

Protecting, preserving and restoring the Indian Creek Watershed and surrounding areas.



Anna and Steve Gdosky Indian Creek Restoration Project Nearly Complete

- Please attend our annual membership meeting. Details on page 3.
- Please note: Our Friday office hours are now by appointment only, so please call before stopping by!

While traveled Route 711 between Champion and Normalville, no doubt you've noticed the construction underway on the Anna and Steve Gdosky Indian Creek Restoration Project, which will treat the Kalp Discharge. This discharge flows from the abandoned Melcroft Number 1 mine, and is responsible for 40% of the total pollution in Indian Creek. Completion of this passive mine drainage treatment system is expected to occur within the next few weeks. When complete, this 10 acre project will clean up over 11 miles of the main stem of Indian Creek.

The last phase of this project involves planting willow cuttings and other plants and volunteers will be needed to complete this phase of the project! If you're interested in participating, please let us know!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Kooser—Tabey Road Waterline Project **2**

Help Us Save Time and Resources! **2**

Riverkeeper Patrol Established **3**

Coalbed Methane and the EPA **4**

PA Minefill Report Released **5**

Our Laurel Landscape **6**

Proposed Weakening of the Stream Buffer Rule **7**



Photo courtesy of Dave Lopes, Project Engineer, Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Construction Underway on Kooser-Tabey Road Waterline Project

Residents Should have Water by Christmas

Along with dedicated area residents, the Mountain Watershed Association began working on a project to bring public water to the areas of Kooser and Tabey Roads in Springfield Township, Fayette County, five years ago. With several partners, including the Indian Creek Water Authority, the Redevelopment Authority, and the DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, the funding was secured and clearances obtained to provide water to more than 40 families on the two roads who currently lack potable water supplies. These homes have been without potable water for nearly 30 years after their private water supplies were contaminated by mining.

The major limitations on the project were due to money.

Our goal was to extend public water to as many families as possible given the amount of money we had. When the bid for the water line came in under our estimate, the prospect of extending the line to more families with the extra money became a possibility.

We had hoped to use the money from the DEP to extend the line to more families. Unfortunately, the DEP would not allow us to use the extra money because extending water to eight more families was outside of the original scope of work.

Senator Richard Kasunic intervened, and thanks to his efforts we were able to secure a bit more of the DEP money for use toward extending the line to the eight additional families.

Another issue recently has arisen: the quality of the water for the additional eight homes. If chlorine is put in the water line at the beginning, there will not be enough chlorine in the water at the end to satisfy state and federal requirements. The water line needs to make a closed loop in order to provide adequate, potable water. Without the full \$402,000 that we were originally allotted from the DEP, we are unsure how we will complete the loop.

While the original 40 families will be getting public water, we are still working out the details in the hopes of extending public water to the rest of the homes.

Water, water everywhere. Unfortunately, it's too polluted to drink!!

Newsletter Now Available Via Email

Help our Organization Save Time and Resources!

We recently began sending our newsletter via email to some of our membership. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, so MWA is now distributing our quarterly newsletter via email to every member who has an email address on file with us.

If you received a hard copy of this newsletter but would prefer to receive future editions via email, or vice versa, please contact Krissy at yrk@mtwatershed.com or (724) 455-4200. If you'd like to get the newsletter via email, be sure to

mention both your name (as it appears on the mailing label of this newsletter) and your email.

Distributing our newsletter via email saves us valuable time and resources. Thank you for your support!



Freed Mine

Amerikohl has recently applied for yet another permit in the Indian Creek Watershed. The Freed Mine would be located in

Saltlick Township. If permitted, this would bring the total number of mines permitted in the Indian Creek Watershed since the DEP

began permitting to around 70, still without a cumulative hydrologic assessment. We'll be reviewing the application and will keep you posted.

Falls Race A Great Success for MWA

Our Plush River Otters are a Hit!

Once again, MWA was asked to table information at the Falls Race, and the day proved a huge success for our organization in terms of new memberships! It was also a great fundraiser for us, and we were also able to engage lots of new folks in our mission.

Though the chilly temperatures reminded us that fall was on the way, fun was had by all in attendance. We'd like to send a big thank you to our great team of

volunteers who helped make our success at the Falls Race possible: Scott Bortree, Paul Cline, Ken Gfroerer, Roger Pritts, Angelo Ross and Lisa Smith.

Also, a big thanks to all of the new members who joined at the Falls Race, as well as to the folks who joined at the Falls Race last year and renewed their memberships at the event this year!



Above: Krissy Kasserman, Yough Riverkeeper, and Lisa Smith, President, MWA Board of Directors, at the Falls Race.

