

GUARDIANS

NEWSLETTER

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WATER RESEARCH CONFERENCE

By: Andrea Varrato

The 2012 Water Research Conference was held at the Waterfront Place Hotel in Morgantown, WV from October 30-31. This annual conference is hosted by the West Virginia Water Resources Research Institute. It featured guest speakers from local agencies, academic institutions, federal and state departments, and environmental groups. The two day event covered many topics, from local water monitoring efforts to stream remediation. The first day of the event focused on water quality protection, conservation, and water quality monitoring. The second day opened with a discussion on geomorphology as it relates to coal mine reclamation, and concluded with two separate and simultaneous discussions. For these talks, the audience split into two groups. One group focused on gas well development, chemical toxicity, and human health while the other session discussed stream ecology and restoration. I chose to attend the gas well discussion. As a resident of Morgantown, I found one talk to be particularly interesting. Tim Ball, the general manager of the Morgantown

West Virginia Water Research Institute

The WV WRI is located in Morgantown, on West Virginia University's Evansdale campus. It is supported by the United States Geological Survey. The current director, Paul Ziemkiewicz, hosted the conference and served as a moderator for many of its presentations.

Utility Board (MUB), discussed the recent development of Marcellus shale drilling in Morgantown, despite a local moratorium. Ball commented on several water protection measures that MUB has adopted in light of the drilling, including frequent examinations of wastewater treatment pond liners. Daily liner inspections were adopted to reduce the risk of chemical contamination in drinking water supplies, though it is important to note that if local water quality protectors lack vigilance in their examination, the potential for chemical contamination remains.

According to the WRI's book of conference abstracts, one stream ecology talk examined indexes of biological integrity, which are frequently used to assess aquatic populations. Ecologists use these assessments of biotic communities to make assumptions about the overall health of a stream. Impacts of increased TDS from acid mine drainage (AMD) on stream biota were also discussed, as was the potential for ecological improvement from AMD treatment facilities, which are often sponsored by local watershed associations like the Guardians. In all, the conference was an interesting look at water quality issues and recent developments in our area.



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A CALL TO ACTION

By: Jeff Reichel

On Friday, September 28, 2012, John Eleyette called a special meeting of the Guardians of the West Fork Watershed at the West Milford Community Center. Even though we were competing with the "friday night lights" of high school football action, we drew more than 47 people from all parts of Harrison County.

West Milford mayor Nancy Gall was in attendance to represent her local constituency and Ron Watson, Harrison County Commissioner. Sidney Jett of the Harrison County Parks and Recreation Board and Josh Toothman of the Milford Wheel Historical Society also attended this meeting.

John Eleyette opened the meeting by describing several reclamation and pollution intervention projects that the Guardians have undertaken, as well as some future projects and their potential impact on water quality in the West Fork River watershed. After John's presentation, it was clear that the organization is about much more than saving the dams from destruction; it is about **improving the entire aquatic environment** for wildlife and for the people of Harrison County.

Several examples were presented that described how other municipalities utilized a series of dams to provide recreational opportunities, and to improve the flow of their rivers. The Platt River in Denver, the San Antonio River in Texas, and the Kaw River in Kansas, were used as examples of how a group of people could make a

significant difference in the lives of the local residents and aquatic wildlife.

These success stories will be the foundation of our plans, should we be successful in saving the West Fork River from disruption by the removal of three dams between West Milford and Clarksburg.

A call to action was presented to everyone in attendance, asking them to communicate their desires to save the river. Attendees were encouraged to contact local, state, and federal officials. It is likely that the most helpful communications will be with the Harrison County Commissioner or state delegates.

Take the time to call, write, or visit local political officials. Ask them to support the goals of the Guardians of the West Fork Watershed. Save the river by preventing the destruction of the dams. Take action before it is too late to preserve the current beauty of the West Fork River.

Your participation in this cause will make a difference. Start today.

AN EXERCISE IN CASTING

By: Mike Murphy

They say that the musky is a fish of a thousand casts. After all of my years fishing for them, I can finally say that I agree with that old saying. This year, I haven't hooked a single musky, though I have had one follow and one strike. I had always hooked and landed a few muskies each year. The following is proof of the fish of a thousand casts.

Bill and I have fished almost every weekend since March and sometimes for an entire week when he took a vacation. We fished many times for bass, and I have fished just for muskies on at least twelve trips. We averaged around six hours each trip.

Figuring at least fifty casts per hour, with a total of seventy two hours for all the trips, comes to *three thousand six hundred casts* and nothing to show for the efforts.

