

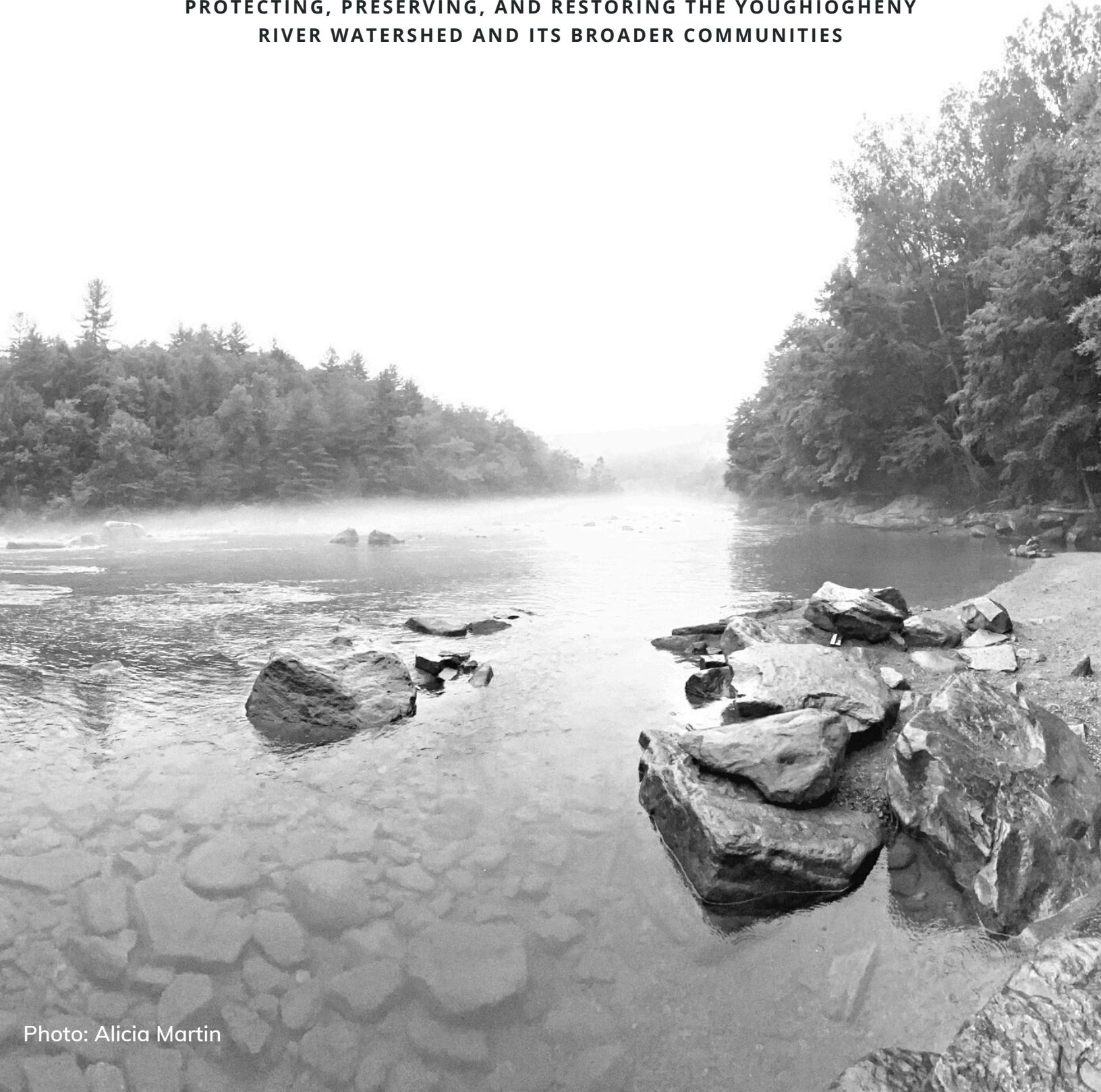
MOUNTAIN WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

HOME OF THE YOUGHIOGHENY RIVERKEEPER

2022

YEAR IN REVIEW

PROTECTING, PRESERVING, AND RESTORING THE YOUGHIOGHENY
RIVER WATERSHED AND ITS BROADER COMMUNITIES



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This past year, Mountain Watershed Association continued to put our mission into action while we set our sights on what we plan to accomplish in the years to come. We completed our 2022-27 Strategic Plan, during which we reaffirmed our commitment to protecting, preserving, and restoring the greater Youghiogheny River Watershed through conservation, recreation, education, and advocacy.

In the face of daunting industrial developments newly proposed for our watershed - such as 9,000 acres of underground coal mines and a hazardous waste landfill - our multifaceted approach of celebrating, improving, and defending the places we love remains critical. I continue to be awed by the ways our local communities, supporters, staff, and Board show up each day to make this work possible - I wholeheartedly thank all of you.

All we've accomplished this past year strengthens my belief that, together, we can have a profound impact on our local communities and all those downstream.



Ashley Funk
Executive Director

\$114,637

Over one-hundred thousand dollars was donated to MWA through more than five hundred individual grassroots donations.

1,232

MWA collected and analyzed over twelve hundred water samples.

192

MWA purchased nearly two hundred acres of land to be held in conservation.

52

MWA coordinated more than fifty community meetings to raise awareness of watershed impacts.

40

MWA's work was featured in local and national media more than forty times.

MEET OUR ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM



Ashley Funk
Executive Director

Ashley oversees all projects and builds relationships among our Board, staff, funders, and partner organizations to promote collaboration and uplift communities.



Alicia Martin
Operations Manager

Alicia manages the organization's HR functions, financial coding, and office administration with a focus in staff support and engagement.



Hannah Spencer
Program Development Manager

Hannah manages the outreach/education team and acts as the storyteller of our projects and impact with donors and funders.

