

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



Highlights:

- Celebrate Earth Day with us! Join us on April 21st for our Birds & Blooms Guided Walk in the Indian Creek Gorge! See page 2 for details.
- Summer interns for hire. Swimmable Waters program and update of conservation plan. Visit www.mtwatershed.com for more information.

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Join us for our 13th Annual Clean Water Banquet & Silent Auction on April 28!

Come and join us in the celebration of our volunteers and accomplishments at our Annual Clean Water Banquet & Silent Auction. Every year we hold this dinner and auction to celebrate the year's accomplishments with our Board of Directors, members, and supporters. It is also a time to raise money to continue the organization's mission to protect, preserve, and restore Indian Creek and the greater Youghiogheny River watersheds.

This year's event will be held on Saturday, April 28, 2018 at Brady's Restaurant on RT 31 in Acme. Auction doors will open at 5pm with dinner served at 6:30pm. Once again this year, we have plenty of great items up for bid, with new donations coming in every day. These donations include gift certificates, tickets to local and regional attractions, handmade creations, sports paraphernalia, baked goods, and much more. The silent auction portion of the evening is always exciting. We will have a 50/50 ticket raffle and Paper Bag Auction for guests to

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Monitoring Mining Activities

As most of you already know, the deep mine is a reality. If you have asked yourself why MWA withdrew its appeal, please read this article. Before you do, one thing we must clarify is that MWA did not receive ONE CENT in this process. In fact you will see that we took on more responsibility to monitor the mining to protect the watershed community.

Background: In 2012 a company called LCT Energy LLC submitted an application to the California District Mining Office of the PA DEP to deep mine about 3000 acres in the Indian Creek Watershed. The footprint of this mine shared the

continued on page 6...

Update Your E-Newsletter Preferences

Do you receive our email newsletter? You can now select what types of updates you would like to receive from us. Topics include Yough River issues, shale gas, trail news, and several other topics. To update your newsletter preferences visit www.mtwatershed.com/join-our-mailing-list. Thank you!



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Birds & Blooms Guided Walk

The Birds & Blooms Walk, formerly the Wild Flower Walk will be held on April 21, 2018 in the spectacular Indian Creek Valley Gorge.

The Indian Creek Gorge is not only the most scenic section of Indian Creek; it is recognized as having exceptional biological value. The steep forested slopes, bedrock outcrops, scoured rock and gravel bars along the Creek itself provide a health and diverse habitat for many species of plants and animals, some of which are rare in the state and region. This walk will be led by local ecologist and plant enthusiast, Lisa Smith.

This year we plan to add a new element to the walk which includes a focus on birds. Migrating warblers, waterfowl and other feathered

friends will be returning from their winter haunts to our beautiful Appalachian Mountains.

Join Lisa and Josh Lawrey, a local naturalist and bird expert for an informative and enjoyable interpretive walk into the Indian Creek Gorge along the abandoned rail grade.

Parking is at the entrance to the Indian Creek Gorge off of Route 381 near Mill Run, PA. From Route 381, look for the Camp Christian sign, and turn down the road toward the camp. At the Y, turn right, proceed until you see a trail head parking area.

Bring sturdy walking shoes, water, a camera, and an umbrella, if necessary. Come enjoy the beautiful Indian Creek Gorge with us!

Indian Creek Valley Trail Updates

The Indian Creek Valley Trail continues to develop although at a slower pace than we hoped. Winter took its toll and we are waiting for a break in the weather to be able to fill in and regrade where needed.

There are also several trees that should be removed. If you enjoy the trail, please offer some of your time to improve the existing sections and help to open up new ones. We are in planning mode for the coming construction season. It turns out that to upgrade the gorge section of the trail all we needed was the Erosion and Sedimentation Plan approved by the Fayette County Conservation District back in October of last year.

We now have the go ahead to do this project which begins at the trail head near Camp Christian and

ends at the Youghiogheny River.

The bids to contractors went out and we are awaiting their responses. The job will be awarded April 9.

Volunteers are needed to monitor the trail. Please contact Peter Kester at 724 455-4200 x5#. If you are hiking/biking the trail, monitoring is a matter of noting its condition and reporting any issues you identify. If you want to help with maintenance, also please call Peter. He will make sure you are notified about work days or just work with you to provide tools to groom the existing pathways.

It's a gorgeous trail. We would like to expand its use. Onward to the Youghiogheny!

