tax deductible donation to MWA, PO Box 408, Melcroft, PA 15462. In-kind donations are also welcome.

Materials Needed	Quantity	Size
Pressure treated pine boards	75	2"x10"x10'
Chain link fence	5 rolls	9 gage
Galvanized carriage bolts	450	1/2" dia x 6" long
Galvanized carriage bolts	265	1/2" dia. x 3" long
Nuts and Washers	715	1/2"

Swimmable Waters Initiative + Swimmable Waters Weekend

Throughout Summer 2014 we will be conducting water quality monitoring at popular swimming locations throughout the watershed. Our members and supporters helped us to identify locations, which include several on the main stem of the river as well as many popular swim holes on tributaries to the Yough.

This "Swimmable Waters" project will help the public make informed decisions about where the water is safe for swimming. Information will be available on the Waterkeeper Swim Guide at theswimguide.org.

Escherichia coli (abbreviated *E. coli*) is a rod-shaped bacterium commonly found in the lower intestine of warm-blooded organisms including humans and

animals. There are hundreds of strains of the bacterium *Escherichia coli*, however, one particular strain, O157:H7, is an emerging cause of foodborne and waterborne illness. Beaches and other designated swimming locations are tested regularly, but swimmers in non-designated areas (swimming holes, locations along the river) swim at their own risk.

We've created a series of small postcards to publicize the project (see our favorite at right!). To request a stack to distribute at your business, please contact us!

We are also participating in Swimmable Water Weekend on July 25-27. This social media event, sponsored by Waterkeeper Alliance, is a powerful and fun way to show support for clean,

swimmable water. Visit Waterkeeper Alliance's Facebook page and Instagram feed to check out some of the great images generated during this event.



Photo ©Josh Lawrey
Many thanks to Josh Lawrey for this great photograph.

River Rally Comes to Pittsburgh

On May 30th MWA joined with over 750 water advocates from around the world at the annual River Rally/Waterkeeper Alliance conference held this year in Pittsburgh, PA. Youghiogheny Riverkeeper Krissy Kasserman, Community Advocate Nick Kennedy, and Community Organizer Kathryn Hilton attended on behalf of MWA.

Along with Joanne Kilgour from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club and Patrick Greuter from the Center for Coalfield Justice, Krissy co-presented on a panel titled "Fracking the Coalfields." This panel, attended by over 50 people, covered the environmental and social impacts of fracking for natural gas in areas that have already experienced significant coal mining activity such as southwestern Pennsylvania. Policy implications of fracking and mining were also discussed.

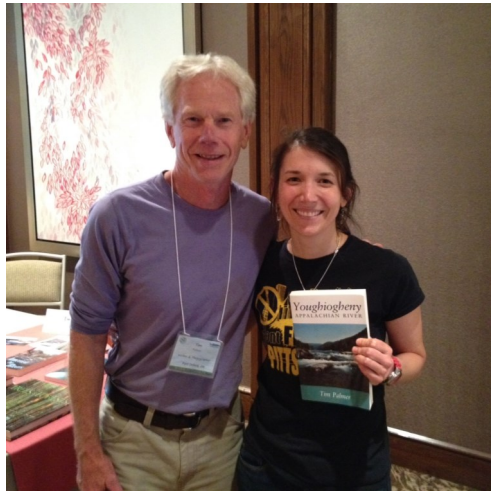
Along with Mary Ellen Cassidy from the Fracktracker Alliance, Kathryn presented a panel on tracking gas drilling activity in watersheds and communities.

During the conference, Krissy was also able to spend time with Tim Palmer, author of Youghiogheny, Appalachian River. Tim is a great supporter of our

work and very generously donated several signed copies of the book to us-- they'll be available at the Yough Defense Party auction this year. It's a great read about the natural and cultural history of the Yough River watershed. Thanks, Tim! More on Tim and his work at www.timpalmer.org.

After the conference Krissy hosted several Waterkeepers from around the world on a multi-day paddling trip on the Yough. Many thanks to Wilderness Voyageurs for providing support for the trip!

Having this conference take place so close to home was a fantastic opportunity for us to show off our watershed and the work we're doing to protect it. MWA was proud to serve on the local host committee and to play a role in bringing so many amazing water advocates to Pittsburgh!



Youghiogheny Riverkeeper Krissy Kasserman with Tim Palmer at the recent River Rally conference.

