

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



Clean Water Banquet & Silent Auction Scheduled for April 11

Highlights:

- We ran out of space! The 'Our Laurel Landscape' column will return in our next edition.
- Join us on April 25 for our Wildflower Walk! See page 2 for details.
- Check out our calendar of events on the back of your newsletter. We hope to see you soon!

Our 10th annual Clean Water Banquet & Silent Auction will be held on Saturday, April 11, 2015 at Brady's Restaurant on Route 31 in Acme, PA. Auction doors will open at 5:00 PM (please come early if you are bringing items for the auction) and dinner will be served at 6:30 PM. Tickets are \$25 and can be reserved by contacting Charlotte at (724) 455-4200, ext. 0# or charlotte@mtwatershed.com. We must receive your reservation no later than close of business on Monday, April 6, 2015.

A vegetarian option will be available. Please mention if you are interested in a vegetarian meal when you call to make your reservation.

Our banquet is a great time for us to celebrate our accomplishments and our volunteers and to raise money to continue protecting and preserving clean water in the Indian Creek and greater Youghiogheny River watersheds. Please plan to join us!

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Public Hearing Held on Proposed Rustic Ridge Deep Mine

The Department of Environmental Protection California District Mining Office held a public meeting on Wednesday, January 28, 2015, at the Donegal Community Center, on the proposed Rustic Ridge #1 deep mine in Saltlick and Donegal Townships. Over 130 citizens attended the meeting. LCT Energy, LP a deep mining company established in 2009 and headquartered in Johnstown, and an associated company of Robindale Energy, has proposed this deep mine.

Officials attending included Westmoreland County Commissioners Ted Kopas, Chuck Anderson and Tyler Courtney as well as Chief of Staff Kristin Malie for Tyler Courtney; Donegal Twp. Supervisors Henry Hoffer, Tom Stull Jr, and Dan Probisco; Saltlick Twp Supervisors, Greg Grimm and Ed Bukovac; Mt. Pleasant Borough Mayor Jerry Lucia and Manager Jeff Landy; Jordan Frei on behalf of Representative Mike Reese; Jason Rigone, CEO for Westmoreland IDC and Director Westmoreland Planning Dept.; Chris Bova, Deputy Director Westmoreland Planning Dept.; Tony Quadro, Asst. District Manager, Westmoreland Conservation District; and Kerry Witt, Manager, Indian Creek Valley Water Authority. We are grateful to these public officials for their

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Wildflower Walk Scheduled for April 25

Our annual Wildflower Walk, held in the spectacular Indian Creek Gorge, will take place Saturday, April 25, 2015 at 9:00 AM, rain or shine. We cover about a mile and a half at a very gentle pace, and the terrain is relatively flat. It normally lasts until around 12:00 PM. Our Wildflower Walk is free of charge though donations are always welcome.

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 and you'll see a

small parking area on the right.

Our Wildflower Walk is led by local naturalist and MWA supporter Lisa Smith. Bring sturdy walking shoes, water, a camera, and an umbrella, if necessary.

Come enjoy the beautiful Indian Creek Gorge with us!



2015 Yough Defense Party A Huge Success!

Our 2015 Yough Defense Party, held on November 20, 2014 at Falls City Pub in Ohio, was a huge success. This event is the single largest fundraiser for our Yough Defense Fund. We are incredibly grateful to the good folks at Wilderness Voyageurs and

Falls City Pub for once again hosting this event and for being such generous supporters of our work. Also, many thanks to the volunteers and auction donors who make this annual fundraiser such a success. We'll see you in November for the 2015 Yough Defense Party!

USX Federal Credit Union Services Available to MWA Members

The USX Federal Credit Union, a financial cooperative owned by its more than 20,000 members, offers free transaction services, loans at affordable rates, and other financial management tools. Through our membership, MWA supporters can now become members of the credit union and participate in its many benefits,

including retirement planning and certificate alternatives.

Please visit www.usxfcu.org for a complete list of products and services offered, office hours and locations, and ATM locations or call at 888-219-3159. They will be more than happy to discuss how they can help you improve your financial future.

Investigation of Meadow Run Water Quality Continues

Through our quarterly Youghiogheny River water quality monitoring we discovered elevated levels of *E. coli* pollution in some areas of the Yough watershed including Meadow Run. In summer of 2014 we began intensive sampling on Meadow in an attempt to identify the source or sources of this pollution. Meadow is heavily utilized for contact recreation including paddling and swimming, and the popular Meadow Run natural waterslides are crowded with children and adults alike throughout the summer months. Because of this, *E. coli* pollution in Meadow is particularly concerning. Through our 2014 sampling we identified several problematic areas and are now planning to conduct increased sampling in those areas. For the first time, we will be utilizing a technique called source tracking.