Yough Riverkeeper Patrol Recently Launched

Patrol Form Also Creates A Mechanism for the Public to Report Stream Impacts

We just launched a new initiative as part of our Youghiogheny Riverkeeper program. The Yough Riverkeeper Patrol is another way of engaging our great volunteers in the stewardship of the watershed.

The Yough Riverkeeper Patrol members monitor streams in the watershed as they paddle, hike, bike, or fish. Patrollers report back to us both their patrol instances as well as any stream impacts that they come across. This information is valuable to us for a number of reasons. First, it

enables us to become quickly aware of any potential stream impacts that patrollers notice. It also helps us fulfill our obligation to the Waterkeeper Alliance by actively engaging volunteers in the patrolling of our watershed. Also, the data that is collected helps us to create baselines for streams in the watershed, so if a stream impact is discovered, we can look back through our patrol logs to see when the impact may have started.

The form that is used by our patrol is also available to members of our organization or

members of the public who wish to provide information on stream impacts. The only difference is that we log our patrol feedback differently for reporting purposes.

The form is available online at www.mtwatershed.com/patrol.aspx, and hard copies are available at our office.

If you spend a substantial amount of time outside in the Yough watershed and would like to become a member of the Patrol, please contact Krissy at yrk@mtwatershed.com or (724) 455-4200.

Annual Membership Meeting Scheduled

Please plan to attend MWA's Annual Membership Meeting on Wednesday, December 5, 2007, at 7:00 PM. This meeting

will be held at the Saltlick Township Supervisors Building on Route 711 in Melcroft, PA. The meeting will include a presentation

about our activities during the past year, as well as the nomination and election of board members. We hope to see you there!

The EPA Takes an Interest in Coalbed Methane Drilling

Recent PA House Legislative Hearing Also Highlighted Surface Owners' Plight

The Environmental Protection Agency has recently been examining issues relating to the water produced by coalbed methane wells and is interested in developing regulations to address some of these issues. In an effort to visit areas of the country where CBM drilling exists and is problematic, the EPA has scheduled many site visits this fall.

On October 11, MWA and the Center for Coalfield Justice hosted one of these site visits. Although parts of the meeting were productive, unfortunately, many of our questions regarding CBM remain unanswered, and we've now realized that neither the EPA nor the PA DEP is going to do anything to regulate the huge quantity of water used daily by coalbed methane extraction.

Produced water is basically the water that is used in drilling and fracturing the well. CBM production also involves daily water use to extract the gas. When you add all this up, it amounts to quite a bit of water, and this water can potentially be contaminated. While the PA DEP insists all water is routed to a permitted treatment facility for treatment and discharge, some important issues remain.

One is the issue of interbasin transfer, which basically means the water may be extracted and used in one watershed but hauled to a treatment facility and discharged in another watershed. This results in a net loss of water from one area to the next. While

water issues are a huge problem in the west where CBM development is also prevalent, there are some areas of Western Pennsylvania where residents are noticing water becoming more and more scarce. The possibility of water being removed from one basin and released in another will increasingly become an issue as demand for public water rises due to the loss of private water supplies.

The process of adopting a regulation is quite lengthy, so we are not expecting the EPA to enact anything prior to 2009 at the earliest.

MWA and CCJ also continue to look at other troubling issues concerning CBM drilling, and are pleased that the Pennsylvania Legislature is doing the same. On August 30, the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee held a

legislative hearing in Johnstown, PA, to discuss House Bill 1735, proposed by Rep. Tom Yewcic (D-Cambria/Somerset).

Beverly Braverman, MWA Executive Director, was invited to testify on a panel of private landowners and public interest groups regarding coalbed methane issues in general and Yewcic's bill in particular.

All things considered, most of the legislators present seemed to be interested in the plight of private surface owners, but it is MWA's concern that Yewcic's bill doesn't go far enough to protect the rights of surface owners.

The strategy group formed by MWA, CCJ, and concerned citizens continues to meet to focus on these issues. If you'd like to join this group, we'd love to have you! Contact Krissy at (724) 455-4200 or yrk@mtwatershed.com.



Above: A coalbed methane well operating in Fayette County, PA.

PA Minefill Report Shows Widespread Contamination of Water

Included are Recommendations for Improving the Management of Coal Ash

A new report by Earthjustice and the Clean Air Task Force shows alarmingly high levels of water contamination in areas where coal ash is disposed of in mines. The report, generally referred to as the Pennsylvania Minefill Report, shows that streams and groundwater adjacent to 10 of 15 mines studied are contaminated with high levels of metals including arsenic, selenium and cadmium.