Youghiogheny River Water Trail *(continued from page 1)*

Pennsylvania, reaching the Monongahela River just upstream of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Part of the Allegheny Plateau in the Appalachian Mountain chain, the watershed is composed of steep forested ridges, deep river valleys and countless small headwater streams. The region contains areas of remarkable biodiversity, high quality waters, and large amounts of unfragmented forestland as well as Pennsylvania's

highest mountains and deepest river gorge. A recent economic impact analysis found that 40% of visitors most frequently mentioned water quality as their main interest or concern when recreating or visiting water trails. The Yough is a major recreational attraction. Much of it is a whitewater river, with several distinct sections featuring rapids ranging from class I through class V. Kayaking, swimming, rafting and fishing are

very common drawing visitors from around the east coast and the world. The Yough watershed provides habitat for several state and federally threatened and endangered species, and many of our streams feature naturally reproducing populations of brook trout, which are increasingly uncommon. We believe increased access to the river will encourage increased river stewardship. Contact us for more information!

Shale Gas Advocacy & Monitoring

Through our Marcellus Citizen Stewardship Project we continue our work to train, educate, organize, and advocate on behalf of Pennsylvanians living in shale extraction areas. Regarding advocacy, one of our primary focuses has been to assist families in Donegal Township, Westmoreland County, suffering from the impacts of a leaking impoundment at a drilling site. We are talking with affected individuals about their rights, contacting the DEP on their behalf, and working to raise public awareness of the situation. Another focus of our advocacy is to support the constitutional challenge to the Oil and Gas Conservation Law, which allows taking of private property by corporations.

In addition to advocacy, our organizing efforts have continued with support of newly formed community groups in Norwin School District and North Braddock. With each group facing unique challenges, our goal has been to tailor our efforts to their needs, including giving presentations on the laws of each municipality, providing strategy advice, and supporting outreach events, among other activities.

We have continued our partnership with the Alliance for Aquatic Resources Monitoring (ALLARM) to hold shale gas water quality monitoring workshops in the communities we serve. Community members will learn about accessing permit information, how to conduct visual and chemical

monitoring, and about data entry and use. Upcoming training events are posted online on our calendar of events.

In other MCSP news, our second annual Grassroots Summit has been rescheduled for September 26-28th. This event is a unique opportunity for community leaders working with shale gas issues to come together to learn, grow, and strategize. This year we will focus on building our communities, mapping where we've been, where we are, and where we are going. The summit will include facilitated strategy planning sessions, while also serving as a celebration of our efforts. For more information on the summit, please contact Stephanie.

DEP Finally Issues Order on Curry Mine

For many months (years?) we've been writing about erosion and sedimentation issues emanating from the Curry Mine site in Dunbar Township, Fayette County. We're happy to report that as a result of our involvement, repeated complaints, and pressure, the Department of Environmental Protection's Waterways and Wetlands Division issued an order to the logging company and the landowner requiring the site to be stabilized. At the time of writing, site stabilization activities were underway. The question of whether this is a mining issue still remains unresolved, however. The Office of Surface Mining, as a



An unnamed tributary to the Yough showing erosion and sedimentation from the Curry site. For color photos visit our website.

result of a federal inspection, issued a cessation order to Amerikohl requiring that the site be stabilized, but Amerikohl and the DEP Bureau of Mining continue to assert that because no coal has actually been removed the activities on the site were not the company's responsibility. We believe, as does OSM, that activities done in preparation for mining should be considered mining activities and should be regulated as such. We will continue to press this issue as it is becoming more common. For more background information and photographs please visit www.mtwatershed.com/blog.

Shale Gas Well Causes Water Contamination in Donegal Township

A recent article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (*Families' well water disrupted near Ligonier*, July 4, 2014) highlights the plight of several families affected by a leaking impoundment at the Kalp well site located in Donegal Township, Westmoreland County. MWA has assisted these families by talking with them about their rights under the law and demanding the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) adequately address the contamination. It is important that this story has finally come to light because DEP and WPX, the operator of the site in question, have not properly addressed the contamination.

For the Kalp site, WPX received its first violation on September 18, 2012 when a DEP inspector found holes in the impoundment. As a result of that leak, three families have filed complaints with the DEP regarding their well water. In its investigation of the complaints, DEP exceeded legal time requirements for investigations, delayed in ordering WPX to replace impacted water,

and failed to account for existing water data in the case of the Geary family. As noted in the article, DEP determined that there was no conclusive link between the leaking impoundment and the changes to the Gearys' water. That conclusion is unacceptable because the contaminants that show up in increased levels in Gearys' water match those found in the impoundment and the water of their neighbors.

For its part, WPX has been issued two more violations—one



The Kalp well pad, with Donegal Lake in the foreground and Route 711 to the right.
Photo courtesy of Josh Whetzel.

on July 10, 2013 and one on June 17, 2014. Those violations concern WPX's failure to replace the water of two families despite a conclusive finding of contamination by the DEP.