Positive Results Seen in the Indian Creek Watershed

The Environmental Protection Agency has approved Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's "2016 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring Report." This report is a snapshot of the waterbodies within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and evaluates if streams, rivers, and lakes are achieving federal water quality standards to protect and provide clean water for aquatic life, water supplies, fish consumption, and recreational uses.

According to this report, 19,900 miles of the Commonwealth's waterways are impaired — not meeting federal water quality standards and require the development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). A TMDL is a restoration plan for impaired streams that identifies the maximum amount of a particular pollution that a stream can tolerate and still be within its water quality standards.

The majority of the Indian Creek watershed is attaining its designated use, including the entire mainstem of Indian Creek. That covers the areas where the Kalp, Sagamore, and Gallentine treatment systems are located. However, there are 14.47 miles of streams listed as impaired for aquatic use within six tributary watersheds: Poplar Run, Champion Creek, and four unnamed tributaries to Indian

Creek. The source of impairments are from abandoned mine drainage, removal of vegetation, and land development causing siltation, turbidity, pH, and metals, all impacts to area streams.

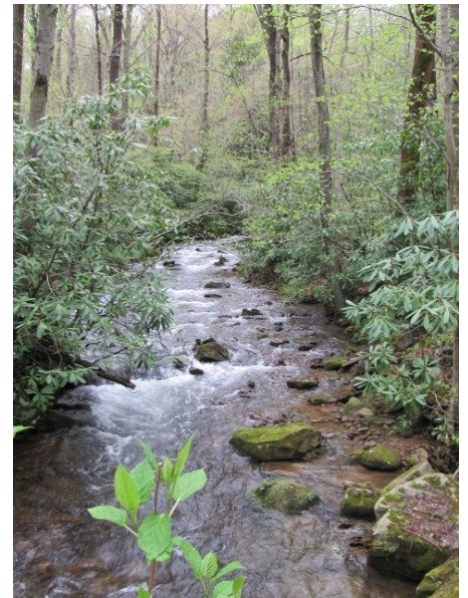
The Poplar Run watershed is the most impacted subwatershed with 7.46 stream miles listed as impaired from siltation and metals. The mainstem of Poplar Run from where Newmyer Run enters near Solomon Fulton Road to the confluence with Indian Creek is impaired. That includes the entire Newmyer Run watershed (2.47 miles) for which a TMDL was completed in 2004. The Poplar Run watershed is one of MWA's focus areas of restoration with three ongoing projects the Poplar Run Land Liming Project, Marsolino Abandoned Mine Drainage Treatment System, and the Rondell-Correal Abandoned Mine Drainage Treatment System.

Champion Creek from Shirley Road to the confluence with Indian Creek (1.58 miles of stream) is designated as impaired from metals associated with abandoned mine drainage. MWA is actively working to restore and protect this watershed through the establishment of the Melcroft Abandoned Mine Treatment system, ensuring protections from the Rustic Ridge Deep Mine and through monitoring

activities.

There are also four unnamed tributaries that flow into Indian Creek between County Line Road and Hopewell Road in Saltlick Township that account for a combined 5.43 miles of impairment. Impairment at these sites is predominately siltation and turbidity from excessive removal of vegetation; however, abandoned mine drainage impacts of metals, total dissolved solids, and pH are also prevalent.

It is evident from this report conditions within the watershed have improved and with our hard work they will continue to improve.



A majority of Indian Creek is attaining its designated use.

2018 Spring Road Clean Up

Help make our community cleaner! Join us on Saturday, May 12 for our annual Spring Road Clean Up. The event will be held from 9am-12pm. Please meet at the MWA office so that we can split up into groups and

clean the 2 mile stretch of roadway that MWA sponsors.

Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes! Gloves, safety vests, trash bags, and light refreshments will be provided. For more infor-

mation or to sign up to be a volunteer, please contact Peter at 724-455-4200 ext 5# or peter@mtwatershed.com.

Swim Season 2018- Are You Ready To Get Wet?

Do you have that yearning to get into the Yough? MWA is ready to help you determine where it's safe to go swimming, paddling, or just splash around this swim season.

From May 1-September 30 we will collect and process bacteria samples weekly at 14 swimming holes in and around the Youghiogheny River. We are monitoring for the presence or absence of E.coli (0157:H7) as it has the potential to cause waterborne illness.

Streams with low E.coli counts are considered safe for swimming, while streams with higher E. coli counts are unsafe. The results are posted on the Swimguide.org and MWA's website. Text "YoughSwimmableWaters" to

84483 to be notified when the data is updated.

