

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



### Tickets Now Available for MWA's Second Annual Clean Water Banquet

- *Save the date: MWA's Annual Wildflower Walk in the Indian Creek Gorge is scheduled for May 12, 2007. More details to come in the April newsletter.*
- *Our new website and online store are up and running! Visit us at [www.mtwatershed.com](http://www.mtwatershed.com).*

Our second annual Clean Water Banquet and Silent Auction are scheduled for April 21, 2007 at Brady's Restaurant in Donegal, PA. Doors open at 5:00 PM and dinner will be served at 6:00 PM. Tickets are \$15 each for buffet style dinner and dessert.

The Clean Water Banquet and Silent Auction are among MWA's biggest fundraisers. Last year silent auction items included three fly fishing rods, a Donegal Highlands golf package, an Aruba vacation package, and many other great items! This year a silent auction and a Chinese auction are scheduled.

Tickets are available by calling us at 724.455.4200 or stopping by the Mountain Watershed Association office, or by mailing in the stub on the back of this newsletter near the membership form. Your ticket will also provide your number for the auctions. Get your tickets early and join us as we celebrate good times, great volunteers, and clean water in the Indian Creek Watershed!

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Invasive Species	2
Volunteer Opportunity	
Project Updates	3
Great Gift Ideas!	3
Our New Neighbors	4
AML Re-Authorization	4
Yough and Mon Water Sampling	5
Kalp Strip Mine Update	5

### MWA Co-Hosts Coal Bed Methane Forum

The Mountain Watershed Association, along with Tri-State Citizens Mining Network, will host an informational forum on coal bed methane (CBM) gas drilling and extraction on January 25, 2007 at 7pm. The forum, held at Washington and Jefferson College in Washington, PA, will focus on the rights and responsibilities of residents and property owners living in the coalfields and grappling with coal bed methane gas extraction.

Over 180 wells exist in Fayette, Washington and Greene counties alone, with many more located in other counties in western Pennsylvania. Coal bed methane extraction is different than extraction of natural gas in many fundamental ways. First, operators do not have to obtain permission from the surface property owner in order to extract the gas. This means an operator who owns the mineral rights on a property can come on to the surface property and install a well- typically using nearly half an acre of land- without any kind of communication with or permission from the surface property owner. Secondly, surface property owners receive no compensation whatsoever for the CBM extracted from beneath their property.

# Invasive Species in the Youghiogheny River Watershed

## Invasive Species Removal Week Scheduled in Ohiopyle

An invasive species is defined by the federal government as one that is a) non-native or alien to the ecosystem under consideration or b) whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

Invasive species can be plants, animals, or other organisms. The most prevalent means of invasive species introduction is - you guessed it- human activity.

It has been estimated that the US spends over \$120 billion annually on the containment and/or control of invasive species, and that over 80% of the fishing communities in the US are considered degraded due to invasive species.

Invasive species are

frequently introduced into ecosystems by unknowing gardeners. Consider this: purple loosestrife, the common daylily, and the winged burning bush are all available at many local greenhouses; all are also considered to be invasive, so gardeners beware!

One of the bigger offenders in the Youghiogheny River watershed is Japanese Knotweed (its scientific name is *Polygonum cuspidatum*). This plant is becoming more and more prevalent in the eastern United States and crowds out native species that formerly thrived in riparian (streamside) areas.

Ohiopyle State Park and the Friends of Ohiopyle are organizing an Invasive Species Removal Week, and are looking for groups to volunteer their time to help in the removal of

Knotweed along the Youghiogheny River Gorge during the week of May 12-19th.

Groups are asked to call the park office 724-329-8591 or email [ohiopylesp@state.pa.us](mailto:ohiopylesp@state.pa.us) with the number of volunteers and available dates. Individuals wishing to volunteer are to report to the office on Saturday May 12th at 9 am. Volunteers are asked to bring their own food and drinks, gloves, and loppers. Gloves and loppers are available in limited supply through the park.

Wilderness Voyageurs Outfitters in Ohiopyle has also scheduled a similar work day on May 19, 2006 and volunteers are needed on this date as well. Call Seth at 1.800.272.4141 for more details.



Pictured (L-R): Japanese Knotweed, Purple Loosestrife, Burning Bush, and the Common Daylily, all designated as invasive species.

## Coal Bed Methane Forum (continued from page 1)

CBM extraction has just begun to find its way onto the radar screen of citizens and organizations outside the areas where wells have been installed. MWA has discovered that many residents don't know their rights or responsibilities, as CBM extraction was little known until just a few years ago when the industry's growth exploded in western Pennsylvania.

The CBM forum will include an informational overview of the extraction process, a panel discussion including representatives from PA DEP Oil and Gas, an independent attorney, an independent hydro geologist, and a private citizen who has had CMB extracted on his property.

The agenda includes a question and answer session as

well as a short optional organizational session for those wishing to work toward legislative change in the way coal bed methane extraction is regulated.

For more information or directions to the forum, please visit [www.tristatecitizens.org](http://www.tristatecitizens.org) or contact Krissy at MWA: 724.455.4200 or [yrk@mtwatershed.com](mailto:yrk@mtwatershed.com).

