Featured News

Bees, bees, where are all the bees?
By Jim Nedrow

Fishing in Dale Hollow Lake
By Mike Murphy

Selected stories from local news outlets and other sources

GUARDIANS NEWSLETTER

Bees, bees, where are the bees?

Honey bees (Apis Mellifera) are unsung heroes that have not been appreciated until they nearly were wiped out. Most people do not realize what a great service the honey bees do for us. Without the bees, there would not be the pollination of our flowers and crops. Honey bees help pollinate roughly one third of all of the crops. These crops are the food source that we depend on for our very survival, and now our honey bees are on the decline throughout the United States.

Honey bees are remembered for their painful stings acquired during the summers when we went barefoot, and the honey we purchase in stores. The average honey bee in her lifetime only produces 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey.

American honey bees were brought here from Europe, and are basically non-aggressive. It is widely believed that the Spanish Conquistadors brought them here. Later the colonists established bee hives in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.

Here lies the problem for our bees. Researchers in 1956 brought 47 African queen bees to Sao Paulo, Brazil wanting to give their bee's greater honey making capabilities and improve their hardiness. While these bees are capable of producing more honey, they have a very aggressive behavior. This is due to the very nature of trying to survive on the African continent. There are many types of animals that like to raid the hives for their honey. Honey Badgers are the main African culprits.

The African bees were never supposed to be released, but through error, idiocy, or design they escaped and are now breeding into American Honey bees. By the 1980's they had migrated from Mexico into the United States.

Recent research with the African strain has proved that the aggressive behavior cannot be bred out by crossing with our honey bees. The reverse seems to be true, that cross-breeding only results in bees that are widely aggressive.

The African bees also brought their diseases with them, and these diseases are threatening our American bees. There are many diseases that were spread through our bees and these diseases are wrecking havoc without native bees.

The principal diseases are Chalk brood and American and European foulbrood. There are two main parasitic mites, the Varroa destructor (the Varroa mite) and Acarapis woodi (the tracheal mite).

American bee keepers are breeding new strains of bees to cope with these pests and diseases, but so far there has been little success.

By: Jim Nedrow
Elk Hunter

Fishing in Dale Hollow Lake

Bill Murphy and I rented a cabin for a week in the middle of last October at Dale Hollow Lake in Tennessee. He talked me into going because he and a friend had fished there in March and caught several nice bass.

We fished on a Saturday afternoon and on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday morning. Bill caught two nice bass around 17-18 inches long, and I caught two smaller bass. We decided to leave and give up for the rest of the week. We just couldn't find any more bass.

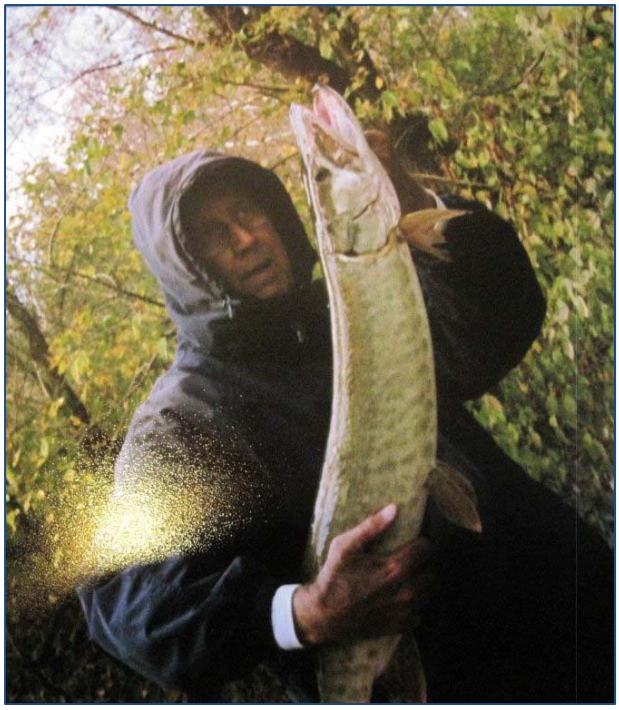
We rested on Thursday and went to the West Fork River on Friday. We caught two muskies. One was around 36 inches and the other was over 40 inches. We also caught several smallmouth bass 16-17 inches long.

I caught two smallmouth fishing for muskey. The steel leader didn't affect them hitting a spinnerbait. Bill was using swimbaits and swim jigs. He caught around 12 nice bass. Bill also photographed an otter on the West Fork close to the boat side below West Milford Dam. He had seen otters there before.