This technique, while expensive, helps to identify the source of the *E. coli* (human, cattle, horse, etc.). Stay tuned for more details, and please consider a donation to our Yough Defense Fund to support this valuable work (www.mtwatershed.com/give).

We've also recently learned that with our input, Meadow Run has been designated a priority watershed for the upcoming round

of Growing Greener grants. The Growing Greener program provides state funds to address environmental issues in Pennsylvania; because Meadow has been designated a priority, grant applications for projects addressing issues in the Meadow Run watershed will receive increased attention.



Left: Taking flow measurements in Meadow Run.

Indian Creek Valley Trail Expansion Projects Planned

Trail work has come to a halt for the winter, but we are gearing up for the coming spring, summer and fall construction season. We have big plans!

We recently met with the Bureau of Forestry to discuss the Route 31 crossing which we hope to establish this spring. This crossing will facilitate a connection between the Indian Creek Valley Trail and the Blair Brothers Trail at the Route 31/381 intersection.

In Springfield Township we are planning to work in two areas: expansion of the trail into the

Indian Creek Gorge and completion of the Steyer Bridge. We hope to complete the gorge section of trail the entire way to the Youghiogheny River. An engineer is currently examining the Steyer Bridge infrastructure to determine if it is sound. If it is, we will need approximately \$76,000.00 in materials to upgrade the decking and build the railings. We have applied for grants through the Laurel Highlands Visitors' Bureau Tourism Grant Program, the Community Foundation of Fayette County, and the Rails to Trails

Corporation for this work.

Once we determine the viability of the Steyer Bridge, we will begin a Sponsor-a-Plank Program where for a \$250.00 donation you can have a brick size plaque placed on the bridge in your honor or in honor of a loved one.

Finally, on a cool but sunny fall day, we dedicated the Donegal Bridge in honor of longtime MWA board member and trail advocate Alonzo Kalp Jr.. Lon has been a tireless supporter of the trail and has been our inspiration as we work to complete it. Thanks, Lon!

Rustic Ridge Deep Mine Public Hearing *(continued from page 1)*

attention to this issue which has significant potential to affect our communities and our waterways.

At the hearing, it was noted that a mine was proposed nearby in 1992 (Rand Am Mine No. 4). That permit was denied by PADEP (a decision which was later upheld by the Environmental Hearing Board) in 1997 because the company failed to demonstrate that the mine would not result in pollution to waters of PA.

Other concerns that were shared at the hearing:

Loss of water supply: At least 196 known private water supplies, both springs and wells, provide water to residents who reside over the mining area, none of whom want to depend on a water buffalo. The Indian Head Water Authority services 7,000 residents and a sizable number of commercial accounts across nine municipalities within two counties of southwestern PA. The water authority indicated they may not be able to service residents if there is damage to private water supplies but no right of access to the home. If the water quality from any of the sources of the Indian Head Water Authority is compromised, the costly burden of additional treatment would be passed onto the consumer.

Truck Traffic: It is anticipated a truck will be leaving the mine site every 3 minutes. Concerns were voiced about truck traffic traveling on Route 31 west

especially through Mt. Pleasant Borough due to pedestrian traffic and business establishments.

Economic Impact: Attendees were concerned about the impact on the tourism industry in the Laurel Highlands and loss of this source of revenue which is substantially more valuable than that which would result from the proposed mine.

Environmental Impact: Many offered their concerns regarding the environmental impact of mine drainage on Champion Creek, Little Champion Creek, Indian Head Creek, and the Youghiogheny River. Millions of dollars have already been used to clean up previous mining pollution.

Health issues: Residents voiced concerns about the effect on respiratory conditions for children and adults.

Noise pollution: Several

attendees shared insights about the construction phase, underground ventilation and the volume of truck traffic.

LCT has yet to determine if the exit for the proposed Rustic Ridge Mine #1 in Donegal & Saltlick Townships will use Route 31 west or Route 982 south. We would note LCT did not bother to send any representatives to the public meeting, which suggests what their attitude will be towards this community if they receive this permit.

For more information on the proposed Rustic Ridge deep mine visit our website. We've highlighted testimony from our staff as well as our technical comments on our News Feed where you can also find a mining map.

To get involved or to learn more about the proposal please contact Beverly.



Above: Rustic Ridge deep mine hearing presentation.