## Updates on MWA Projects

### Kalp Discharge

Most of you have probably noticed that the Kalp Project at the Kalp Discharge in Romney along Route 711S is well underway. The contractor exceeded our goals this past fall so spring should see much activity on site and the project should be COMPLETED this year!

This particular project, formally called the Anna and Steve Gdosky Indian Creek Restoration Project, will clean up the water entering Indian Creek from this mine discharge. The Kalp Discharge is responsible for 45% of

the total pollution entering the whole watershed, not just the main stem of the creek. When this project is completed, it will result in the restoration of nine miles of Indian Creek.

As we say, Coming Soon, Clean Water!

### Celebrate! Clean Water Coming to Kooser Road

The Kooser Road Waterline Project is fully funded. MWA staff and volunteers have been waiting with bated breath to hear

whether we would be awarded the \$500,000 grant that makes up the remainder of the money needed for this \$900,000 project, which will supply water for over 40 homes.

The good news is that we received the grant. The equally good news is that the project will be bid out in February/March so that construction can take place this spring and summer.

Thanks to the folks from this part of our community who worked so hard to move the project forward—and to Bankson Engineering for putting together an effective grant proposal.

## Great Gift Ideas

The calendars sold like hotcakes, we just ordered more Youghiogheny Riverkeeper t-shirts, and we're down to just a few Entertainment Books. Needless to say, our fundraisers have been very successful in the last few months.

A big thank you goes out to all of our board members and

volunteers who stepped forward to sell calendars and entertainment books. We couldn't what we do without each of you!

Still available are Entertainment Books (just a few at \$25 each), Yough Riverkeeper organic cotton t-shirts (sizes S-XXL, \$12 each), Yough Riverkeeper recycled cotton

canvas bags (\$15 each) and Indian Creek Notecards (\$10 each).

If you haven't purchased a calendar yet, call the office to be placed on a waiting list!

If you are interested in any of these great items (they make great gifts!) please visit our online store ([www.mtwatershed.com](http://www.mtwatershed.com)) or call the MWA office at 724.455.4200!



## Beavers in the Indian Creek Watershed

### A Little Background Information On Our New Neighbors

Recently, it came to our attention that we have new guests on the creek. Several beavers have decided to make part of the main central stem of the creek their home.

Beavers are the largest rodent found in North America. They can weigh up to 55 lbs, with the females usually weighing more than the males. Beavers have small unwebbed front paws with claws which they use for digging and constructing dams. Their back paws are large and webbed to help them swim.

Beavers are excellent swimmers and can remain underwater for up to 15 minutes. They are mainly active at night and

eat soft deciduous trees such as birch, aspen, and willow. They also eat grasses, cattails, water lilies, and other aquatic plants.

Occasionally, beavers will burrow into riverbanks but typically they build stick dams. They construct their homes with a variety of different sized soft trees and shrubs. Once the trees are in place they use mud to help seal up the cracks. The entry for a beaver dam is underwater; this protects them from predators such as coyotes, bobcats, and foxes.

In the event of danger, beavers will slap their paddle-like tail on the water to warn other family members. Beavers are one of

the few animals that mate for life. The young, called "kits", stay with their parents until they are two years old and then leave to find a mate and establish their own dam.

Beaver dams can create flooding problems in some areas, but they also create habitat for other animals including water fowl and fish.



Above: Pictured is a North American Beaver.

## AML Re-Authorization: Victory at Last!

Saturday, December 9, 2006 brought great news for all those working to restore Pennsylvania's thousands of abandoned mine sites. The AML (abandoned mine land) Fund Re-Authorization was passed by Congress in the wee hours of December 9th as part of a 500 page bill called "The Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006."

The Abandoned Mine Lands Fund is fed by fees levied on each ton of coal mined in the United States. Fees collected go toward restoration of abandoned mine sites. AML monies have played a large part in restoring abandoned mine sites here in the Indian Creek Watershed, including our newest project, the Anna and Steve Gdosky Indian Creek

Restoration Project (treating the Kalp discharge).

Pennsylvania has the largest legacy of abandoned mines in the nation, with 44 of 67 counties containing at least one site, and 4,600 miles of impacted streams and rivers. Nearly 1.4 million Pennsylvanians live within a mile of an AML site, and because many contain hazards including open mine mouths, flooded pits or highwalls, every year deaths are blamed on unreclaimed mines. The PA DEP estimates the total price tag for cleaning up all the AML sites in the state to be nearly \$15 billion.

AML Re-Authorization amends the 1977 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) and extends the AML

Program for at least the next 15 years, and should provide Pennsylvania with at least \$1.5 billion to clean up the worst AML sites, termed Priority 1 and Priority 2.

AML re-authorization is a huge victory for organizations working to remediate Pennsylvania's legacy of abandoned coal mines. Mountain Watershed was an active player in the Pennsylvania AML Coalition, which worked toward re-authorization for over three years. With re-authorization, groups like the Mountain Watershed Association can continue their valuable work and bring about a cleaner environment and cleaner water supplies to Pennsylvanians across the state.