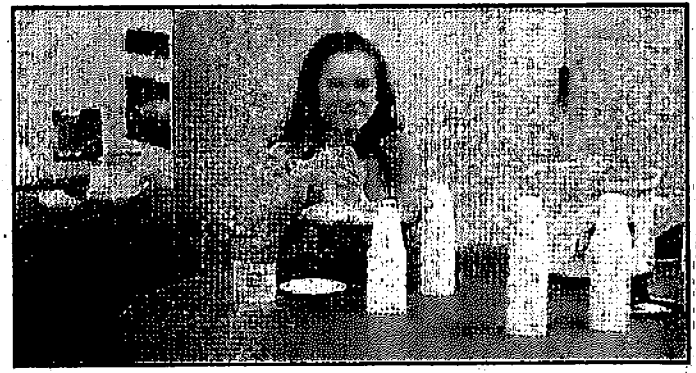
It is always fun to plan trips to other places and states, but West Virginia and the West Fork can't be beat.

By: Mike Murphy

Photo collection: Mike and Bill Murphy fishing in Dale Hollow Lake and in the West Fork River near the West Milford Dam last October



Zula Stenger wins 'Taste of Soup' event



Southern Area Library held its second annual "A Taste of Soup" fundraiser recently with over 150 people attending.

This year's winner was Zula Stenger. She won the contest for her chilled strawberry soup.

This event, held the fourth Sunday in January at the Lost Creek Community Building, has been a successful way for those who love the library to come out and support it.

Members of Friends of Southern Area Library start planning for the event in November.

Patrons, volunteers, trustees, staff and Friends of the Library members all join together to offer a wide range of soups for attendees.

This year's offerings included the 2013 prize-winning entry, Kim Wriston's chili, as well as chicken enchilada, butternut squash and many more.

There were over 10 soups offered for participants to taste. Those attending tried the different soups, then they voted with their wallets by putting money into the soup maker's jar.

Because of the many requests for recipes, next year the library will offer a recipe book.

Besides soups, the library had breads donated from local restaurants, as well as homemade desserts provided by Friends of the Library members.

Pictured: Taste of Soup winner Zula Stenger with her chilled strawberry soup.

"One of the biggest complaints of citizens in West Virginia (about these operations) is truck traffic. This water pipeline system will save approximately 280,000 truck trips."
Al Schopp,
Antero Resources

Antero utilizing massive Ohio River pipeline

Impoundment near Pullman in Ritchie County

Water is used in hydraulic fracturing process

By EVAN BEVINS
ebevins@newsandsentinel.com

PARKERSBURG – Oil and natural gas aren't the only commodities being moved by pipeline as Marcellus and Utica shale activity in the region accelerates.

Colorado-based Antero Resources announced plans in August to construct a $525 million, 80-mile pipeline from the Ohio River at Bens Run in Tyler County through Pleasants and into Ritchie County. Work is still continuing on the line, but it's already up and running, said Al Schopp, chief administrative officer and regional vice president of Appalachia for Antero.

"We're using it. We hope to use it for 90 percent of all of our (well) completions in West Virginia in 2014," he said.

Fresh water is a major component of the horizontal hydraulic fracturing process used to access oil, natural gas and other minerals locked in deep-underground shale formations. Transporting water via pipeline, rather than truck, saves the company about $600,000 per well, Schopp said. It also cuts down on truck traffic that can be hard on local roads.

The pipeline is expected to provide water to about 160 wells, mostly in Doddridge, Ritchie and Harrison counties.

"As we expand our operating area, we'll expand the pipeline into those areas," he said.

The company's ability to draw water from the Ohio is based on the level of the river, Schopp said.

"We're only allowed to pull water from our sources when they're at (certain) heights and levels, and we have to check them every hour," he said. "We're very careful not to overdraw from any low-water source."

When the river is at an acceptable level, the company can pull excess water, storing it in impoundments for use later so that operations don't have to be shut down when levels are too low.

"When the water runs low, we pull out of those storage impoundments," Schopp said.

CLARKSBURG WATER BOARD

A Municipal Corporation Serving Clarksburg Since 1887

General Manager
Richard D. Welch

Board Members:
Albert N. Cox II, President
Charles O. Thayer III
Paul J. Howe III

January 7, 2014

The Honorable Earl Ray Tomblin
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, 1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Charleston, WV 25305

Dear Governor Tomblin,

The Clarksburg Water Board (CWB) owns four low-head dams along the West Fork River in Harrison County. The dams were constructed in the early 1900's, and originally were all used for water supply purposes. With the construction of the Stonewall Jackson Dam in 1990, only the Hartland dam has a water supply purpose, which is to pool water in front of the CWB raw water intake.

The dams pose a significant public safety hazard and the CWB faces a liability risk since the dams are heavily used for recreational purposes. In addition, the CWB spends rate payer's money to maintain and insure these obsolete and unsafe structures.