It tends to wear one out casting heavier rods and baits. I use heavy action rods and thirty pound line. My favorite baits are the grandma crank bait and the double showgirl, which is a smaller version of the double cowgirl.

Bill hooked two muskies while bass fishing. One was in the forty inch class. It finally broke off after jumping clear out of the water. The other was around thirty six inches; we landed and released it.

I have had good bass fishing trips above the Hideaway Dam, having landed several thirteen to fourteen inch Kentucky Spotted Bass, and my largest largemouth bass of around four pounds. They were all caught on a chartreuse and white spinner bait. I never changed that bait all day.

There have been many successful musky fishermen, as the Musky Magazine reports. The lunker of the months of April and May were two fifty two inch muskies caught in Stonewall Jackson Lake. The Susquehanna and Allegheny Rivers have reported forty eight and forty seven inch fish. The West Virginia chapter of musky fishing said that the **DNR reported small mouth bass, baitfish, and a few small muskies returning to Dunkard Creek**, which is terrific news. We have caught nice muskies in Dunkard Creek over the years.

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SLOW SUICIDE

By: James Nedrow

Have you ever taken the time to consider what fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides may be doing to you? Are we poisoning our environment to the extent of committing 'Slow Suicide?'

Of all the chemicals that we use (and there are some 30,000), about 400 or so are the ones that do not break down harmlessly. These chemicals are in the environment and are accumulating in the plants and animals that we use for food. When we ingest these chemicals, they are in our bodies changing us in ways that may not be good. There are many papers on the chemicals we ingest and the harm they can do.

Contaminants are causing mutations in animals at an alarming rate. Scientists are seeing many fish species with abnormal features such as too many eyes, abnormal hearts and fins. Fish, other aquatic animals, and plants are readily available specimens for scientists who study this problem. Mutations in humans are not so readily observed, as there are so many different factors involved. These chemicals are slowly affecting us, but most people never see or hear any of this in the news.

Animals in our food chain are doctored with vitamins, growth hormones, and antibiotics, as in the case of growing 'super' chickens. By growing them faster and getting them to market, farmers become more efficient and make earlier profits.

Growth hormones are used more and more in the farming industry. This is also the case with beef and milk products. Humans are at the top of the food chain, and therefore we accumulate all of these poisons and harmful chemicals. Some, (notably the heavy metals like lead, arsenic and mercury), are deposited throughout our bones and tissues permanently.

I am not letting vegans off easy either. Vegans believe that by eating healthy foods (especially organically grown vegetables) they will remain healthier, but they often overlook the amount of pesticides and herbicides that are hidden in their diets. Organically grown foods are the safest only if you can verify that they are truly organically grown.

Cookware is another source of metal in our food. Contamination primarily comes from aluminum coated pots and pans. It is still not known if aluminum and Alzheimer disease are connected. The safest cooking items are made from stainless steel, ceramic, and cast iron. Benefits of cast iron cookware include a more even heating and the addition of a minuscule amount of iron in food.

In addition to the problems of the industrial food system, water contamination from ground pollution is a huge issue in our area. Examples of ground pollution are trash, food processing waste, oil spills and human waste. There is not one stream in the Harrison county area that I would drink from. Every 'holler' has either been contaminated with sewage in some indirect way, or has household trash dumped into it.

Ask yourself, "Are we committing Slow Suicide?"

Jim Nedrow
Elk Hunter



GWFW Mission Statement

Guardians of the West Fork Watershed is a volunteer 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the ecological integrity of the West Fork River, its tributaries, and its watershed. It will monitor and assist agencies in monitoring biological, physical, chemical, and cultural characteristics of the watershed to identify sources of degradation and suggest their elimination. It will publicize the status of the watershed and encourage education and recreational enjoyment of the watershed. It will seek wide membership and outside funding to support its activities.

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COMMENTARY TO “GET IT RIGHT ON GAS”

By: S. Thomas Bond

The recent column in the New York Times by Tom Friedman entitled “Get It Right on Gas” is of particular interest to me. I have spent a lifetime farming in West Virginia in the Marcellus area and enjoy the benefit of a good education, BS in Chemistry and Math, MS in Education and a Ph. D. in Inorganic Chemistry.

The author shows the bias to be expected of an intelligent, media informed person, one who is kind, not tough minded. It also shows that he has not visited the areas where shale drilling takes place to talk with people, nor examined the vast literature of complaint about the harm done in the field.