If the delays in fully addressing the Kalp situation are actually the result of an ongoing investigation, as DEP spokesperson John Poister claims, then the DEP should not have issued another drilling permit to WPX, as it did on January 27, 2014, until such an investigation is concluded. Clearly WPX has ongoing violations which normally act as a bar to new permit issuance. Furthermore, how can WPX with "three strikes" against it at the Kalp site alone be able to continue with operations when it has shown a pattern for not addressing its impacts? DEP needs to invest the time necessary to fully investigate the extent of the contamination from the Kalp site, and halt the operations of WPX while it does so. DEP must ensure that WPX takes the safety of Pennsylvanians seriously.

Rustic Ridge Mine, continued...

loss of property values, impacts to spring and well water, flooding of Champion Creek, the potential for new mine drainage discharges into Indian and Champion Creek, and noise and safety issues from heavy truck traffic and fans.

Following the publication of four weekly public notices (which began on July 3), a 30-day public comment period will commence. We are available to assist

community members in reviewing the mining maps and application and making comments.

We have hydrogeologists and attorneys analyzing this application. The hydrogeologists agree that the proposed mine will cause pollutional discharges in the watershed. This is especially concerning given the amount of resources MWA has dedicated to restoring past damage from coal

mining. The 125 square mile Indian Creek watershed already has approximately 130 mine drainage discharges. Additional discharges will only make restoration more difficult and expensive.

We need members like you to become involved in this fight. Write a letter, talk to your neighbors, or attend a meeting. For more information, please call Beverly at 724 455-4200, x1#.

Our Laurel Landscape...

Wild and Wonderful Wetlands

Since pre-Colonial times, Pennsylvania has lost 56% of its wetlands, which are defined as areas of land frequently saturated by both surface and ground water. The loss of wetlands can be devastating to the health of an ecosystem because wetlands provide important ecological services. They act as a filtration system for water pollutants by slowing the movement of water, allowing time for chemical reactions to cause suspended solids to drop out and excess nutrients to be absorbed by abundant wetland vegetation.

Physically, wetlands are a storage basin for floodwaters and surface runoff which helps to reduce the risks of flooding and erosion. Many wetland critters take advantage of the accessibility to water while being able to maintain a dense vegetation cover as protection from predators. As a result, these swampy areas serve as a specialized habitat to a diverse

array of animals, which adds to the ecological significance and value wetlands hold.

One Pennsylvania species that takes full advantage of the wetland habitat is the Red-winged Blackbird. Blackbirds build their nests among the tall marsh vegetation. This bird can be seen flitting among the cattails— look for the bright burst of red on its wings. The Red-winged Blackbird will also consume pesky insects that breed in wetlands. Other species, like the Green Frog, will also take advantage of the high insect population and can often be found croaking among the cattails at the edge of a pond. Other animals that populate wetlands include grey herons, geese, muskrats, and turtles— to name just a few.

Since only 1.4% of Pennsylvania is still currently considered wetlands, it is important for our communities to not only preserve the remaining habitat but

also to restore and rebuild this type of environment. Mountain Watershed Association is actively incorporating the building of wetlands as part of the mine drainage treatment process. By visiting one of MWA's treatment systems, it is clear that many animals use these reclaimed wetlands. Proper and thoughtful planning has allowed numerous species to thrive in these man-made habitat which mirror the wild undisturbed areas that once abundantly existed in Pennsylvania.



Red-winged Blackbird. Copyright Audubon.

Make a Planned Gift

You donate to the Mountain Watershed Association because you care about the work we do. Have you ever thought about what will happen to when you are no longer able to direct your donation? Planned giving is the answer this question. Your planned gift can allow you to leave

a legacy of support for our community and our watershed. Name the Mountain Watershed Association in your will by making a specific bequest or name MWA as a beneficiary in a life insurance policy. That \$1500 policy you secured through work can be a

huge donation to a small non-profit. If you would be interested in learning more about making a planned gift to the Mountain Watershed Association please contact Bev for more information. Thank you for your consideration in this delicate matter.

We are now able to accept gifts of stock or bonds. Please contact Beverly Braverman at mwa@mtwatershed.com or 724/455-4200 for more information.



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Protecting, preserving and
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River watersheds...



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Upcoming Events

October 4
Fishing Derby & Duck Race

November 12
Annual Meeting & Potluck
Dinner

November
Date TBA

See www.mtwatershed.com
for more information.

Please Invest in the Future of Our Mountains and Streams by
Becoming a 2014 Member or Making a Tax-Deductible Donation
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Home of the Youghiogheny **RIVERKEEPER**[®]

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_____ Group (\$15) Number of people _____	_____ Lifetime Member (\$500)
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I would like to receive MWA's quarterly newsletter via email!

*Please make checks payable to: Mountain Watershed Association
1414B Indian Creek Valley Rd., P.O. Box 408, Melcroft, PA 15462*

*The official registration and financial information of the Mountain Watershed Association, Inc.
may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free,
within Pennsylvania, 1 (800) 732-0999.*

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