After the tragic death of three people in a canoe at the Highland Dam on February 27, 2000, the CWB authorized an engineering study to evaluate public safety improvements at all four low head dams. In 2003 Gannett Fleming prepared a conceptual-level study of public safety improvement alternatives for the West Fork River Dams. Removals and modifications of the dams were included among the alternatives described in the study.

To address the safety issues at the dams in a cost effective and responsible manner, the CWB designated the Hartland Dam and Two Lick Dam for modifications (Phase I) by placing boulders designed to reduce the hydraulic roller downstream of the dams and installing warning signs at each of the four dams. In February 2007 the CWB accepted the lowest bid in the amount of $322,235.00 submitted by Lyons Excavation & Hauling to complete Phase I. Phase I was completely funded by the CWB. Boulder placement at the remaining two dams planned as Phase II was tabled after the CWB entered into a Cooperative Agreement in June 2007 with the US Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to remove the three dams and construct a fish passage at the Hartland Dam. The agreement utilized assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canaan Valley Institute. Our partners are

interested in restoring the West Fork River to recover multiple threatened and endangered species, improve recreational fishing, and improve public access and paddling opportunities. They hired the engineering firm of Milone & MacBroom, Inc. to provide design and planning services for the dam removal project.

One small group of individuals, the Guardians of the West Fork River, opposes the removal of our dams. We have given them several years to develop an alternative plan to dam removal, but they have been unable to develop anything that eliminates CWB's liability associated with the obsolete structures including a partnership with the Harrison County Commission. The Guardians are afraid that recreational opportunities will be lost by the removal of the dams. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimate that the removal of the dams will reconnect 346 miles of upstream habitat for fish passage. The approximately 40 miles of stream in between the dams that will be returned to free flowing conditions will be accessible and most importantly safe for kayakers and canoeist.

We understand the position of the Guardians; however the removal of these dams is a property rights and liability issue for the CWB. We are happy to have found a partner willing to assist us with addressing the safety, liability, and expenses associated with the dams so that we can better serve our customers as a provider of safe drinking water. We are not in the recreation business.

Additionally, the Guardians are currently pursuing a Water Trail grant that would increase public recreational use of the river. The CWB is concerned that increasing recreation on the river before the dams are removed poses a significant and additional public safety hazard.

Continuing with Phase II as mentioned earlier is not considered an option. We have found that the boulders placed under Phase I invited fisherman and public to walk on the boulders creating additional liability. We even had a report of a vehicle being driven over the boulders. The expensive signage has been mostly vandalized and stolen.

The dam removals will cost close to $1.3 million, however the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the restoration of the West Fork River will provide a socioeconomic benefit of $193 million. Mr. John Schmidt, State Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, says that fishermen have plenty to gain from the removal of the dams: "It will allow the river to return to its natural flow. This means that you're encouraging a diversification of river habitat, an increase in the flow of nutrients downstream, and the creation of wetter stream bank habitats that create food sources and act as nurseries for immature fish."

According to an environmental assessment report by the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, this project has the potential to restore more suitable habitat for as many as twenty-five species of freshwater mussels including two federally listed species.

For these reasons, we believe this is a win-win solution for the local community and the CWB. We ask you to support our grant application to be submitted this month by the U.S, Fish and Wildlife Service. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Welch
General Manager

WEST FORK RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT (June 9, 2011)

- The Environmental Assessment prepared by WV USDA describes the effects of removing three obsolete run-of-the-river water supply dams and modification of a fourth dam with an aquatic life passage structure in the West Fork River.

- This project proposes to restore, to the greatest extent possible, the aquatic and ecological integrity of the West Fork River and adjoining tributaries.

- All dams were built and are owned by the Clarksburg Water Board (CWB). The four dams were originally constructed for water supply from 1905-1931. Only the Hartland Dam currently provides this function.

- Project is proposing to completely remove three of the four dams between West Milford and Clarksburg. There will be an aquatic life passage structure installed on the Hartland Dam in Clarksburg.

- In 2003 the CWB performed a public safety study on all four dams between Clarksburg, WV and West Milford, WV. It was initiated after three people died in a canoe that was caught in the hydraulic roller effect of one of the dams.

- The NRCS, USFWS, WVDNR and the CWB spent over two years evaluating eleven different alternatives including dam removal.

- The proposed project will restore the ecological integrity of approximately 40 miles of the West Fork River and many more miles of adjoining tributaries.

- The project will benefit up to 25 species of mussels including 2 federally endangered species, all of which are listed as Species of Concern by the state of West Virginia.

- There are no wildlife species existing in or near the West Fork River that are dependent upon the continued existence of the dams. In fact, they are mostly an impediment to the lifecycle to many forms of aquatic and river fish species. Therefore their removal will only improve the aquatic life in the river.

- Fish passage throughout the river will be increased and river fish habitat will be better distributed throughout the restored reach. Additionally, fish will be able to migrate from the Monongahela River up to Stonewall Jackson Dam – especially during spring spawning events.

