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2012 Annual Report



As 2012 and the Mountain Watershed Association's 18th year come to a close, we continue to work toward comprehensive restoration and protection of the Indian Creek watershed and have expanded our monitoring activities into the larger Youghiogheny River watershed. Your investment in our organization's work has helped to make this possible! Please allow us this opportunity to share some of our activities from the past year with you.

Progress on Marsolino Discharge

As part of the continued implementation of the Indian Creek Comprehensive Restoration Plan for Abandoned Mine Drainage, we submitted a Growing Greener proposal to the state for funds to purchase the land needed to proceed to Phase I of the Marsolino Treatment System. The Marsolino discharges are a result of poor strip mining practices and comprise the second worst discharge in this watershed. If we can secure this funding, we will be working with the Department of Environmental Protection to build our sixth treatment system so that we can further restore Indian Creek and its tributaries Poplar and Newmyer Runs.

A letter from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

One of the most difficult subjects to discuss with people, even family members, is preparing for the end and after. Can one prepare for after death? The topic of this discussion is not the traditionally defined “afterlife,” but how you can support an organization you invested in all of your life, even after you have moved on. This is called planned giving.

By definition, a planned gift is any major gift made in lifetime or at death as part of a donor’s overall financial and/or estate planning, but here particularly, we would like to talk briefly about wills. Statistics show that anywhere from 30% to 60% of all people die without a will. This is hard on those left behind.

Think about it. Do you want the government to decide what will happen with all of your hard-earned dollars after death? Have you ever thought about what will happen to the organization to which you frequently donated when you are no longer around to direct that donation? Planned giving can answer that question. You can name that organization in your will by making a specific bequest. Another method of planned giving is to name that organization 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 me for more information. Thank you for your time and consideration with this delicate matter.

Sincerely,

Beverly Braverman
Executive Director

Marcellus Citizen Stewardship Project

Over the past year our Marcellus Citizen Stewardship Project (MCSP) has been revamped to offer more tools for citizens to protect their communities from impacts of shale gas extraction. With a partnership formed with the Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring at Dickinson College, we have upgraded our Visual Assessment Trainings to include water monitoring in addition to our existing outreach and assessment activities. Over this past year we have trained an additional 100 people in Visual Assessment, over 100 people in water monitoring, and have 50 volunteer water monitors throughout southwestern Pennsylvania.



Community Organizer Veronica Coptis presenting at a community workshop and Outreach Coordinator Melissa Troutman explaining our Marcellus Citizen Stewardship Project at a conference.

Another addition to the MCSP this year is our new focus on supporting community leadership. We are networking community leaders throughout Pennsylvania and also providing community groups with technical assistance and training opportunities. Community leadership is essential to ensure citizens are informed, protected and that their interests are being considered as industrial development moves into communities. Currently there are 16 citizens serving as community leaders in 9 counties across the state, including Fayette, Allegheny, Butler, Potter, Lycoming, and Bradford.

2012

OM&R and AMD Treatment Systems

Over the past two years we have been developing an Operation, Maintenance, and Replacement (OM&R) Plan for our abandoned mine drainage (AMD) treatment systems and other remediation and clean-up projects. The plan identifies the maintenance needs and cost associated with keeping the systems functioning. By following the maintenance activities identified in the plan, we can extend the lifespan of the treatment systems.

We also dealt with a major problem this year at the Anna & Steve Gdosky (Kalp) Treatment System. Pipes became clogged with iron and restricted the flow of mine drainage entering the treatment system which caused the mine pool elevation to rise. After installing new cleanout pipes and cleaning several other pipes, the treatment system began functioning normally. MWA received financial assistance for the cleanout and repairs from Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation's emergency response program.



Field Tech Carla Ruddock taking a water sample and AmeriCorps Intern Terri Springer flushing at our AMD treatment systems.

ICV Bike/Hike Trail Expansion

We continue to expand the Indian Creek Valley Bike/Hike Trail with a goal of someday reaching—and crossing—the Yough River. Engineering design is underway for the Donegal Bridge, the site development plan for the Melcroft Bridge is almost complete, and construction on the trestle bridge in Melcroft and the Springfield Township portion of the trail will begin in the spring. We have also created a new website for the trail—check it out at www.indiancreekvalleytrail.com.



MWA's Trail Committee overseeing construction on the Donegal extension.

Proposed Curry Mine

Earlier this year the Commonwealth Court upheld the Fayette County Zoning Hearing Board's 2009 denial of a special exception for Amerikohl's proposed Curry Mine. Due to its proximity to the Youghiogheny River, Ohio State Park and the Great Allegheny Passage, MWA has been opposing this proposal for many years. Unfortunately, Amerikohl has now reapplied to the Fayette Zoning Hearing Board and we await a decision.

Act 13 Opposition

Mountain Watershed Association submitted an amicus, or friend of the court, brief in support of a lawsuit against portions of Act 13, Pennsylvania's new oil and gas law. Plaintiffs include Delaware Riverkeeper Network and several municipalities who won a 120-day injunction in Commonwealth Court in April. This prevented zoning provisions of Act 13 from taking effect. The ruling was appealed to the State Supreme Court by the current administration and testimony was heard by Supreme Court Justices at a public hearing in Pittsburgh in October. No ruling has been made, but according to the plaintiff's attorneys the success of the case so far has been in part due to the immense public support from citizens and groups like MWA.

Monitoring Deep Mine Proposals – Again

We are tracking two Intent to Explore notices for underground mining in the Donegal/Jones Mill area and the Springfield Township area, both from LCT, Inc. MWA has voiced concerns regarding impacts to tourism revenue, infrastructure, community health and private water supplies along with increased dust, noise and traffic. We sponsored an informational meeting to assist watershed residents in understanding what this may mean for our community, and we plan to continue monitoring and commenting on these proposals throughout 2013.



Community members learn about the proposed deep mine at our informational meeting at Highlands Hall.

Water Quality Monitoring

We began our Youghiogheny River Comprehensive Water Quality Monitoring Project, a water sampling plan covering the Yough River basin from Maryland to the mouth near McKeesport. Sampling sites are located on the main stem and all of the major tributaries. This project, which analyzes nearly 30 components, will establish current water quality conditions throughout the basin. In addition, we have continued monitoring water quality above, below and within our mine drainage treatment systems. This includes taking water samples and also macroinvertebrate sampling to determine what impact our treatment systems are having on stream life. We have also placed 28 in-stream water quality monitors throughout the Indian Creek and Yough watersheds. These dataloggers gather water quality information continuously. They help to determine baseline water quality and to identify and track pollution. Strategic partnerships with agencies including the U.S. Geological Survey and the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) have allowed for further expansion of these projects.



Yough RIVERKEEPER® Krissy Kasserman & USACE Yough Lake staff installing a datalogger on a tributary to lake.