SNAPSHOTS OF THE YOUGH

We are always looking to feature our supporters' photos in the annual Lottery Calendar as well as presentations, newsletters, and educational materials.

We are specifically seeking high quality photos of water, plants, animals, and landscape located within Indian Creek and other tributaries of the Youghiogheny River.

Do you have any photos taken in the Youghiogheny River watershed that you would like to share with us? Email Hannah@mtwatershed.com

Robert Manuel



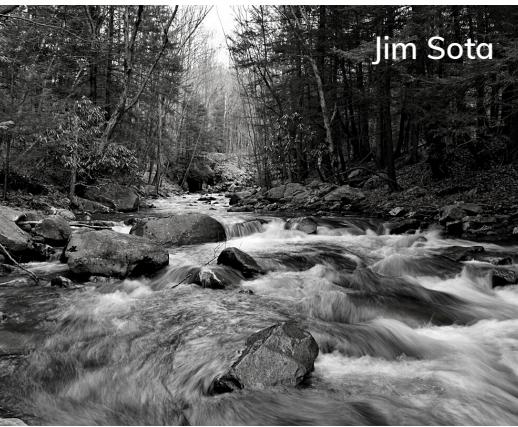
Dabney Robinson



Michael Liddick



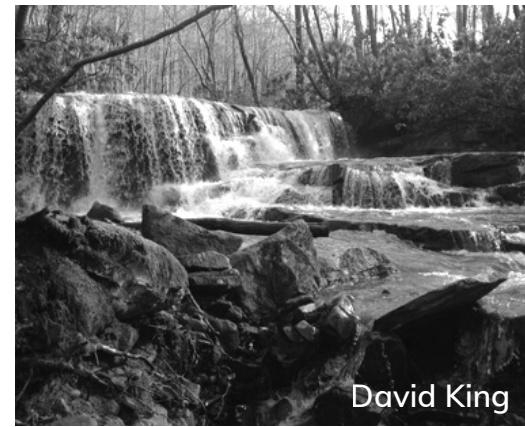
Jim Sota



Ashley Shuster



David King



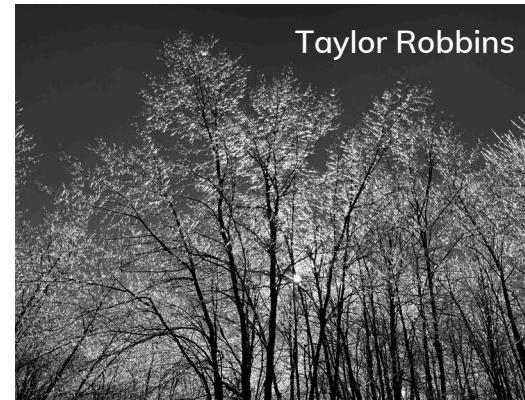
Chris Herring



Kerry Bell



Taylor Robbins



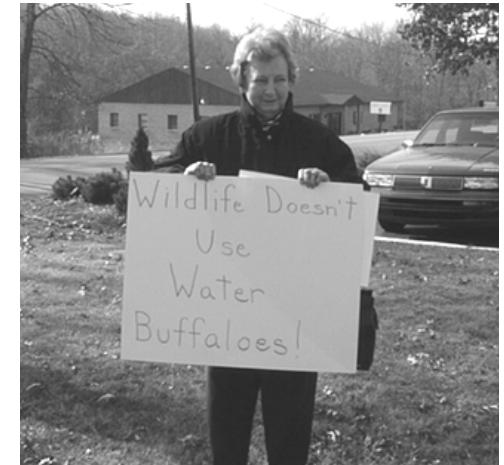
ABOUT MWA

MOUNTAIN WATERSHED ASSOCIATION IS A NON-PROFIT, 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION WITH THE MISSION TO PROTECT, PRESERVE, AND RESTORE THE YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER WATERSHED AND ITS BROADER COMMUNITIES

Our organization is unique in that we pursue on-the-ground restoration of historic environmental damages while we advocate to protect the watershed from new sources of pollution, primarily caused by fossil fuel development.

OUR HISTORY

Like many grassroots groups, Mountain Watershed Association began its life around a kitchen table. The organization was founded in 1994 to oppose an underground coal mine proposal in the Indian Creek Watershed. MWA's input and organized opposition resulted in the denial of the permit. Since then, the organization has expanded to eleven full-time employees, a full-time Americorps member, a 21-person volunteer Board of Directors, and more than 2500 members and supporters.



Dortheia Gearhart was one of the founding members of MWA.

MWA aims to empower communities both locally and downstream to transition towards sustainable, resilient, equitable economies and healthy environments where all beings can thrive. *We strive towards a world where we all act as if what affects one of us, affects all of us, because that's how watersheds work.*

KIND WORDS FROM OUR SUPPORTERS

"Thank you so, so much for everything you do for Western Pennsylvania. I appreciate all of your work and think it is so important for all of us." - Anonymous

"Clean water and access to this beautiful area benefit us all. Thank you for your hard work and dedication."
- J. Brown

"MWA is such a hard working, effective organization. I know my donation will be meaningfully applied and used efficiently." - C. Anderson

"The Youghiogheny River watershed is a special place that deserves to be protected for the benefit of all species. Keep up the great work!" - J. Boback

"You guys do such important work. Every time I pass those AMD ponds I imagine what the streams would look like should they not be there! Keep it up!" - K. Bell

"This organization is ACTIVE and a voice for the Yough! Keep up the good work!" - E. Good

"Thank you for helping citizens mobilize to care for and enjoy our communities and environment." - C. Christofi

"I appreciate the dedication and hard work of the MWA staff and volunteers to preserve the beauty of the Laurel Highlands." - J. Grice

CONSERVATION

GUIDED BY COMPREHENSIVE RESTORATION PLANS, WE FOCUS OUR CONSERVATION EFFORTS ON INITIATIVES SUCH AS ABANDONED MINE DRAINAGE REMEDIATION, WATER QUALITY MONITORING, TRAIL DEVELOPMENT, AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING.