- The amount of water in the river will not change; nor will the river dry up. The amount of water in the West Fork River is controlled by the release at Stonewall Jackson Dam.

- Water elevations immediately behind (upstream of) the dams will drop Resident fish in pools directly behind the dams will move to other pools within the stream. Fish currently locked between the dams will benefit from access to preferred habitat and increased spawning opportunities.

- Release of sediment and sediment contamination was always a primary concern throughout this study, especially since public water supply was involved. The sediments behind the structures have been tested and found not to contain harmful levels of pollutants. Additionally, he amounts of sediment behind each dam has been determined to not be substantial and is not expected to cause water quality concerns .However, continual monitoring throughout the life of the project will ensure that water quality is not affected.

- Dams have been thoroughly documented and registered with WV Culture and History. We have been granted approval by the SHPO to remove the dams.

WATERS OF PROGRESS--I

$12.4 Million Spent on Small Dams Brings Fringe Benefits

[redacted]

Under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954, a total of $12.4 million in federal money has flowed into West Virginia.

This money has been used in constructing small dams that retard the flow of floodwaters down West Virginia hollows.

The federal dollars were used along with $5.6 million in state and local funds that helped yield fringe benefits in terms of new water supplies, recreational development and greener hills and valleys.

Forty-nine dams have been completed, four are under construction and 20 are positively planned on going projects.

To date, no ground has been broken in Kanawha County for a single dam. But federal and local funds definitely are committed for construction of dams on Blakes Creek at Nitro and on Elk Two Mile Creek.

Contracts on those dams are to be let next year. State and local authorities hope the one multipurpose dam on Blakes Creek can serve as a pilot project in the county. They believe this project, with its 27.5-acre lake for recreational purposes, will give thrust to long range plans for development of other watersheds in the county.

* * *

CLARENCE E. MORAN, director of the Regional Development Authority for the Charleston-Kanawha Metropolitan Region; and Chester C. Johnson, water projects coordinator for the authority, are anxious for the two county jobs to get moving.

So are State Agriculture Commissioner Gus R. Douglass, chairman of the West Virginia Soil Conservation Committee; and Carroll Greene, the committee's executive secretary.

Douglass said he has long been concerned about the amassing of plans for Kanawha County without some specific action. "We need to get a little bit done," he said.

The recreational aspects and the protection that the dams can give to residential and industrial areas are particularly important in Kanawha County, he said.

Within the system planned for Kanawha County, Douglass said he knows there is potential for construction of reservoirs that could serve as reserve sources of water supply. He added that he hopes the West Virginia Water Co. and others will give full attention to this definite potential.

* * *

ON A STATEWIDE level, West Virginia has been moving relatively fast under the watershed act. The state ranks ninth in the nation in terms of federal money received for this program.

The money has been spent or definitely allocated to 16 watershed development projects in 17 counties. Excluded are federal allocations under the Potomac flood prevention project.

Blakes Creek is counted among the 16 at a relatively small total cost of $440,000, including $296,000 in federal money and $143,900 in county funds.

The so-called "average" project in West Virginia costs $1.2 million, of which 69 per cent is federal, 21 per cent local and 10 per cent state.

The other project allocations, giving names of the watersheds, the counties and the total costs:

Salem Fork, Harrison, $428,839; Upper Grave Creek, Marshall, $714,783; Marlin Run, Pocahontas, $152,879; Daves Fork-Christians Fork, Mercer, $278,030; Bonds Creek, Ritchie, $296,443; Brush Creek, Mercer, $3,747,800; Polk Creek, Lewis, $1,066,400; Saltlick Creek, Braxton, $1,245,800.

Upper Deckers Creek, Monongalia and Preston, $1,244,780; Pecks Run (channeling only, no dams), Upshur and Barbour, $433,100; Big Dutch Run, Webster, $622,300; Harmon Creek, Hancock and Brooks, $1,040,500; Shooks Run (channeling only), Barbour, $54,600; Upper Buffalo, Marion, $3,584,800; and Wheeling Creek, Ohio and Marshall, $3,082,610.

* * *

ONE OF THE GREAT assets of this program is that no watershed will be developed unless engineering studies show that the benefits will exceed the costs over a 50-year period.

Every watershed development depends heavily on local leadership and attitudes. First, there almost has to be a local flood to convince everyone of the need for flood control.

Then there is a procedure for getting federal financial assistance and technical help by application through the West Virginia Soil Conservation Committee and final approval by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The project must be sponsored by a conservation district and a local levying body. Other agencies may join in the project.

The State Road Commission and public utility companies have given their complete cooperation toward the success of the projects, officials said.

Some of the plans for Kanawha County are well beyond the preliminary stage and are seemingly begging for implementation.

Now, 61 Dams