

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



### **MWA's Annual Wildflower Walk is May 12, 2007**

#### **Mark Your Calendar!**

- Look for our new series "Our Laurel Landscape" on page 6 of your newsletter!
- We are now scheduling rides for our Trips for Kids Program! See page 4 for details!

Our Annual Wildflower Walk in the Indian Creek Gorge will take place Saturday, May 12, 2007, at 9AM. This free event will be led by Lisa Smith, local naturalist and president of MWA's Board of Directors.

The wildflower walk normally covers about a mile and a half at a very gentle pace, and the terrain is relatively flat. The walk normally lasts until around 12:00PM, and is rain or shine.

Parking for the wildflower walk will be at the entrance to the Indian Creek Gorge off of Route 381, near Mill Run, PA. From Rt. 381, look for the Camp Christian sign, and turn down the road toward the camp. At the Y, turn right, and you'll see a small parking area on the right.

Please wear sturdy walking or hiking shoes, bring a bottle of water, and be sure to dress for the weather. Don't forget an umbrella if it looks like it may rain! Please call the office with any questions, otherwise, we hope to see you there!

### **Annual Clean Water Banquet is April 21, 2007**

Our second annual Clean Water Banquet is just around the corner! Scheduled for April 21, 2007, our banquet and silent auction will be held at Brady's Restaurant in Acme, PA. Doors will open at 5:00PM, and dinner will be served at 6:00 PM.

Menu options include ham, stuffed chicken, vegetables, salad, and assorted desserts. Dinner is buffet style and all-you-can-eat. A vegetarian option is also available.

This year's silent auction includes merchandise donated by many local businesses, Patagonia, and Redington. Items include clothing, a vacation package, many great gift baskets, and a tri-axle load of "you-cut" firewood-delivered!

Members, friends and guests are welcome, so please join us as we celebrate the ongoing restoration of Indian Creek! All proceeds from the silent auction will offset the Mountain Watershed Association's operating costs.

Tickets are \$15 each, and we still have a few left, so please call the office today to reserve yours! We can be reached at 724.455.4200.

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## What is Effective Public Participation?

### Our message to DEP: *Don't Exclude People!*

As many of you may know, the Department of Environmental Protection has been recently scheduling meetings on mining permits during daytime hours, rather than during the evening as they had formerly been held. These meetings are also using a different format than the 'public hearing' style gatherings that encouraged information sharing.

The majority of the meetings are now held between the hours of 1:00 and 4:00 PM and are not designed to support commu-

nity efforts. Attendees speak with DEP personnel at smaller stations that are set up around the room. Should a citizen wish to offer testimony, rather than addressing the entire room with his or her concerns, this citizen speaks his or her comments into a tape recorder situated in the back of the room.

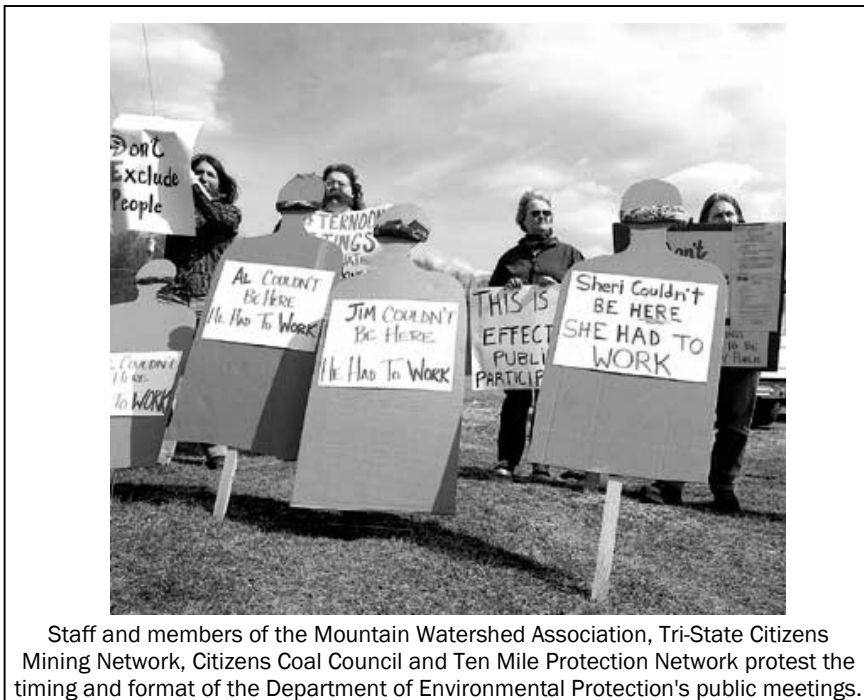
Is this effective public participation? We don't think so, so we recently staged an action calling on the DEP to return public meetings to evening hours and to the public hearing structure.