MEET OUR CONSERVATION TEAM



Carla Ruddock
Director of Conservation

Carla has been overseeing MWA's conservation and remediation efforts for 13 years. Coordinating and monitoring maintenance, and restoration activities, including the development of River Conservation plans.



Taylor Robbins
Conservation & Recreation Manager

Taylor conducts monthly water quality sampling throughout the watershed and manages our trail and land preservation projects. She acts as the liaison to the Trail Committee and leads the Land Preservation Committee.



Eric Harder
Youghiogheny Riverkeeper

Eric implements waterway litter cleanups, provides support for water sampling efforts, and engages in regional and national organizational networking.



Kate Furlong
Outreach & Education Coordinator

Kate implements the Water Guardians afterschool program, hosts community workshops, and coordinates MWA events and outreach efforts.

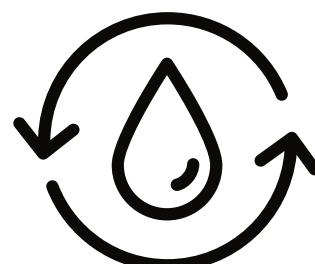


Sarah Anthony
Trail & Field Specialist

Sarah provides assistance with monthly water sampling and restoration projects, implements road cleanups, and supports our conservation and recreation projects.

47

In 2000, over 47 miles of Indian Creek were considered impaired.



14

As a result of our remediation efforts, only 14 stream miles are considered impaired today.

RESTORATION

The first abandoned mine discharge treatment system was developed in the Indian Creek watershed in 2001. Since then, we have developed four additional treatment systems to divert contaminated mine water, filter out pollutants, and direct the cleaned water back into the stream.

KALP TREATMENT SYSTEM AWARDED FUNDS FOR EXPANSION

\$222,482

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) awarded MWA a total of \$222,482 for the The Kalp Passive Treatment System Redesign and Development project through their Growing Greener program.

The Kalp Passive Treatment System is located along Indian Creek close to Melcroft. Built in 2007, Kalp treats 38.5 tons of iron every year from a discharge of polluted water exiting the abandoned Kalp mine. Prior to its construction, approximately 184 million gallons of mine water were discharged into Indian Creek, depositing 38.5 tons of iron. The Kalp discharge accounted for 42% of the acid load and 31% of the iron load for the entire Indian Creek watershed. The current treatment system captures the mine discharge before it enters the stream and forces it to flow through a series of ponds which remove metals and acid from the mine water before it is released into Indian Creek. The system has allowed Indian Creek to bounce back, now a popular fishery absent of an orange tint.

However, the 16 year old system is currently only 71% efficient in removing iron and 72% effective in removing aluminum. The system is undersized and causing overflow issues as pipes have clogged, requiring an upgrade and expansion. The Growing Greener grant award will allow us to purchase an additional 8.5 acres to expand the treatment system. We will work with Hedin Environmental to develop a rehabilitation plan and design a more effective treatment system. Once a design has been received, MWA will apply for additional funding to support the rehabilitation. Increasing the efficiency of the Kalp Passive Treatment System is essential to protecting the Indian Creek watershed.

YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER CONSERVATION PLAN CONTINUES

A River Conservation Plan is a comprehensive document detailing all the characteristics of a watershed, providing a holistic approach to preservation and protection. The document overviews all the existing studies for the region and will include a list of recommendations, that when implemented, will improve conditions within the watershed. Mountain Watershed Association, under the guidance of Project Steering Committee, is currently working to update the existing Indian Creek River Conservation Plan and create the Youghiogheny River Conservation Plan: Part 1, Dunbar Creek to Headwaters.

Having a River Conservation plan provides a prioritized plan of action for improving our watershed community. The plan will compile all the information known about the Indian Creek watershed in one "go-to" document. Once the plan has been completed and is recognized on the Pennsylvania River's Registry, funding opportunities are available for projects identified within the plan

30

Part 1: From the Headwaters to Dunbar Creek covers over thirty tributary streams or creeks that flow directly into the Youghiogheny River. Did you know the headwaters of the Youghiogheny River start in West Virginia? The river continues through Maryland and flows into Pennsylvania where it eventually empties into the Monongahela River in McKeesport.

BIODIVERSITY

The health of a watershed is evident through the living things that rely on clean water to live and thrive. We conduct annual surveys to better understand the natural community in the watershed.

FRESHWATER SPONGES FOUND IN KOOSER RUN

In May, AmeriCorps members waded through Kooser Run to collect freshwater sponges with Marc Yergin, a volunteer researcher at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and pioneer of freshwater sponge research in Western Pennsylvania. Freshwater sponges work as natural filters feeding on bacteria and small organic particles that pass through them. Clean water means more freshwater sponges and more freshwater sponges mean cleaner water.

In recent years, Marc has recorded a decline in the size and frequency of freshwater sponges in Kooser Run and other surrounding areas. Decline in sponge population can be caused by agriculture run-off, acid mine drainage, chemical spills, and other disturbances. Despite possibly being the oldest recorded animals on earth, freshwater sponges are incredibly sensitive, requiring a healthy pH and low levels of pollutants.

