



2018 Annual Report



THANK YOU! Our mission is to protect, preserve, and restore the Indian Creek and greater Youghiogheny River watersheds. Your support, both financially and through volunteer efforts, has made this possible. With our Annual Report we would like to share some of our 2018 achievements and thoughts.

2018 by the Numbers...

20

Number of bacteria water sampling sites, including complaint responses, analyzed at our in-house lab .

\$24,000

Funds for expansion of the Indian Creek Valley Trail into the scenic Indian Creek Gorge.

262

Stream miles in Indian Creek now meeting their designated use.

9,600

Macroinvertebrate collected and analyzed from the Indian Creek watershed to document improved water quality.

14,500

Number of people reached through our shale gas organizing and advocacy efforts.

\$36,750

Awarded over the past year to projects through the Direct Support Program.

Bidding Farewell to a Stalwart Friend

Beverly Braverman— Sometimes you make a friend who always has your back. When they belong to a community group like MWA and always support the good work it is a rare find. Lon Kalp was such a member. He passed away July 3, 2018. The first time we spoke was about the Indian Creek Valley Trail. He wasn't a young man then but he was interested in its restoration because he loved to hike.

Jerry Gearhart—He was a volunteer fireman from 1962 for over 30 years and volunteered a lot for his church. He was a great carpenter helping to build the parkway around Pittsburgh and supported his union for most of his working life. He loved the outdoors, hunting and hiking in the mountains and determined to protect the area as much as he could. One of his favorite activities was to lead a group of volunteers to work on the trail. When you worked with Lon, no resting or eating was involved.

Bill Brisbane—I remember the PURE JOY of Alonzo in walking the Champion-Jones Mill Trail, the many times he, Roger, and I went to cut back brush and trees. Unforgettable how he just enjoyed being out in the woods in any time of the year.

Roger Pritts—Lon, a life time resident of the Indian Creek Valley, was a husband and family man, a World War II Veteran, a union carpenter, and a civic-minded mountain man. I don't think Lon would mind being called a mountain man because I believe he was most at peace when he was strolling around with his homemade walking stick, splitting firewood, cutting the fields with a scythe, sitting around a campfire or just getting a drink out of his spring with his little tin cup he kept hooked on a nail in its own special spot. Persistence is defined as being stubborn, refusing to relent, and continuing in the face of opposition. This was Lon personified. To explain: Lon asked me many times to join the MWA. My answer was no, too busy or I'll think about it. Not good enough for Lon. The turning point came one Sunday morning--after possibly a late Saturday night-- at 6:30 am when my phone rang and Lon was on the other end. I cannot recall my thought process at the time but by 6:32 I was going to be a member of MWA. His persistence was my gain. I had the privilege to work alongside Lon, then in his 80s, to build the Donegal section of the Indian Creek Valley Trail. With snippers or a shovel in hand he kept the project moving forward. Because of his persistence this section was completed. MWA renamed it the Alonzo Kalp Jr. Extension. He was never afraid to put himself into the mix. When things were moving positively, Lon would tell us "That a boy."

We miss you, Lon. Thank you and----that a boy!

Treatment Systems– The Lifelines of our Streams

Mountain Watershed Association continues to maintain six passive treatment systems in the Indian Creek watershed. However, the name passive can be very misleading as these systems require frequent maintenance to keep the systems functioning as designed. As the system's age they need some infra-structural rehabilitation.

The Kalp Treatment system involves monthly and bi-monthly flushing and this year also required some extra maintenance activities. Two valves had to be replaced in the vertical flow ponds and two valves needed to be repaired in the systems initial pond. MWA works with the Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation to assist with some of the maintenance activities, including the bi-annual pipe cleanings.

Work at the Melcroft Treatment system was also necessary this year. The baffle in the settling basin had to be repaired along with the pipe dispersing water into the aerobic wetlands from the settling basin. The remainder of the work was conducted in the magnesium removal bed with the elimination of all the vegetation that washed into the pond, repair the pipe, and stirring of the stone in the pond.

Issues continue at both the Sagamore and Gallentine Treatment Systems. At Sagamore the Rogue Discharge, although reduced, continues to spew toxic aluminum and iron into Indian Creek. Diverting this discharge into the existing treatment system is not an option as the chemistry of the effluent is drastically different from the original discharge. The system was not designed to handle this problem. Issues at Gallentine are related to the inability to conduct maintenance at the site. MWA has applied for funding to correct the design deficiencies at Gallentine and to further study the Rogue Discharge at the Sagamore site.

Phase 1 at the Marsolino site is showing improvements to the Poplar Run watershed. We have just expanded our monitoring to better track the improvements and to determine if a second phase of treatment will be needed at the site.

The final treatment system is the Permapress system. This system continues to function as designed.

Return on Environment

What's it worth to walk out your door and breathe clean air or sit on your porch and hear the birds? Or look up at the sky and see stars and not the glow of someone's lights? The privilege of not having to deal with this light, noise, and pollution are value-added components of living in the Laurel Highlands.

There's a lot to be said for our natural environment. MWA has entered into a collaboration with several groups to study the economic value of water in the Laurel Highlands. The study will provide estimates of the economic impact of measures taken to improve water quality and/or address the priority negative impacts identified in the river basins within the LH. This study will use the "production function" approach which means that it will start with the biophysical quantities and relationships (how many gallons, how much less sediment, how many more trout, Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) mitigation, how many fewer health problems, availability of clean drinking water) and then applies the value of the outcomes (days spent fishing, dollars spent on outdoor recreation, medical expenses avoided) to estimate the economic value. This will result in an estimate of the total economic value of the Laurel Highlands environment. Stay tuned for the results next year!