According to study author Jeff Stant, enough coal ash is produced in the United States yearly to fill the box cars of a train stretching from Washington, DC to Melbourne, Australia.

About 120 Pennsylvania mines are permitted to dump coal ash under the Coal Ash Beneficial Use Program, administered by the PA Department of Environmental Protection. This makes Pennsylvania the leading state in the US for allowing ash to be



Above: Surface mine filled with coal ash. Photo courtesy of Clean Air Task Force and Earthjustice.

placed in coal mines.

The McDermott Mine in Cambria County has accepted 316,000 tons of coal combustion waste. At that site, cadmium has been measured in mine discharges at levels 76 times higher than allowed under government standards; selenium levels were 36 times higher. Use of a nearby water supply was also discontinued due to contamination.

Study authors attribute the

high levels of pollution to a lack of government safeguards and inadequate monitoring.

The study made 13 recommendations for improving the placement of wastes. Among them: increased long-term monitoring; setting pollution limits for ash dumped in mines; and isolating ash from water.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection maintains that the use of coal ash in mines is beneficial to the remediation of these coal mines, but the study shows that the PA DEP's regulations governing coal ash are glaringly inadequate.

To read the report, please visit <http://www.catf.us/publications/reports/PAMinefill.pdf>.

For more information, please contact Bev at mwa@mtwatershed.com or (724) 455-4200.

MWA Needs You!

Are You Interested in Becoming More Involved? Join a Committee!

MWA is seeking members to sit on one of our many committees. Our committees help our organization in many ways, and are a valuable part of our structure. By donating an hour or two a month to one of our committees, you could help improve your community's quality of life in many ways!

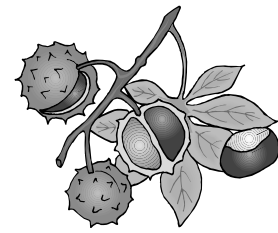
We have a fundraising committee, a finance committee, a

trail committee, and an abandoned mine lands committee, among others. If you have some time to spare and are interested in getting more involved in the Mountain Watershed Association, please consider joining!

Committees help with existing fundraisers and brainstorm new ones, help with maintaining our treatment systems, assist with implementing our Trail

Feasibility Study on the potential expansion of the ICV Trail, and many other tasks.

MWA is a small organization, and we have our dedicated volunteers to thank for helping us get to where we are today. We would love for that group of volunteers to grow, so if you'd like to get involved, please let us know by calling the office!



Our Laurel Landscape

Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire?

The Indian Creek watershed drains a ridge called Chestnut, but if you've spent any time in the woods around here, you know that there aren't many Chestnut trees around any more. Where are they all?

Good question. Many of us are too young to remember when one of the primary trees in Pennsylvania was the American Chestnut. Once considered one of the most important (and most prevalent) forest trees of eastern North America, the Chestnut tree was nearly wiped out due to the chestnut blight, which was introduced over a century ago to North America from Asia either by imported chestnut trees or lumber. The blight, first discovered in the Bronx Zoo in 1904, killed nearly every mature chestnut tree in the eastern United States by 1940.

Prior to the blight, it is estimated that the total number of Chestnut trees in eastern North America was near 4 billion, making

up nearly 25% of the trees in the Appalachian Mountains. Although most of western North America is still blight-free, it is estimated that there are fewer than 100 chestnut trees over 24 inches in diameter left in the east.

Despite this devastation,



Above: Chestnut blight shown on an American Chestnut Tree.

many small trees do still exist, but the majority are off-shoots of an

original root ball, and generally don't have time to mature before they too are attacked by chestnut blight.

Many organizations are working to develop blight-resistant varieties of the chestnut tree, often by crossing the American Chestnut with the blight-resistant Chinese Chestnut. One such tree was planted on the lawn of the White House in 2005 and is doing very well.

In September, an American Chestnut tree was discovered growing near the Anna and Steve Gdosky Indian Creek Restoration Project near Melcroft. Although the tree is small and likely part of a root ball left over from a blight-killed tree, it was an interesting discovery. Will we have healthy Chestnut trees prospering on Chestnut Ridge again? We hope so! For more information on the plans to restore the American Chestnut population, please visit the American Chestnut Foundation at www.acf.org.

It's Time to Renew Your Membership!

With your support, we've been able to make great strides in improving the quality of Indian Creek and the surrounding area. We ask that you continue to support our efforts by becoming a 2008 member of the Mountain Watershed Association.

As most of you know, we've changed our membership structure so that all of our mem-

berships are due January 1. If you've already paid dues recently, you've already renewed for 2008. If not, we ask that you take a moment to send in your membership renewal (forms can be found on the back of your newsletter).