FISH SURVEYS FALL SHORT OF IDEAL POPULATIONS

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) staff completed detailed fish, water quality, and habitat sampling in the upper Youghiogheny River watershed with assistance from MWA staff during the 2022 field season. The goal was to characterize the current fish communities at previously unassessed sites. WPC and MWA staff completed 28 surveys on unassessed streams within the contract period. Many of the surveyed streams had poor water quality and were unsuitable for aquatic life. Four sites had pH levels below 4.0, ten sites were dry with no discernable flow, and twelve sites were electrofished and no fish were observed. Many of the streams that had poor water quality and were not surveyed actually had excellent potential fish habitat present which could bode well for future restoration efforts in the watershed. The current study can act as a baseline before water quality improvements are enacted, such as limestone dosing and passive treatment systems in the area.

28 of the 28 sites examined, only 2 sites contained native Brook trout populations. 16 fish were recorded within the two habitable streams.

This project was funded in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation Community Conservation Partnerships Program administered through the Pennsylvania Environmental Council's Laurel Highlands Landscape Mini Grant Program.

PRESENCE OF INSECTS INDICATES STREAM HEALTH



3,032

We collected over 3,000 individual macroinvertebrates from 27 surveys along Indian Creek. We sample stream insects to assess habitat conditions. We collected 96 different taxa.

Pictured is the larval stage of a species of Caddisfly. Caddisfly larvae create tubed homes made out of small pebbles, sticks, or leaves that they crawl inside of and carry along with them. Caddisflies are a tasty treat for fish, birds, and crayfish. Their presence in a stream indicates good water quality.

RECREATION

WASHOUTS IN THE GORGE PROMPT ACTION

In July of 2021, the Indian Creek Valley Trail experienced a storm event which caused a portion of the "gorge" section of trail to wash away. The gorge wash out is a safety concern due to the steep drop off exposed by the storm and is currently taped off.

Mountain Watershed Association (MWA) has been in contact with local engineers to explore what MWA's options are for fixing the wash out. It has been concluded that the estimated cost of repairs and engineering will total \$160,000.

Keep your eyes open for a new fundraising campaign which will support the wash out repair costs.



• Photo: Taylor Robbins

Heavy rains in the summertime have left hazards along the ICVT on the Gorge section.

Please use caution when traveling this section of trail.

MWA ACQUIRES NEARLY 200 ACRES OF FOREST IN THE INDIAN CREEK GORGE

MWA acquired a 192.6 acre property in Fayette County which borders Indian Creek and Rasler Run, a tributary to Indian Creek. Indian Creek is designated as a high quality coldwater fishery, and Rasler Run is Class A Wild Trout Stream. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has designated 12.8% of the property as a Natural Heritage Area for its exceptional ecological diversity.

MWA's acquisition of the land will allow MWA to preserve the ecological diversity of the property and prevent future development which would affect the health of the bordering streams. A previously private property will now also be designated as a public protected area open for recreational activities such as hiking, fishing, hunting and primitive camping.

Thank you to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Richard King Mellon Foundation for funding the project.

IN NEED OF VOLUNTEERS FOR WATER SAMPLING

MWA is in the process of developing a training for volunteers who would like to participate in consistent water monitoring from May through September for our Swimmable Waters and Roadside Springs sampling.

Volunteers will be trained on sampling protocol and will be provided with supplies while doing field work. Sampling efforts will occur on a weekly basis for swimmable waters and quarterly for roadside springs. Does this sound of interest to you? Email Taylor@mtwatershed.com or call our office at 724-455-4200 to let us know you would like to stay in-the-know about our upcoming training.

263

Weekly, we test 13 popular swimming, wading and paddling spots around the Youghiogheny River and Indian Creek watersheds for E. coli between May 1 and September 30. In 2022, we analyzed over two hundred water samples for this program. Be sure to check our website weekly for updates from our bacteria sampling or visit theswimguide.org.

Text "YoughSwimmableWaters" to 84483
to receive alerts when new water data is available

EDUCATION

WATER GUARDIANS YOUTH PROGRAM

In 2022, MWA began a new education project: the Water Guardians After School Youth Club. The Water Guardians club provides students with opportunities to learn through activities focused on water quality, climate change, and environmental justice issues. The Water Guardians club is made possible thanks to grant funding from the 2022 DEP Environmental Education grant program.

46

We hosted forty-six educational programs in 2022, including activities on the trail, in the afterschool program, and at community events.



All smiles at the Watershed Festival after catching this trophy trout!

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY

In 2022, we ramped up our community-based education activities with 3 native plant workshops, a 5-part hiking series led by MWA Board Member Faith Sartori, a 2-part film series, and our annual Birds & Blooms Guided Walk led by a local naturalist and a local birder. Look for even more outdoor education opportunities in 2023!

100

Thanks to a grant from the PA Fish and Boat Commission, we distributed 100 free fishing poles to area youth during our annual Indian Creek Watershed Festival.

SAVE THE DATE!
JUNE 12

MWA is partnering with the Allegheny Land Trust to offer a Project WET training open to the public. Only \$5 to attend!

10am-12pm @ the Carnegie Free Library in Connellsville

BORROW GEAR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SUPPLIES FROM OUR RESOURCE LIBRARY

Upon receiving a generous grant from the Fayette County Community Foundation, MWA has created a resource library of outdoor gear and educational resources available to the public. Items in the library can be signed out and borrowed for both weekdays and weekends.

Resources in the library include items like waders, binoculars, field guides, maps, themed activity backpacks, and curriculum books! We also have children's fishing poles thanks to the 2022 Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's R3 Grant. We hope this resource library makes outdoor recreation more accessible to the community it serves and inspires people to simply get out there! Resource library materials will be located at the MWA office as well as the Carnegie Free Library in Connellsville by springtime. Contact Katlyn@mtwatershed.com for information.



We have child-sized waders you can borrow for your next adventure!

CAMPAIGNS

WE EMPOWER COMMUNITIES IN THE BROADER YOUGHIOGHENY RIVER WATERSHED TO ENGAGE IN CAMPAIGNS TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND ITS ROOT CAUSES.