## Water Sampling on the Yough and Monongahela Rivers Continues Unusual Contaminant Discovered and Reported

MWA, through the Youghiogheny Riverkeeper project, is participating in a continuing study of water quality in the Yough and Mon Rivers as they flow through Greene and Fayette Counties.

This study, initiated in August, is attempting to identify impacts to water quality in the Yough and Mon. Seven water sampling points have been identified in Fayette and Greene Counties, and quarterly sampling takes place at the pre-determined points.

MWA is participating in this study with the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. One of our responsibilities is completing the quarterly water sampling as well as some interim sampling.

Youghiogheny Riverkeeper Krissy Kasserman and Americorp Intern Shannon Bates have completed two quarterly sampling events (September and December) to

date.

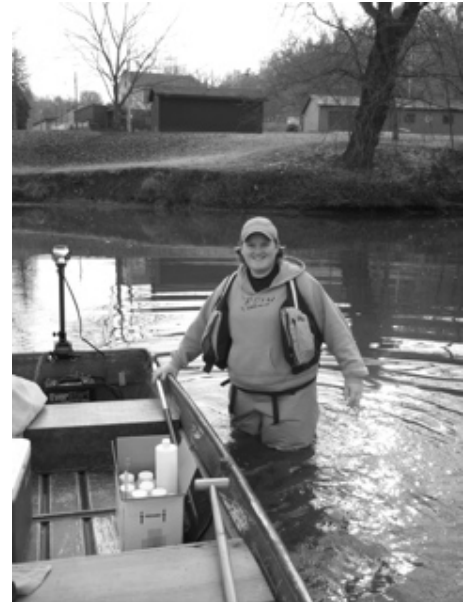
During the December round of water sampling in Greene County, a virtual graveyard of deer carcasses was discovered in the shallows of the Monongahela River, just upstream from the small community of Crucible, PA.

These carcasses provide a risk of microbial contamination including E-coli as well as whatever parasites the deer might have been carrying, potentially cryptosporidium. Crypto is a parasite that is resistant to chlorination and can be fatal to young children and the elderly if ingested. Some of these contaminants obviously already exist in our rivers, but a fresh source makes the potential for contamination even greater.

Complaints were filed with and site inspections requested from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Game Commission.

This situation aside, the

December round of sampling was relatively uneventful, and we should be hearing about the results very soon!



Above: MWA Americorp Intern Shannon Bates with our borrowed boat, the 'Green Bean,' and 'Hoss,' our trolling motor.

## Kalp Strip Mine Update

The resolution from the Fayette County Planning and Zoning Board that gave Albert F. Stiffler Mining the special exception to mine at this location on Chearney Rd. clearly states they are responsible "to widen Chearney Road by two feet on each side and replace any existing damaged drainage pipes for a length of one mile from the intersection of TR 820 and SR 1009 PRIOR TO THE REMOVAL OF COAL FROM THE SUBJECT PROPERTIES" (emphasis added).

We have had several com-

plaints about school buses and coal trucks on the road at the same time. The school buses have pulled off the road to let the coal trucks pass. Clearly, the road has not been widened as promised.

Mountain Watershed Association has appealed the issuance of the special exception for this strip mine. The major problem with appeals of this sort is that often by the time the appeal is heard the mining has either taken place or has gone so far that stopping the activity at that point is dangerous to the environment and

health and safety of the community. This is due to open high walls and unreclaimed surfaces.

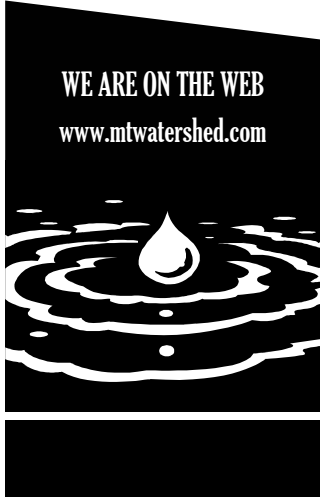
It is truly amazing that the judicial process is slanted so far in favor of the mining industry. What other industry can destroy home, land, and water while the appeal is still being heard by the courts?

If you are a surrounding property owner and have problems with traffic, dust, water loss, or blasting damage, please call us at 724 455-4200. You do have some rights that can be enforced.



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

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



Non-Profit Org.  
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POSTAL PATRON

*Attached please find your 2007 membership card in anticipation of your renewal.*

Please Invest in the Future of the Mountains By  
Becoming a 2007 Member of the Mountain Watershed Association

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership	
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic (\$5)	<input type="checkbox"/> Stream Friend (\$45)
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$7) Number of people _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Stream Hero (\$90)
<input type="checkbox"/> Group (\$15) Number of people _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Member (\$500)
<input type="checkbox"/> MWA Donor (\$20)	<input type="checkbox"/> Donation (Tax Deductible)

\_\_\_\_ Number of Clean Water Banquet Tickets Requested (please enclose \$15 for each ticket)

Please attach any special dietary needs including vegetarian fare and mail to the below address.  
Tickets will be mailed to you.

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

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and  
restoring the  
Indian Creek  
Watershed and  
surrounding areas.*