If you join at the Stream Hero (\$90) level or above, we'll send you to a free box of MWA notecards or a white organic cotton

logo t-shirt. Please also consider making an additional donation to our organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

Your support has been instrumental in our past accomplishments, and we hope you'll continue to be a member of the Mountain Watershed Association in the future!

Weakening of Stream Buffer Rule Could Have Irreversible Impacts

Area Streams May Be Among Those Affected

On August 24, 2007, the Bush Administration, through the federal Office of Surface Mining, proposed to significantly weaken the "buffer zone rule." This stream protection was written into the Clean Water Act decades ago and prohibits coal-mining activities from occurring within 100 feet of streams unless those activities will have no impact on water quality or quantity. Weakening of the stream buffer rule will allow coal companies to dump massive amounts of waste directly into streams, destroying them completely.

The lack of an adequate buffer zone rule will have grave implications for streams throughout the coal-mining areas of the entire nation. Much attention has been focused on the potential impacts in areas where mountaintop removal mining is practiced, but the impacts will also be felt in other areas of the country where coal mining is prevalent.

The Administration's proposed rule essentially removes the idea of a 'buffer' from the buffer zone rule. This weakened rule proposed by the Office of Surface Mining could irreversibly impact communities and water supplies in the coalfields by legalizing the burying of our streams.

In the United States, 36 states possess mineable coal, and it

is no coincidence that many of these states have some of the worst water quality in the nation due to reckless past mining practices.

Having spent the last ten years cleaning up abandoned mine drainage in the Indian Creek watershed, MWA is very concerned about this potential threat to our water resources. If this proposed rule is adopted, we will have an entirely different issue to contend with, and that is the legalized burying of our streams to appease special interest groups.

It seems to us that the Office of Surface Mining, under the Bush Administration, has proposed to change the stream buffer rule to conform with the desires of coal operators, rather than requiring the coal industry to conform with the existing law.

Our ultimate goal is that the OSM 'Pull the Rule!' meaning we'd like to see this revised rule be discarded in favor of the existing stream buffer rule.

We have requested an extension of the comment period, as the initial comment period was limited to 90 days, and we've also asked that public hearings be held here and in other coalfield areas around the country so that OSM may truly realize the impacts this revised buffer rule may have on our water resources and our communities.

A hearing will be held

Wednesday, October 24, 2007 at the Ramada Inn in Washington, PA. This hearing will be an opportunity for coalfield citizens to discuss the impacts that the revised stream buffer rule will have on them.

Written comments are also still being accepted at the address below. Please ask OSM to 'pull the rule!' in favor of the existing stream buffer rule.

Have you never submitted comments before? Would you like to submit comments but need some help preparing them? Please let us know! We're available to help draft and proof comments.

Thank you for your support! Remember, the more comments OSM receives on this subject, the more opportunities the OSM will have to truly learn about the impacts this revision could have in Appalachia and around the country.

Please submit comments to:

Dennis G. Rice
Office of Surface Mining
Reclamation and Enforcement
US Department of the Interior
Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20240
Email: Drice@osmre.gov

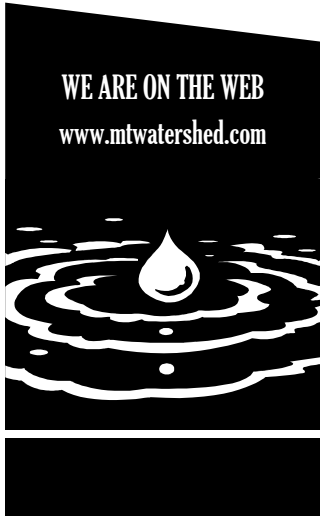
If submitting comments via email, please place RIN1029-AC04 in the subject line.

Fall 2007



1414-B ICV Road
P.O. Box 408
Melcroft PA 15462

Phone: 724 455-4200
Fax: 724 455-4201



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Melcroft, PA
Permit No. 002

POSTAL PATRON

It's that time of year! If you haven't already renewed your membership in the Mountain Watershed Association for 2008, please do so today. See the membership form in this newsletter, and THANK YOU for your past support!

Please Invest in the Future of Our Mountains and Streams by
Becoming a 2008 Member of the Mountain Watershed Association

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Type of Membership

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| _____ Basic (\$5) | _____ Stream Friend (\$45) |
| _____ Family (\$7) Number of people _____ | _____ Stream Hero (\$90) |
| _____ Group (\$15) Number of people _____ | _____ Lifetime Member (\$500) |
| _____ MWA Donor (\$20) | _____ Donation (Tax Deductible) |

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

*Protecting, preserving,
and
restoring the
Indian Creek
Watershed and
surrounding areas.*