MEET OUR ADVOCACY TEAM



Melissa Marshall
Managing Attorney

Melissa has been our on-staff attorney for seven years, serving as a legal resource for holding polluters accountable.



Madison Hinkle
Community Advocate

Maddie provides legal guidance and organizing support across MWA's campaigns and conservation projects.



Eric Harder
Youghiogheny Riverkeeper

Eric responds to citizen complaints and concerns for pollution. He is the liaison for partner organizations working to protect the Yough.



Stacey Magda
Organizing Manager

Stacey organizes community action around Rustic Ridge, the Jordan Mine, and the MAX Environmental landfill in Yukon. She is also a member of the Cancer Crisis Coalition.

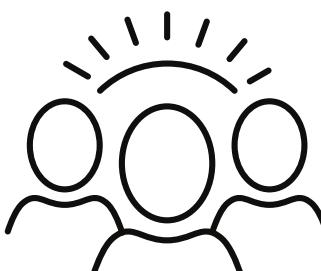


James Cato
Regional Organizer

James conducts nurdle patrols, manages the Direct Support Fund, and organizes community action against shale gas development.

975

MWA engaged nearly one thousand residents to participate in public hearings and meetings on proposed developments



17

MWA participated in seventeen public hearings on proposed developments in 2022

COAL MINING

Over the past 20 years, Mountain Watershed has raised almost \$9 million dollars to construct abandoned mine drainage treatment systems that restore our polluted waterways, leading to improved quality of life in our region. Given the tendency for mining to produce polluting discharges along with other impacts, we advocate to prevent continued coal mining developments in our watershed.

MINE EXPANSION THREATENS HEART OF THE LAUREL HIGHLANDS

LCT Energy LP, a subsidiary of Robindale Energy based in Latrobe, has set its sights on the Donegal, Acme, and Stahlstown areas for an expansion of their underground coal mining operations. Serious issues have been occurring at LCT's active mine, Rustic Ridge I. Those impacts include private water supply impacts, subsidence damage that includes irreparable damage to private residences, noise concerns, coal dust, and a dangerous increase in industrial truck traffic.

Even with serious impacts to the community and an extensive list of violations issued by DEP, LCT is proposing to expand their mining activities in the heart of the Laurel Highlands. Their proposed developments include: expanding their active mine by 1400 acres, establishing a new 2600-acre mine, exploring over 5,000 acres for further deep mining, and developing a surface mining area for coal prep, storing, and cleaning. This all adds up to over 9,000 acres of active and proposed mining within a 4.5-mile radius that encompasses the headwaters of Jacobs Creek, Loyalhanna Creek, and Indian Creek.

Mountain Watershed Association continues to work with impacted residents to raise awareness of these ongoing and proposed mining impacts. We are also preparing to bring a legal challenge against these proposed coal mine expansions in order to protect our watershed and all those who depend on it.

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Since beginning operation, the Rustic Ridge I Mine has had seventeen complaints regarding water quality/quantity issues

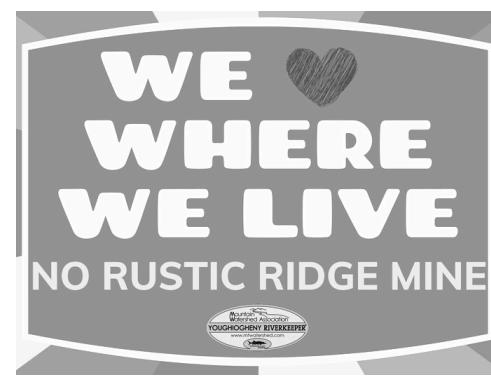
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There have been ten complaints concerning subsidence that has impacted local residents' homes.

Issues and concerns have also been expressed by local residents regarding:

- truck traffic and road conditions
- coal dust and air quality
- disruption of residential life
- noise and lighting
- impacts to tourism and recreation.

MWA continues to assist community members with organizing opposition to the mine operations.



You'll see these signs in yards of community members near the mine site. Contact Stacey to get a sign for your yard.



Scan the QR code to access the survey!



Are you concerned about industrial truck traffic in the Laurel Highlands?

Please complete our survey and submit via Google Forms. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this survey or the matter of industrial truck traffic, please contact stacey@mtwatershed.com or at 724-455-4200 x9

DIRECT SUPPORT FUND

This is a grants program hosted by MWA that focuses on providing resources to grassroots groups and advocates working toward social change on shale gas, coal, and petrochemical infrastructure.

\$144,854

In 2022 we distributed \$144,854 to grassroots projects - the most we have ever shared out. We had 31 projects in total, coming from WV, OH, and PA. MWA provided resources for several types of projects that were new to Direct Support, including water testing outside a proposed Salmon Farm in Ohio, helping to restore a historic environmental site, and supporting a Rising Nation river journey with the Lenape Nation of PA.

Thanks to new donors, we can now award funds to projects that organize communities in response to environmental issues like:

- petrochemical buildup
- shale gas development
- coal mining operations
- air pollution
- lead contamination
- climate change legislation

SHALE GAS

Currently, one of the greatest threats to the health of the watersheds and quality of life in the Appalachian region is the development of shale gas and petrochemical infrastructure.

SHALE GAS DRILLING THREATENS ELIZABETH TOWNSHIP

In the past year, MWA has worked closely with community groups on several proposed and pending shale gas developments in the Mon-Yough Valley. This includes the Heracles Wellpad, proposed near a high school, approved by the Elizabeth Township Commissioners in January 2023. It also includes the Hera Wellpad in Rostraver, and the Champion Compressor Station. All three are proposed in rural residential areas and have faced stiff opposition from local groups and residents living nearby. Folks granted party status in these hearings have brought witnesses including physicians, acoustical consultants, and statisticians to help make the case that placing industrial operations close to their rural homes is ill-advised, unfair and dangerous. After hard work by MWA, the community, and our partners Protect PT and the Environmental Integrity Project, the Hera Wellpad was denied outright by the Rostraver Zoning Hearing Board!