This action was held in Marianna, PA, with the Center for Coalfield Justice, Citizens Coal Council, and Ten Mile Protection Network at a conference for a longwall mining permit revision. Township supervisors specifically requested in writing that the meeting be held during evening hours and in a 'public hearing' style, but instead it was held as an informal public conference from 1:00 - 3:00 PM. DEP staff asserted that this time and format works better for them.

There is a laundry list of problems surrounding afternoon meetings, first and foremost being the lost wages that folks encounter should they have to take off work to attend. To call attention to this issue, we created what became affectionately known as our 'dudes on a stick'; cardboard cutouts of people who weren't able to attend the meeting. The signs on them say, "Jim couldn't be here. He had to work." or "Shari couldn't be here. She had to work."

The action generated a very positive article in the Washington Observer-Reporter, so we are curious to see what, if anything, the DEP does to address our concerns.

Would you like to support our campaign to make public meetings PUBLIC again? Send your comments to DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty and Michael Terretti at the addresses to the left. Tell them that a 'public' meeting isn't public if the public can't attend because they are at work!



Staff and members of the Mountain Watershed Association, Tri-State Citizens Mining Network, Citizens Coal Council and Ten Mile Protection Network protest the timing and format of the Department of Environmental Protection's public meetings.

Secretary Kathleen McGinty  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Rachel Carson State Office Building  
PO Box 400  
Harrisburg PA 17101  
Email: kmcginty@state.pa.us

Mr. Michael Terretti  
District Mining Operations  
Department of Environmental Protection  
Armbrust Professional Center  
RR #2, Box 603-C  
Greensburg PA 15601-8739  
Email: mterretti@state.pa.us

## HELP!

### MWA Needs YOU as a Committee Member!

We need volunteers to serve on our committees. Our committees are made up of MWA members and they help to implement the priorities of our organization. We have the Finance Committee, the Abandoned Mine Lands Committee, the Membership/Volunteers Committee, the Mill Run Committee, the Trail Committee, and the Fundraising Committee.

- Our Finance Committee guides our Executive Director and Bookkeeper in financial actions of our organization.
- The Fundraising Committee is responsible for developing,

organizing and refining our fundraisers, and working with the Membership and Volunteer Committee to identify volunteers for implementation of fundraisers.

- The Membership and Volunteer Committee is responsible for developing mechanisms to increase membership and volunteers for the organization as well as developing ways to cultivate existing members and volunteers.
- The Mill Run Restoration Committee supports MWA's restoration efforts on Mill Run, a tributary to Indian Creek.
- The Trail Committee is responsible for overseeing efforts

of MWA to develop the bike trail along Indian Creek, primarily the Donegal section of the trail.

- The AML committee is responsible for oversight of MWA's projects, including maintenance and management (such as greasing windmills and flushing treatment systems) in conjunction with the Executive Director.

Please call if you are interested in serving on any of these committees, because we really need YOU as a volunteer so that we may continue to protect, preserve and restore Indian Creek!

## Gardeners: This Spring, Choose an Alternative to Cypress Mulch

Submitted by Marylee M. Orr of the Lower Mississippi **RIVERKEEPER®**

Many folks think that levees are the Gulf Coast's first line of defense against hurricanes, but they are not. This spring many gardeners across the country will buy cypress mulch, not realizing that this mulch is cut from vital wetlands that stabilize our coasts against storm surges and erosion.

Cypress wetlands absorb floodwater like a sponge, protecting coastal communities and saving lives. They also serve as critical habitat for migratory birds

and wildlife.

Many Louisiana cypress forests will never regenerate once cut. But state and federal government officials turn a blind eye to this illegal logging. Meanwhile, retailers use creative language to convince gardeners that their cypress mulch is "sustainable." Don't believe what's written on the bag. Mulch producers admit to mislabeling their product and retailers don't really know the source of the

mulch they sell.

The most tragic fact is that cypress mulch is no more effective than other mulches. A University of Florida study confirmed that cypress mulch isn't any better for your garden than pine bark or eucalyptus mulch – or even leaf litter, something southwestern Pennsylvania has an abundance of!

Why cut a tree to grow a flower? Please don't buy cypress mulch. Choose an alternative and save the cypress forests.

## Coal Bed Methane Drilling Forum Held on March 15th

The Mountain Watershed Association, along with the Center for Coalfield Justice (CCJ) and the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy, recently hosted another forum on coalbed methane drilling.

This forum, held at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, PA, generated news articles in some area papers, and was attended by State Representative Jess Stairs as well as staff from the offices of three other state legislators. The forum was attended by over 80 concerned citizens and property owners.