We will be promoting this program through our social media again this year. Be sure to tag your neat and interesting pictures on the Yough, #Youghriver, and yours could be chosen to appear in one of our promotional photos.

Another tool that MWA uses to provide updates about our monitoring and other activities is Water Reporter. This is a smart phone app that allows users to report on conditions by providing a picture, a brief description, and confirming the location. A manager is alerted so that corrective actions can be initiated if needed.

Visit waterreporter.com and/or download the app to sign up. Make sure to add #Youghriver to your posts to ensure that MWA sees your report. If you would like more information, contact Carla at Carla@mtwatershed.com.



The sample on the left is a stream showing high levels of Ecoli, while the sample on the right is showing minimal levels of Ecoli.

Don't Frack Maryland!

Gov. Hogan (Maryland) signed into law a ban on hydraulic fracturing in Maryland on April 4, 2017. Maryland joins New York and Vermont among states that have banned fracking. Many Maryland residents are now focusing efforts to raise awareness about the dangers and health impacts of fracked-gas pipelines. Recent pipeline projects like Sunoco's Mariner East II and Energy Transfer Partners' Rover pipeline have had increased media exposure over the spills, contaminated drinking water sources, and sink holes caused by the construction of these pipelines. Residents are becoming more aware of the immediate dangers of pipelines and the long-term effects of pipeline compressor station air

emissions like the current Eastern Panhandle Expansion pipeline project, which proposes crossing underneath the Potomac River.

Currently, Gov. Hogan backs an energy initiative, which pushes infrastructure upgrades to provide natural gas as the primary energy source for more homes in the state. The program is focused around the merger of two major natural gas providers and a settlement, which requires funding of expanding the service area.

Is it curious that on one hand fracking is ban in Maryland but on the other hand there's a push to use natural gas as a primary energy source?

The Delaware River Basin Commission is currently the in the legal steps of banning fracking. The importance of the Delaware River to the residents and the amount of drinking water provided by the river to Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware, and New Jersey is recognized by the citizens and government officials, which led to the petition to prohibit fracking within the basin. The public comment period ends March 30th and several public hearings were held over the proposed regulations.

For more information or to get involved visit DontFrackMD.org.

Allegheny Energy Center Suggests New Location on the Yough

In 2017, public outcry from the community of Elizabeth Township (ET) made it clear that a proposed gas-fired and Yough-adjacent power plant was not welcome there. Elizabeth Township's Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) even ruled that the power plant, proposed by the Invenergy corporation, would be illegal according to zoning rules. Despite the clear ruling by the ZHB, Invenergy appealed the decision. Oddly, Invenergy then requested repeated extensions from the Court, essentially preventing their own legal appeal from moving forward.

Meanwhile, the company applied for another land use permit at a different, but still Yough-adjacent,

property in the ET community of Smithdale. Invenergy stated publicly that they would withdraw their ongoing legal appeal if the new application was granted, making it appear as though the legal appeal was intended, in part, as a tactic to pressure the township. Fortunately, the ET Board of Commissioners had the foresight to understand that for many of the same reasons the original proposal was illegal. The Smithdale proposal was also illegal. In August of 2017 the Commissioners voted to deny Invenergy's proposal and in December of 2017, Invenergy withdrew their legal appeal of their initial proposal.

At ET's monthly Commissioners

meeting in January 2018, Invenergy asked for a public hearing date at which they would present a new proposal for the Smithdale site. Again, MWA/YRK, Protect ET, and community members rallied and planned new strategies for opposition. In a befuddling act, Invenergy quietly withdrew their request only a few weeks later. This signifies a clear need for MWA to remain vigilant in our support of the community and protection of the Yough but gives some hope that Invenergy may be getting the message that this threat to the community and the Yough is not acceptable.

Direct Support Funds Available For Shale Gas Advocacy

Since August 2014, Mountain Watershed Association has been working to manage a fund for grassroots efforts throughout communities impacted by Marcellus shale gas development. Made possible by several grants, the Direct Support Fund has distributed over \$160,000 to support grassroots groups and individuals working to organize and protect their communities from the damaging repercussions of natural gas development.