MWA supports these residents in their preparations and in the hearings themselves and will continue to do so as shale gas buildup continues in our region. We will keep a close eye on Invenergy's proposed Allegheny Energy Center too, whose air permit is currently being appealed, as much of this region's new shale gas extraction could be used to support the power plant's construction along the GAP Trail and the Youghiogheny River.

WHAT IS SHALE GAS?

Shale gas is a natural gas found in shale formations. The formations are composed of fine sedimentary rocks that, when fractured through intense pressure, release gas that can be captured and transported through pipelines. Shale gas is the byproduct of decaying plants and animals trapped under rock and subjected to heat and pressure for millions of years.

Learn more at www.FracTracker.org

PETROCHEMICALS

MWA acts as a watchdog to monitor the impacts of the ongoing petrochemical buildup in the Youghiogheny River Watershed and the greater Ohio River Valley region.

NURDLES BECOME INCREASINGLY WIDESPREAD, CAUSING ALARM AS ETHANE-CRACKER PLANT BEGINS OPERATIONS

We began our rigorous nurdle sampling program in Fall 2020 to assess existing plastic pollution in our rivers because Shell's Beaver County Ethane-Cracker Plant was expected to come online as early as Summer or Fall of 2022. The Plant came online in November 2022. This facility's chief output will be nurdles produced from fracked gas, which will then primarily be used to produce single-use plastics. The Shell Plant instantly became the largest of its kind on the continent. Nurdles will likely be transported by rail car or barged and, based on the experiences of other groups near these facilities, nurdles will end up in waterways we depend on.

In two years of regular sampling, we hadn't seen nurdles in the Ohio River. However, in September we found more nurdles than we've previously ever recorded. In search of the source, we discovered an outfall swarmed by schools of feeding fish, completely surrounded by the small plastic pellets stuck to the riverbank and coating leaves of riparian plants. 3-Rivers Waterkeeper filed a complaint with the PA DEP, and the source of pollution was identified and halted. We will continue to conduct regular nurdle patrols in the broader Ohio River Watershed with plans to increase patrols in the Yough Watershed in order to monitor the impacts of the petrochemical industry being built along these waterways.

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In partnership with Three Rivers Waterkeeper, we conducted sixteen nurdle patrols in 2022.

Right: Small plastic pellets referred to as "nurdles" coat the leaves of riverside plants.



Above: From the river, we can see a view of the Shell Cracker Plant

WHAT IS A CRACKER PLANT?

"An ethane cracker plant is a large industrial facility that takes ethane and processes, or "cracks" it into ethylene. It heats the ethane up so hot that it breaks apart the molecular bonds holding it together. Ethylene is the root chemical and building block for plastics, resins, adhesives and other chemicals."

Learn more at www.BreatheProject.org

GET INVOLVED

If you spend time by or in the water, reach out to James Cato at james@mtwatershed.com, especially if you fish or boat along the Ohio River, Beaver River, or Raccoon Creek. A land-based nurdle patrol takes just fifteen minutes and links to a national database, helping to keep our region clean and hold polluters accountable. The more data we keep now, the better shot we have of exposing large spills in the future. Spills and releases are preventable, but they won't stop without someone keeping track of them.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

MWA continues to work alongside communities directly affected by the pollution discharge, poor air quality, and health impacts of hazardous waste landfills.

THE ONLY CLASS-C HAZARDOUS WASTE LANDFILL IN PA SEEKS EXPANSION; RESIDENTS VOICE CONCERNS

MAX Environmental, the hazardous waste landfill overlooking Yukon PA, wants to expand as its existing landfills reach capacity. The company has filed for expansion permits—Landfill No. 7—right along Sewickley Creek. The first public hearing for this process took place on Dec. 1st in the heart of Yukon, the Volunteer Fire Department. Community Organizers at MWA have been working with community members in Yukon since 2017, providing support in spreading awareness about the negative impacts of the landfill and navigating conversations with the PA Department of Environmental Protection to enact stricter regulations at MAX Environmental's landfill operation.

Residents began to push back the moment the meeting commenced. More than 80 people from the small town and surrounding areas joined in-person, filling seats to show the panel of DEP spokespeople that they wouldn't accept toxic waste in their backyards. During the Q&A portion of the meeting residents hit on a common theme: *Does the DEP know how dangerous this facility will be? Can the DEP regulate a facility like this?*

While responding to residents' concerns, the DEP revealed that it had never, in its history, permitted a landfill like the proposed No. 7, as MAX Environmental is the only RCRA Class-C hazardous waste landfill in PA.

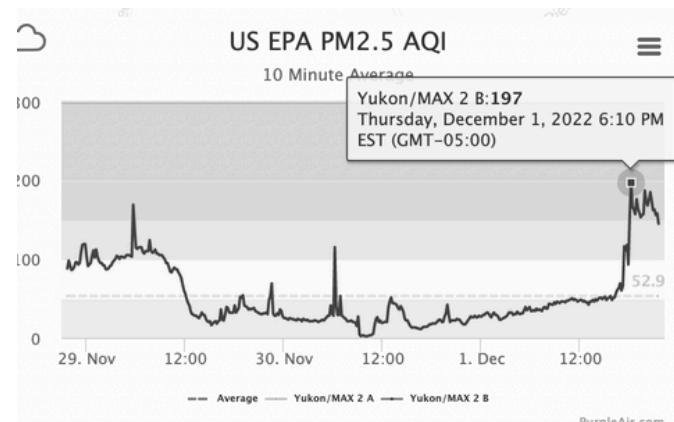
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The site has more than 300 violations. In 2022 alone, MAX received 6 violations for its existing landfill operations.