The forum included an informational presentation by the

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, a panel discussion featuring a representative of the DEP, an independent attorney, independent hydrogeologist, and an affected citizen.

At the forum, the hydrogeologist distributed a list detailing information that folks with private wells should know about their well. This list contains information that is useful to any property owner with a well, regardless of whether coalbed methane drilling is a threat or not. For a copy of this information, or the transcript from the forum,

please contact the office.

The forum in Latrobe was the second forum MWA co-sponsored. The first, in Washington, PA, was attended by over 100 people.

MWA, along with CCJ, is in the beginning stages of forming a committee to work on property rights issues surrounding coalbed methane extraction. If you would like to be a part of this committee, please call the office at 724.455.4200 or email [yrk@mtwatershed.com](mailto:yrk@mtwatershed.com). Our next meeting, though not yet scheduled, should take place in late April or early May.

## Trips for Kids Laurel Highlands Now Scheduling Rides!

Our Trips for Kids Program is now scheduling rides for spring and summer. This program, which combines environmental education and bicycling, is available to area youth, church, scout and school groups.

We have ten bicycles and a variety of helmets available for use by participants, and most of our trips meet in Indian Head, PA. Donations are accepted but never required.



Above: Trips for Kids participants.

Each trip is between 2 and 3 hours in length and includes instruction in bicycle maintenance and handling, trail riding etiquette, and a hands-on lesson in environmental education focusing on our local water resources!

MWA recently developed and printed brochures detailing our Trips for Kids program, so if you'd like more information or would like to pass brochures around at your school, church, or other organization, please call the office at 724.455.4200 today!

# Quarrying the Headwaters of Our High Quality Cold Water Fishery

## How Much Burden Can One Stream Handle?

By Beverly Braverman, Executive Director

Following its usual penchant for giving out permits on a Friday, on February 2, 2007, the Department of Environmental Protection issued the Henderson Quarry Permit to New Enterprise Stone and Lime Co., Inc. to quarry the headwaters of Indian Creek. The original permit was issued on December 9, 1999. Why did it take the Department eight years (including the original review period) to decide that this company could operate a quarry without degrading the environment in the headwaters of our stream?

If you are interested in seeing a copy of the Permit and/or the Department's Comment and Response Document, please call the office. We can e-mail them to you or provide you with a hard copy.

The company was given numerous opportunities to prove it would not discharge into Indian Creek. Why was the company given so many opportunities to correct its deficient application? We were once told that the Department allows one or two correction letters and responses. Then, the Department is

supposed to deny the permit and let the permit applicant reapply. Oddly, in the Rand Am deep mine case, the Department also allowed numerous corrections by the company, five to be exact.

Where is the public participation in this process? We are getting phone calls from people who attended the last hearing, in October 2005, which was so long ago they cannot even remember whether they testified or not.

What is this company's history of operations? Over the years, it has been one of violation and correction. Perhaps this is just the cost of doing business.

The permit includes a section of Special Conditions. Number 3 allows for degradation and correction. "Should mining operations result in degradation of water quality in Indian Creek . . . mining activities . . . shall cease until (it is demonstrated) that degradation has been abated and degradation is unlikely to recur." It is this "could/should/unlikely" state of environmental enforcement that has resulted in many of the problems we have today with water resources.

Another hilarious condition is the one where the company is required to keep a water truck on site at all times so that roads within the permit area can be watered to minimize fugitive dust emissions. All one has to do is look at the Bakersville site to see that fugitive dust emissions are commonplace and that if a water truck is there, it is not being used. Complaints have been filed about the dust—which somehow have not found their way into the permit files at the DEP office. We know because we reviewed them.

Condition 12 provides that the company must notify the Department if it finds additional springs adjacent to the quarry. How can the Department have issued a permit with this condition after eight years?? How can the permittee not have been required to inventory any and all springs adjacent to the site over that same time period?

The good news is that the appeal of this permit was filed March 23—a Friday. Hopefully, we can keep the company from opening the quarry while we are appealing.

## Our Laurel Landscape

*Our Laurel Landscape is a new series which will appear in MWA's newsletters, and will focus on plants and animals found here in the Indian Creek Watershed and elsewhere in southwestern Pennsylvania. Be sure to look for it. We hope you enjoy it!*

Cattails, also known as bulrush, are of the genus *Typha*. The four species found in North America are *T. latifolia* (common cattail), *T. angustifolia* (narrow leaf cattail), *T. glauca* (blue cattail), and *T. domingensis* (southern cattail).

Cattails are easily identified by their long, sword shaped leaves and their flowers, which have a rather hot-dog like appearance. They grow in the shallows of lakes, ponds, rivers, and marshes (and mine drainage treatment systems, including some of MWA's!) throughout the country.

The root systems of these plants play an important part in preventing erosion, and the plants provide shelter for many birds, insects, and amphibians.