More recently, many of our funded projects have been working to fight the petrochemical build-out in Southwestern Pennsylvania and the greater Appalachian region. While Shell is constructing the Ethane Cracker Plant in Beaver County to produce plastics from natural gas, the petrochemical industry also plans to build pipelines, storage facilities, and more well pads in

order to transform our region into the next plastics hub of the United States. The build-out of this industry could have serious impacts on air and water quality which can impair the health of our communities - this is why the Gulf Coast petrochemical region is known as "Cancer Alley".

However, many community groups are fighting the construction of the infrastructure needed to make this petrochemical future a reality. One of these groups is the Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAC) who has been working to stop Shell's Falcon Pipeline. This ethane pipeline is projected to span from Washington to Beaver County, PA over to Harrison County, OH. This pipeline could disrupt several tributaries and the raw water line for the Ambridge Reservoir which serves as

the only source of drinking water for 30,000 people in Beaver County. Funded by Direct Support, BCMAC has been garnering community attention on this issue and working to stop the pipeline from putting the drinking water of thousands in jeopardy.

If you know any community group that may be interested in Direct Support Funding, applications can be downloaded from Mountain Watershed's website or call for a hard copy. Submissions are reviewed on a monthly basis, and the awards committee strongly considers proposals less than \$2,000, though larger requests have been accepted. If you have questions about whether your project qualifies for funding, or if you need assistance in getting started, please contact Ashley., 724-455-4200 ext 6#.

Monitoring Mining Activities *(continued from page 1...)*

same footprint with approximately 2/3 of the Rand Am application that was denied in 1996. Despite MWA submitting numerous comments along with other community members over the course of five years, DEP California District Mining Office issued the permit two days before Christmas 2016. It did not matter that MWA spent the last 20 years working to restore the watershed nor that more than \$8 million of state, federal, local, and private funding was spent to do it. To oppose the mining of coal at this site MWA filed an appeal within 30 days.

The first day of the hearing on the appeal was scheduled for January 29, 2018 before the Environmental Hearing Board. A week prior to the hearing the mining company agreed to expand the barrier between the old Melcroft Mine #3 and the new mine from 800' to 1400'. We pointed out to DEP in 2012 that a major issue was inadequacy of the barrier. This concern was ignored. The company also proposed to reduce the amount of the mine effluent flowing into Champion Creek to 1000 gallons per minute, acceding to concerns we had been expressing since 2013.

Our consultant and legal counsel told us that without these two issues fundamental to our appeal, they did not think we could win our case. What should we do?

We asked that certain additional measures be taken to protect the community and its ecosystem. In addition to increased barriers and effluent discharges into Champion Creek, MWA added:

- More stringent sound levels at the boundary of the site. These levels would have to be monitored by MWA as they are stricter than those set by the state's regulations;
- Monitor mine pool water migration and elevation by the installation of a piezometer in the barrier.
- Measure seismic vibration when blasting takes place. We would place two seismometers to monitor blasting as well as oversee those that the company deployed. The level of blast is also stricter than those required by regulation;
- Monitoring of particulate matter leaving the site as fugitive dust emissions roiling off the permitted site besets many nearby community members at other mine sites and seems to be something DEP is reluctant to address. Monitor increases in fugitive dust emissions along County Line Rd from truck traffic;
- Acquisition of a YSI meter that would measure pH, temperature, turbidity and other parameters to tract if the stream will not be unduly burdened;
- Continuing to collect monthly water samples to check water quality to make sure large amounts of heavy metals are not discharged into Champion Creek; and
- Measure flow to determine the company does not exceed the 1000 gallons per minute agreed to as discharge into Champion Creek, which nor-

mally has a flow of around 600 gallons per minute; to prevent scouring of the streambeds and other damage.

Other conditions include information to be provided to MWA:

- Six month mining maps after they have been accepted by the DEP;
- Electronic copies of hydrologic monitoring reports and discharge monitoring reports at the same time that they are provided to DEP;
- Pumping rate documentation associated with the dewatering of the coal seam, to be available to MWA upon request;
- Dark sky lighting;
- \$7500 for trees to be located to reduce dust and noise from site;
- Limits to breadth of mine roofs that will control subsidence; and
- Re-sending pre-blast surveys and reviewing some of the well testing.
- Agreement not to blast other than on Monday and Friday unless safety dictates otherwise.
- Stipulation to call people who live within a half-mile of the blast site who have requested it prior to the blast to minimize disruption to their lives.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 724 455-4200 x1#. I will do my best to answer your questions and concerns.