Open burning, hazardous waste leaks, uncontrolled dust emissions, and a failure to properly report chemical spills are a few of the dangerous lapses MAX has allowed.

Health effects reported by nearby residents to MAX could fill a book. That night, neighbors described "inside days" for their children when air quality deteriorates. They described temporary ailments including headaches, nosebleeds, and ulcers. Graver yet, a string of cancer-related deaths has left many homes unoccupied, and some cancer survivors suspect their condition originated from MAX. The heavy testimony continued with examples including multiple consecutive miscarriages, chemical-borne illnesses, and pets dying in clusters after rainfall washed over the facility into a residential lawn.

Mountain Watershed Association believes more should be done to collect thoughts and concerns from residents of Yukon and beyond. As the public hearing took place on the same day as the informational session, MWA hopes the DEP will consider a second virtual or hybrid hearing to capture the voices of those who could not attend the in-person session on Dec. 1. Holding one public hearing is the minimum requirement, and the minimum public input is not enough for the only RCRA Class-C Hazardous Waste Landfill in the state.



Purple Air Monitors installed in Yukon recorded a spike in poor air quality on the night of the DEP public hearing.

DEFEND THE YOUGH

NEW TRAIL PLANNED FOR YOUGH WILDERNESS CORRIDOR PROMPTS COMMUNITY MEETING IN OPPOSITION

The only waterway designated as a Scenic River in Maryland is the Youghiogheny River. This section of river is hardly a place to construct a high-volume, developed high-traffic trail. Maryland Senator Edwards and Delegate Beitzel resurrected this proposal after initially being denied by the Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources. Several bridges were proposed in order to connect Friendsville, MD to Swallow Falls State Park, which would encroach on the rare and sensitive habitats located in the river corridor. The Maryland Scenic and Wild Rivers Act prohibits this type of trail, and the proposal does not adhere to the Yough River Scenic Corridor Management Plan. Being one of the largest wilderness areas in the entire Youghiogheny Watershed, MWA helped local residents connect and hosted an informational meeting regarding the trail. The community expressed many concerns about the project, including the lack of public transparency throughout the planning process. A final decision has not been determined by the Maryland DNR.

FIRST YOUGH RIVER CONVERGENCE A SUCCESS

MWA hosted the 1st Annual Yough Watershed Convergence, a gathering of conservation groups within the Youghiogheny River watershed to share project updates, successes, troubles, ideas, and needs. Projects are often costly, time-consuming, and take continued maintenance and oversight. We hope that creating a space for these conversations will lead to more collaborations and increased amplification of the region's collective conservation efforts. More than ten representatives from area groups discussed water quality monitoring, stormwater management, stakeholder engagement, abandoned mine land remediation, groundwater flow modeling, and project funding. Email Eric@mtwatershed.com to express interest in attending the second annual Yough River Convergence.

\$32,786

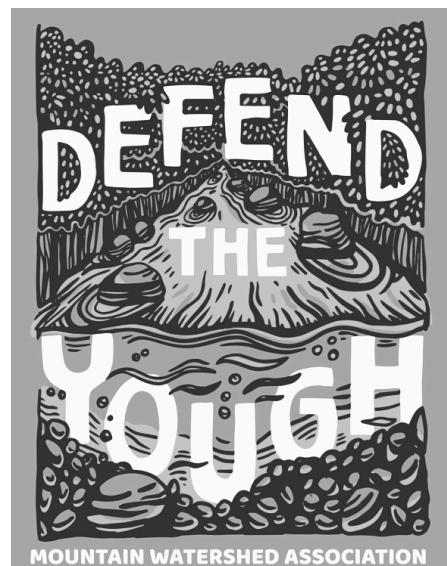
Between Fayette Gives and the Yough Defense Party, you helped us raise over \$32k for the Yough Defense Fund in 2022! This funding helps to maintain our Riverkeeper program and ongoing campaigns throughout the Yough Watershed.

Join us at the
15th Annual Yough Defense Party
on November 16, 2023.

Save these Dates!

- **Yough River Cleanup (Connellsville)**
 - Saturday, April 22
- **Yough River Cleanup (West Newton)**
 - Saturday, May 20

Canoes and Rafts are available to use during cleanups, please RSVP with Eric at 724-455-4200 ext. 2#



We love the new Defend the Yough design by Harris Wright! You can find shirts and hooded sweatshirts in the MWA online store with this new artwork.

FUNDRAISING

We achieve our mission through a variety of initiatives including abandoned mine drainage remediation, water quality monitoring, trail development, educational programming, grassroots organizing, and legal advocacy.

RUSTIC RIDGE LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

7%

Protect the health of our watershed and all who depend on it. Support our legal challenge of the Rustic Ridge Deep Mine expansion. Fighting the expansion of this underground mine will be a multi-year endeavor estimated to cost **\$500,000**.

If LCT's 1,400 acre expansion in the Donegal area is accepted by the DEP, MWA will be filing a legal appeal to oppose any expansion of the already destructive Rustic Ridge I Coal Mine. This large fundraising goal is an estimate that includes costs for retaining private outside counsel, covering expert witness fees, and tackling appeals or contingencies over several years of litigation.

Join us for a fundraising event!

Enjoy an evening in a cozy local residence with other like-minded guests, enjoying music or art demonstrations provided by area talent, a tasty dessert to share, and the opportunity to support the cost of MWA's legal efforts to stop the Rustic Ridge mine expansion.

Tickets are limited to 12 participants per event. All proceeds benefit the legal fund.

FEBRUARY 19, 2023 @ 2:30 pm, Shaping stone, minerals, or gemstones – a Lapidary demonstration

MARCH 19, 2023 @ 2:30pm, Water-themed piano music performed by local piano club.