As the cattail heads or 'flowers' disintegrate in the fall,

this material is frequently used by birds to line nests, and can also be used to stuff insulated clothing or pillows. Believe it or not, there is an international society of people who sleep on cattail pillows!

Many parts of the cattail are edible. In early spring, the young sprouts can be cut close to the ground and either peeled and eaten raw or sliced and boiled like green beans (You can even sauté them up with a little garlic and butter!).

In the summer, the young flower heads can be cut as soon as they begin to turn from green to yellow. They can be husked and boiled just like corn on the cob. Although somewhat tedious, the pollen can also be shaken from the mature flower and used in baking- just a small amount can turn a batch of pancakes bright

yellow, much to the enjoyment of the folks at the table!

From fall to spring, the rhizomes (the underground roots that connect the plants) can be used just like potatoes, or dried and then ground into flour. To harvest these rhizomes, dig between the plants with a digging stick and break off a section of rhizome. After boiling in salty water, peel away the spongy outer layer to expose the white inner core, as this is the section that is edible.

Although the leaves are not edible, they may be dried, bundled, and used for fire-starters, or used for basket-weaving.

Enjoy cooking up what was once a staple for the Native Americans, but remember: if you aren't certain it's a cattail, please don't eat it!



**Don't forget about our great gift ideas, available at the office and now online at [www.mtwatershed.com](http://www.mtwatershed.com)!**

## Geary II Proposed Strip Mine

Mountain Watershed Association, Inc., requested a public meeting to be held within the Indian Creek Watershed to discuss the proposed strip mining application entitled the Geary II Surface Mine located in Springfield Township. The proposed strip mine location is north of Rogers Mill, PA along both sides of Pritts Road. A letter from DEP in response to our request stated that a meeting will likely be held towards the end of April. We will try to keep you posted on this.

We are concerned about the cross-ridge mining aspect (on the top of the mountain). Permittee Amerikohl Mining stated that it is asking for a variance to the requirement of returning the surface to its approximate original contour. This is the same type of variance requested for Mountain-top Removal.

Also, prior mining in the area resulted in contaminated water. The statement from the permit application that "The

additional volume of surface water will impact the stream flow, or Unnamed Tributaries "B" and "C" at times, but the overall surface discharge quality to the Indian Creek hydrologic system SHOULD (emphasis added) remain unaffected" is not reassuring.

Indian Creek is a special protection watershed in that it has streams that are designated High Quality, as wilderness trout streams, and serve as public water supplies. The Department of Environmental Protection's Technical Guidance Document on alkaline addition states that "Alkaline addition will not be considered on special exception watersheds, where a permit would not be issuable on its own WITHOUT (emphasis added) alkaline addition." The permittee's statement that "The mining methods employed, at the time, (at which the discharges resulted) did not include alkaline addition or special handling. " suggests that discharges resulted because the

mining was done without those methods and, therefore, could not be done "without alkaline addition.

We have a map in the office if you want to see if your home and/or property are on it or how close the proposed mine is to your home.

Please remember that it is in your best interest to either take water samples or let the company take them PRIOR to any mining. This is one way you can protect your right to a replacement water supply if the permit is issued and mining results in loss of water.

A pre-blast survey should also be completed if you are within 2500 feet of the permit boundary. This will show if your home had damage prior to blasting at the site.

If you have any questions for the DEP, call 724 925-5500 and ask for either Mike Gardner or Tom Kovelchuk. If you have any questions for MWA, call us at 724.455.4200.

## Project Update

- MWA was recently awarded funding for a small stream channel project in Mill Run.

- The Anna and Steve Gdosky Indian Creek Restoration Project (Kalp Discharge) will also be back under construction as soon as weather permits.

- The Marsolino Discharge, the worst aluminum contamination in the watershed, is the object of our next treatment system. Efforts are under way to have the site property appraised, and then we will meet with the landowners to discuss either an easement or an acquisition.

- The Kooser Road water-line project will be bid out soon. Construction should begin and be complete this summer.

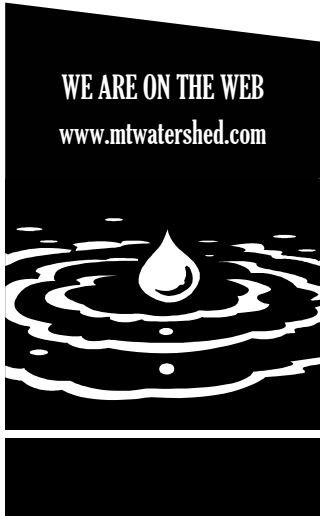
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April 2007



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

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

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1414B Indian Creek Valley Rd., P.O. Box 408, Melcroft, PA 15462

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