DEP Accepts Comments on Tenaska Gas Plant on the Yough

DEP held a formal public hearing on Tenaska Pennsylvania Partners LLP's proposed gas-fired power plant along the Yough in Westmoreland County on February 11th. Over 150 people were in attendance, and residents provided testimony on a number of concerns regarding the combined water discharge (NPDES) and Air Quality Plan Permits for this proposed gas plant.

Before the hearing began, a one-hour Q&A session was hosted by the Department of Environmental Protection and led by Kim Morewood, the Director of the Office of Environmental Advocate. Many residents were outspoken about their disappointment in the lack of answers that were given during the Q&A, referring to it as a question session instead. Dissatisfaction with DEP's scheduling and formatting of the prior public information

sessions was a reoccurring comment made throughout the evening. In our comments, we noted on the record that a DEP official publically announced the wrong deadline for formal written comments without clarifying the mistake, which is another example of unclear information being provided to the public even though the process was being guided by the Environmental Justice enhanced public participation process.

Many residents fear the environmental impact this plant may have on the Youghiogheny River as well as regional air quality. Members from the local Sportsman's Association wanted to know if Tenaska would reimburse them for trout stocking in the event of a fish kill from exposure to polluted or high temperature waste water. Air quality experts questioned Tenaska's methods

used in air models, referencing levels for formaldehyde specifically. In response, DEP informed Tenaska that they had plans to impose a limit for this particular air pollutant. Many residents brought up concerns over reduced property values. Some even pleaded with supporters of the plant to consider if South Huntingdon Township is the appropriate location due to past experiences of degradation from boom and bust industries.

Mountain Watershed Association has asked the Department to deny Tenaska's NPDES permit based on the deficiencies that were noted in our formal public comment (available on our website). A comment response document will be issued by the Department to address many of the concerns that were brought forth during the public comment period.

Consider a Planned Gift to Support Clean Water

What exactly is Planned Giving? It is a gift, also known as a bequest, of funds given to someone or something in a person's will. If it has crossed your mind that the treatment systems now restoring the Indian Creek Watershed must be maintained forever or that the sampling to monitor and protect the Yough should continue into the future, then perhaps you might consider setting up a bequest for the Mountain Watershed Association. This would help to

maintain the organization when you are can no longer make a contribution. There are different types of bequests, including insurance policies with MWA as the named beneficiary.

One form of bequest is a Specific Bequest: I give, devise and bequeath (insert dollar amount or item of property to be donated) to the Mountain Watershed Association, Inc., or its successor organization, a nonprofit corporation as described in section 170 (c) of the Internal Revenue

Code with headquarters located at 1414B Indian Creek Valley Rd., Melcroft, PA 15462, to be used for preserving and protecting the Indian Creek and greater Youghiogheny Watersheds. You may also specify a particular project or initiative you would like to support.

If you have any questions, please call Beverly. Your gift may certainly **remain anonymous**. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Rehabilitation of Kalp Mine Drainage Treatment System Complete

Have you noticed work occurring at our Anna & Steve Gdosky Indian Creek Restoration Project? The rehabilitation of this passive mine drainage treatment system (treating the Kalp discharge) near Melcroft, PA, was conducted in three phases that took approximately six weeks to complete. Work began in October 2014 and was completed just before Thanksgiving.

The first stage of rehabilitation was conducted in the two vertical flow ponds. The old mushroom compost was removed from both wetlands along with eight inches of limestone that had become compacted with iron precipitation. A new layer of compost was installed.

During the emergency work (previously conducted) caustic soda was used to treat the additional discharge from the mine pool which created an increase in the amount of iron sediment that was discharged in the final settling pond. The second stage of rehabilitation involved removing the iron sludge from the final settling pond. This was the most challenging part of the rehabilitation effort. The first attempt failed when the iron sludge would not go into a dry monitoring well where it was to be disposed. It took almost

two weeks, a camera, and a drilling rig to remove the casing before we understood why. When the casing was originally installed, more casing was installed than what was necessary and the bottom of the casing was sitting on the bottom of the mine floor. This trapped the sludge in the well casing instead of allowing it to spread into the dry void of the mine. Once the drilling rig replaced the casing the sludge was removed from the settling pond in about one week.

The final phase of rehabilitation involved replacing the up-flow bed. During this portion of the rehabilitation all the stone and piping was pulled out of the original system. The top foot of stone was saved but the rest was

transported off-site along with the old piping. New stone and piping were installed as well as orange construction fence about one foot above the pipes. The orange fence will be an early detection system for anyone doing future maintenance at the site identifying that they are about one foot above the pipes.