Learn more at www.mtwatershed.com/events

STEYER BRIDGE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT FUND

100%

FUNDED!

You helped us increase passable trail miles on the Indian Creek Valley Trail. After 3 years of diligent fundraising, we have reached our goal! Work will begin on the Steyer Bridge project in 2023. Stay tuned for our next trail project - we will begin fundraising to fix the washouts on the Gorge section and complete the unfinished sections of trail.

RASLER RUN LAND PRESERVATION FUND

100%

FUNDED!

You helped us protect nearly 200 acres of forested land in the Indian Creek Gorge. MWA recently purchased a 192.6 acre property in Fayette County which borders Indian Creek, a tributary of the Youghiogheny River, and Rasler Run, a tributary to Indian Creek. Rasler Run is a Class A Wild Trout Stream that supports a wild-reproducing trout population and empties into the Indian Creek Gorge. Keep an eye out for our next land preservation project. We will be conducting biological surveys on the Rasler Run property that will provide insight into how we can best preserve this area.

SUPPORT MWA

VOLUNTEERS ARE CRUCIAL TO PROJECT SUCCESS

Conservation projects and community cleanup events are a time-consuming endeavor. We are thankful for the involvement of volunteers assisting with activities such as community organizing, water sampling, litter cleanups, fundraising, trail maintenance, and event organizing.

3,000

Over three thousand volunteer hours were logged last year. Help us increase this number for 2023!

\$80,000

An hour of volunteered time is federally valued at \$26.67. The total value of volunteer labor donated to MWA in 2022 totaled nearly eighty thousand dollars.



Floating down the river and pulling tires as you spot them is a fun way to get involved! Check out our upcoming river cleanup schedule and pencil us into your calendar.

JOIN A COMMITTEE

Deep Mine Committee

last Thursday of every month @ 6:30pm (Virtual or at the MWA office)
Contact Stacey@mtwatershed.com to express interest in participating.

Education Committee

first Thursday of every month @ 6:30pm (Virtual or at the MWA office)
Contact Hannah@mtwatershed.com to express interest in participating.

Fundraising Committee

second Wednesday of every month @ 9:30am (Virtual or at the MWA office)
Contact Hannah@mtwatershed.com to express interest in participating.

Indian Creek Valley Trail Committee

third Monday of every month @ 6:30pm (Virtual or at the MWA office)
Contact Taylor@mtwatershed.com to express interest in participating.

Land Preservation Committee

third Thursday bi-monthly @ 6:00pm (Virtual or at the MWA office)
Contact Taylor@mtwatershed.com to express interest in participating.

Watershed Festival Committee

second Tuesday of every month @ 7:00pm starting in April (Virtual or at the MWA office)
Contact Carla@mtwatershed.com to express interest in participating.

Yough Defense Party Committee

meeting date/time to be determined
Contact Eric@mtwatershed.com to express interest and stay updated on scheduled meetings

MOUNTAIN WATERSHED ASSOCIATION'S SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

For questions and to RSVP call 724-455-4200 ext. 4# or visit mtwatershed.com/events

March 4 - Nature Poetry Workshop

10:00am to 12:00pm - at Laurelville Retreat Center

March 19 - HeART of the Highlands: Piano Music

Starts at 2:30pm - in Donegal area (specific location upon registration)

March 26 - Free Community Fishing Clinic with PA Fly Co

1:00pm to 4:00pm - at C.W. Resh Park in Indian Head, PA

April 22 - Yough River Cleanup (Connellsville)

Starts at 9:00am - at Yough River Park

Rafts and canoes free to rent, please reserve with Eric@mtwatershed.com

May 6 - Birds & Blooms Guided Walk in the Gorge

Starts at 8:00am - meet at ICVT Trailhead at Mill Run Reservoir

Guided bird walk begins at 8am, guided wildflower walk begins at 9am

May 20 - Yough River Cleanup (West Newton)

Starts at 9:00am - meet at Cedar Creek Park

Rafts and canoes free to rent, please reserve with Eric@mtwatershed.com

June 12 - Growing Up Wild: Project WET Training

10:00am to 12:00pm - at the Carnegie Free Library in Connellsville, PA

Registration is \$5 and open to the public, contact Hannah@mtwatershed.com

June 24 - 3rd Annual Golf Scramble

Starts at 9:00am - at Donegal Highlands Golf Course

Registration at 8:00am, Start playing at 9:00am

July 15 - Loop Race on the Yough

Starts at 6:30pm - in Ohiopyle

Day-of registration is optional, Awards at Wilderness Voyageurs Pavilion around 8:00pm

July 23 - Yough River Float Trip

Float begins at 10:00am - at Hazelbaker's Canoe Rentals in Layton

Purchase tickets and reserve boats by July 14

September 23 - Indian Creek Watershed Festival

10:00am to 2:00pm - at C.W. Resh Park

November 16 - Yough Defense Party

2:00pm to 10:00pm - at Falls City Pub in Ohiopyle

VISIT WWW.MTWATERSHED.COM/EVENTS TO LEARN MORE

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Faith Sartori

Barbara Shaffer

DONATE TO DEFEND

Join the effort to protect, preserve, and restore the Indian Creek and greater Youghiogheny River watersheds!

Name

\$10 \$25 \$50

Address

Phone

Email

BECOME A MAJOR DONOR

\$500 \$1,000

\$1,500 \$2,000

Interested in a monthly donation?

Scan the QR code to access our online donation page or visit www.mtwatershed.com



I would like my donation to support:

**Legal Defense Fund
(Rustic Ridge)**

Land Preservation Fund

**Indian Creek
Valley Trail Fund**

**General Fund
(Membership)**

**You can make a donation or renew your membership on our website OR you can mail a check to
Mountain Watershed Association | PO 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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