Fresh & Finite

2018

Without water death occurs in about three days, although there are cases where individuals survived up to ten. Fresh water is not infinite. There are many stories about future water wars. Fantasy and science fiction abounds with themes of water wars and worlds where water is controlled by the greedy and populations thrive or die at their whim.

What happens when there are just too many people and not enough fresh water?

"The fact that our supply is finite has dire implications on our world population of nearly 7 billion people and growing. The global water consumption rate doubles every twenty years, a pace that is double the rate of population growth. If population and consumption trends persist, it is estimated that the demand for water will surpass its availability by 56%. " *Population Institute, July 2010.*

MWA continues to strive to protect our vital water resources and improve the quality of our streams. Let's work on this together in the coming years.

Completing the Gorge

2018 has been a wonderful year for the Indian Creek Valley Trail. The support that has been provided for completing the Gorge section is simply-Amazing! We've seen support from private donors, to businesses, trail lovers, book clubs, and fundraisers. Our Complete the Gorge campaign has raised nearly \$24,000 and counting.



The fundraising efforts for this section go back long before 2018. Over three years ago MWA decided to clean up and regrade this beautiful section of trail. In fact, according to the Western PA Conservancy's Natural Heritage Inventory, this area is one of exceptional, unique natural diversity. The Gorge is the locale of unique wildflowers, scenic views, and an array of wildlife that will make this trail a Number One path for biking, hiking, snow shoeing, running, and enjoying.

There was significant erosion occurring that needed to be addressed quickly. We raised over \$5,000 to hire an engineering firm to develop an erosion and drainage plan. As a result of this plan we were able to purchase pipe for \$4,860. At this point we raised an additional \$200,000.00 to tackle drainage problems in the Gorge. We secured funds from the National Road Heritage Commission, the Rails to Trails Conservancy, the Community Foundation of Fayette County, The Pittsburgh Foundation Volunteer Fund, the Redevelopment Authority of Fayette County and the Department of Community and Economic Development.

We bid out the project, awarded it, and started to whip the trail into shape. We spent \$178,000 on Phase I, a regrading effort to correct drainage issues, replace old or missing pipes and collapsed box culverts and install new pipes along its length. The trail bed is stable and riders use it despite the unfinished surface—And here we are today.

We are looking to raise an additional \$100,000 to complete Phase II; resurfacing by adding gravel and blue dust so that when it is completed, you will be able to jog it or walk your baby stroller along it.

We hope to finish Phase II by the spring of 2019. Upon completion of Phase II, trail users will be able to comfortably and safely travel this section the entire way to the Youghiogheny River. We hope to continue work on this beautiful trail so that one day we may cross the Youghiogheny River and connect with the Great Allegheny Passage.

Bringing Communities Together

From the very beginning, Mountain Watershed Association has been made up of community organizers. Our organization started when a group of residents came together to protect their community and natural resources from a proposed deep mine. Though they may not have realized it then, every one of those residents acted as a community organizer.

In our rural areas, having a say over what happens in our communities is especially important, since a single new industry has the potential to alter the entire character of a region. If a community is faced with a new coal mine, shale gas well, quarry, power plant, or landfill, then an area that used to be made up of farmland or forests could be forever changed. Back roads could become major truck routes; a quiet backyard could sound like a city street; wild game populations could lose their habitats; a beautiful view of a ridgeline could be lost. In these areas, community organizing is necessary in order for residents to learn about these issues and come together to take action.

Community organizers pave the way for local residents to work together to advocate for what they believe. They show residents that they have the ability to influence how decisions are made in their communities, and they help to make connections, facilitate strategies, and strengthen relationships.

When faced with an issue, community organizers find ways to show people the possibilities and challenges of what they're up against. They provide context by showing what has happened in similar fights in other communities and the strategies that have worked in the past. They help residents to prepare public testimony, file complaints, write letters to the editor, and talk to the media. At the end of the day, organizers are successful if they can take a backseat while the broader community takes control and moves an initiative forward.

Even if organizers do not achieve all they set out to do, they can still measure success in the relationships they've built and the connections they've made. In the end, an organized community is a stronger community, and they will be ready to take on whatever comes next.



Above is a group photo taken at this year's Grassroots Organizing Summit.

Setting Precedence at Rustic Ridge

On January 25, 2018 - almost a year after filing our legal challenge to the permits issued by the PA Department of Environmental Protection to allow LCT Energy to construct the Rustic Ridge No. 1 Mine - we entered into a settlement agreement. MWA was able to secure commitments from LCT to amend the most egregious problems with its permits as well as commit to an unprecedented array of other measures in order to prevent or mitigate harms.

First, the barrier between the abandoned Melcroft Mine #3 and Rustic Ridge will be increased from 800 feet to 1,400 feet in order to better prevent dangerous blowouts of the abandoned mine pool. Second, the flow from Rustic Ridge's polluttional discharge point into Champion Creek will be dramatically reduced in order to ensure the creek is not overwhelmed and can continue to support life.

LCT further committed to various standards and protections that are so expansive that, as far as we know, there is no other agreement like it in the state of Pennsylvania. LCT agreed to:

- Reduce blasting noise and provide notification of blasting to neighboring residents;
- Relocate their ventilation fan to reduce noise impacts;
- Utilize canopy and dark-sky approved lighting to reduce light spillage;
- Commit to tree plantings; and
- Re-survey private water wells and local springs.

Swimmable Waters Program Expansion

From May 1 through September 30, MWA samples popular swimming locations throughout the Youghiogheny River watershed for the Swimmable Waters Program established through the Riverkeeper Network.

This year MWA was able to report data from 10 additional sites through cooperative work with the Garrett County Maryland Heath Department and their Maryland Healthy Beaches program. One of our goals for 2019 is to add an additional site in the Upper Yough. We are thrilled to see this program's reach expanding deeper into the Yough River watershed.



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