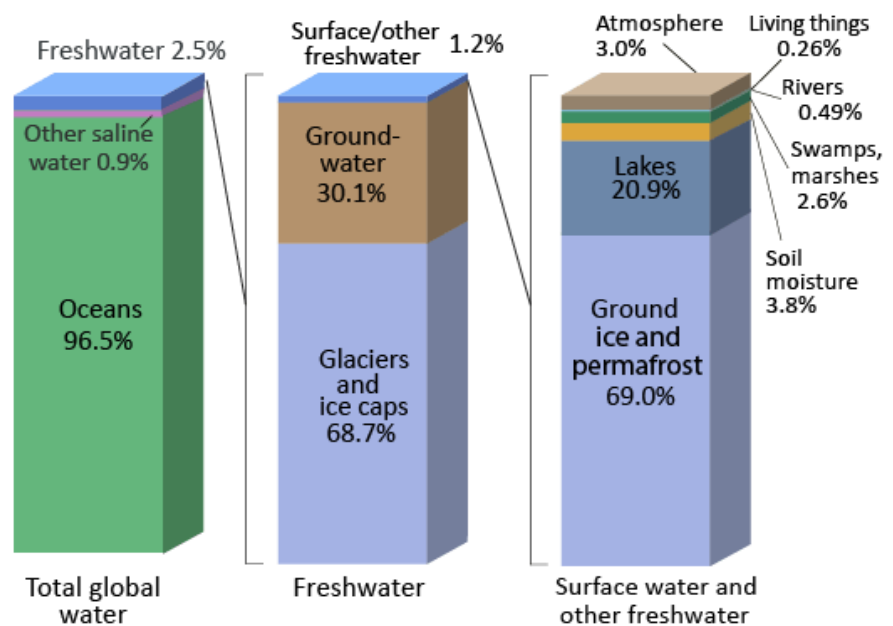
Our Laurel Landscape: How Much Water Is There?

Out of the total global water, salt-water, saline, and freshwater, found on earth, only 2.5% is freshwater. Breaking down that freshwater gives surprising results. 69% of freshwater is trapped within ice and glaciers. 30% of all freshwater is inside the Earth called groundwater. The remaining 1% of freshwater comprises ground ice and permafrost, lakes, soil moisture, swamps and marshes, rivers, living things, and the atmosphere. Roughly 24% of the surface freshwater is only flowing, visible water while the rest is either solid ice or water vapor. Luckily technology gives humans ways to extract groundwater increasing our freshwater supply from a tiny 1% to nearly 31% of the global freshwater. Groundwater, which is water that slowly moves through tiny holes in underground rock is slowly replenished. Throughout the world, groundwater is being drained so fast that the ground sometimes caves in, or subsides. As the human population contin-

ues to grow, the pressure on freshwater increases steadily. At the rate of consumption we currently place on groundwater and freshwater, the life sustaining resource will continually diminish until it's gone. In a world of growing eco-awareness, different methods and

practices are adapted and used to combat excessive water usage. Understanding the ecosystem, such as California adapting lawn care norms to a semi-arid climate, cuts back on unnecessary waste of a critically limited but vital natural resource.

Where is Earth's Water?



Source: Igor Shiklomanov's chapter "World fresh water resources" in Peter H. Gleick (editor), 1993, *Water in Crisis: A Guide to the World's Fresh Water Resources*.
NOTE: Numbers are rounded, so percent summations may not add to 100.

Annual Banquet *(continued from page 1...)*

participate in as well. Last year's banquet raised over \$6,000 dollars!

All members, guests, and friends are welcome. Reservations must be pre-paid by April 20, 2018. For

ticketing information contact Jena at jena@mtwatershed.com or 724-455-4200 ext 4#, or register online at mtwatershed.com/events. This is sure to be an evening of fun, food, and good company so please

join us at Brady's Restaurant in Acme on April 28th to help keep our Laurel Highlands beautiful!

You can find the latest MWA news and events by visiting our website, www.mtwatershed.com. While you are there you can view our projects, upcoming events, our blog and The Territory Store!



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Upcoming Events

April 21

Birds & Blooms Guided Walk

April 28

Clean Water Banquet &
Silent Auction

May 12

Spring Road Clean Up

May 19

Indian Creek Valley Trail
Clean Up

September 22

Indian Creek Watershed
Festival

October 24

Annual Membership Meeting &
Potluck

November 15

10th Annual Yough Defense
Party

Visit www.mtwatershed.com
for more upcoming events.

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I would like to receive MWA's quarterly newsletter via email!

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

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