With the completion of the rehabilitation, the toxic and iron-laden mine drainage is once again being treated by this system prior to being discharged into Indian Creek. This treatment system has resulted in significant improvements in water quality in Indian Creek, and we're pleased to report it is once again fully functional.



Above: Rehabilitation work underway in one of the vertical flow ponds.

Direct Support Funds Available for Shale Gas Advocacy

The Direct Support Fund provides small disbursements to grassroots groups and advocates working toward social change on

shale gas issues. A steering committee made up of representatives from six regional organizations considers proposals

and makes awards monthly. For more information or to apply visit our website or contact Stephanie.

Our Involvement Halts Flow of Sediment From Curry Mine Site

Logging has a significant impact on water quality in our watershed. According to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, the landmark 1977 law regulating surface mining activities, when logging occurs on a permitted mine site it should be regulated as a mining activity because it is conducted to facilitate mining. This means all of surface mining permit conditions apply to both the logging and subsequent mining.

Amerikohl Mining's Curry surface mine is located in the heavily forested, wild and remote Youghiogheny River gorge in southwestern Pennsylvania. It is entirely surrounded by public lands. It is located within three high-quality watersheds, the second highest level of stream designation in the Commonwealth. This area is used extensively for recreation including cycling, paddling, and fishing.

Despite our best efforts to stop it, in 2010 Amerikohl Mining received a permit to surface mine 264 acres in this otherwise pristine area. They have yet to begin mining activities (and in recent months the permit has expired), but in 2011 the site was heavily logged. Sediment-laden water began flowing from the site almost immediately (visit our website for photos). We filed complaints with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)'s Bureau of Mining (BOM). BOM responded that because coal removal had not begun, the logging should be regulated by DEP's Waterways and Wetlands Bureau.

This bureau then asserted they had no authority because the logging took place on a permitted mine site and should be regulated by BOM.

While Waterways and Wetlands and the Bureau of Mining pointed fingers at one another, sediment continued to pour into the Youghiogheny River, causing an immense plume of muddy water in the river. At this point, we decided to leapfrog DEP entirely. On December 31, 2013, we filed a complaint with the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM). OSM gave DEP an opportunity to provide the enforcement necessary to correct the problem. DEP took a pass. OSM conducted a site visit and found the site had been logged extensively without any attempt to control erosion—not one single hay bale was present. Sediment flowed off the site and into the river unabated. OSM issued a notice of violation to Amerikohl requiring site stabilization. Amerikohl did nothing. With our continued input, OSM conducted a second inspection several weeks later—and found sediment continued to pour into the river. OSM then issued a cessation order to Amerikohl requiring that all activities on the site cease immediately.

Amerikohl appealed to the US Department of the Interior's Office of Hearings and Appeals, again stating the landowner was responsible for the logging. The appeal was heard before a Department of the Interior Administrative Law Judge who

ruled "PADEP's conclusion that Amerikohl was not involved in the timbering company was factually incorrect." The judge further stated, "Additionally, because Curry was doing many things to facilitate mining operations through its timbering activities, the timbering itself was a surface mining activity subject to PADEP's regulatory authority." The judge then affirmed the notice of violation and the cessation order issued to Amerikohl by OSM.

The decision is a victory for several reasons. First, and most importantly, it has resulted in site stabilization activities that have slowed the flow of sediment into the Youghiogheny River. It also supports our position that logging on a permitted mining site is indeed a mining activity and should be regulated as such by DEP. Finally, it affirms the failure of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to provide proper enforcement of an issue on a permitted mining site in a high-quality watershed. Our constant pressure and subsequent engagement of the Office of Surface Mining is the only reason the site has ultimately been stabilized and the sediment stream slowed.

Unfortunately, Amerikohl has now appealed the Office of Hearings and Appeals decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). We are currently preparing an amicus, or friend of the court, brief which we will submit on behalf of OSM. Stay tuned.



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Upcoming Events

April 11

Clean Water Banquet & Silent
Auction

April 25

Wildflower Walk

November 11

General Membership Meeting
& Potluck Dinner

Visit www.mtwatershed.com
for more upcoming events
and activities.

Please Invest in the Future of Our Mountains and Streams by
Becoming a 2015 Member or Making a Tax-Deductible Donation
to the Mountain Watershed Association,
Home of the Youghiogheny **RIVERKEEPER**[®]

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| <i>Type of Membership or Donation Amount</i> | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| _____ Basic (\$5) | _____ Stream Friend (\$45) |
| _____ Family (\$7) Number of people _____ | _____ Stream Hero (\$90) |
| _____ Group (\$15) Number of people _____ | _____ Lifetime Member (\$500) |
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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.*

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