In the Marcellus area we are no strangers to extractive industry, we have had deep and strip coal, timber, and the longest history of oil extraction – anywhere. The rip and tear methods of resource extraction have a new parallel in the Marcellus. They will not make our states prosperous, but when played out will have injured thousands of people, depreciated property values and damaged our long time industries, timber, cattle, recreation and retirement.

Economic evaluations don't include the cost. It is externalized by accounting like a balance sheet with credits and no debits. It is inscribed in law for oil and gas by long practice, from a time when space was considered infinite with respect to the need for natural resources. Damage is externalized. That has been the practice for resource extraction in the past, and it continues.

The notion of a “transition fuel,” which Friedman mentions serves the industry and the investors, not the citizens.

The problem is **NOW**.

We need to act NOW on global warming

You can not expect strangers to observe regulations, laws or “best practices,” (if they are worth anything at all) in the face of the stress of being so over-built as the shale drilling industry. When it started, the drive was to lease as much of the finite resource as possible. Then, the drive was to get as favorable

legislation as possible, and they got that. This appeared in the *New York Times* recently:

“Mr. Headley said the drilling foreman on his property told him he had drilled all over the world but never in a place easier than Pennsylvania. “Ask for what you want and you’ll get it,” he quoted the driller.”

Now the drive is to export the gas, even though originally the argument was “to give the United States energy independence.” Are we not going to need that independence in the future?

The attack on alternative energy sources in Pennsylvania, by the shale drillers, Governor Corbett, and elsewhere, is certainly not without the shale driller's assent.

These are not kind people, their objective is not to help America. Their objective is to help themselves, and the arguments for shale drilling, the laws for it, the effort, the PR, **the risk is not for America**. When it is over the debris will be left behind, including the unplugged wells, which are never mentioned, and the drillers and investors will move on. But the brownfields won't. Nor will the population move. It has happened before.

TOM CORBETT'S REASONING ON MARCELLUS

By: S. Thomas Bond

Republican Governor of Pennsylvania Tom Corbett has characterized persons criticizing shale drilling as "unreasoning opposition," according to an article in the Canon McMillan Patch. Corbett, who has managed to "tic off" about everybody outside the shale drilling industry and its minions, from the American Planning Association to the public health industry for his Act 13 excesses, as well as industries producing renewable energy, environmentalists, and a large number of ordinary citizens who have to bear the decline in property values and destruction of their surroundings and health. The governor even wants universities to drill on their grounds to "help solve their financial problems."

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Shale drilling is big industry, not concentrated, but with the potential to spread over 100,000 square miles of Appalachia and hundreds of thousands more in other areas. It consumes vast quantities of refined petroleum products, tens of thousands of tons of steel and a wide assortment of industrial chemicals, which are used in vast quantities. Each square mile of shale will be touched if the industry has its way. Parks, airports, national forests, cities and towns, rivers and lakes, homes, and all other industry in the area, will have on every square mile four to six acre pads filled with 18 inches of stone, a miniature brownfield and something like military free fire zones along the pipelines and access roads.

The fact is that Gov. Corbett has a pathological aversion to evidence. His world is Determined by claims of the shale drilling industry such as: We don't destroy water, We don't make anyone sick, Of course our balance sheet doesn't show costs to the public - there are none, and so on. Considering the amount of money investors have put into shale drilling, and the acute sensitivity of investors to adverse news, what else could the industry say? Look at what happened to Chesapeake as a result of Aubrey McClendon's financial antics when they became public.

If the governor wanted evidence he'd send people out to talk to victims. Of course, his campaign donations from the

industry stand in the way. Just as campaign donations stand in the way of fact-finding in other states.

The ground under the Shale drilling industry is shifting, though. The public health industry has a strong moral backbone. They are gearing up to go for data in spite of Act 13. There are suits all over the place. Google "shale drilling suit" and there are pages of articles on the subject. Along with the Shale industry advertisements, of course, top and bottom of the page. One of the most interesting is against OSHA by Petro-Hunt. It is clear the industry risks it employees in many ways, just as it does residents by such things as inordinately long hours, silica dust, and breathing vapors.

Several newspapers now have special shale drilling sections. Publications by opponents are increasing in number and sophistication. An organization called Host Farms exists to invite and encourage researchers interested in measuring the parameters in question. There was a world wide protest against shale drilling Saturday, September 22.

In New York's finger lakes region, Inergy Corporation plans to build a LPG storage facility in caverns formed from mining salt. The community is uniting against the plan. Businesses including tourism, vineyards and wineries, Watkins Glen businesses (which are close enough to be affected by catastrophic fires), are lining

up against it. Nothing so complete has been faced by the industry before.

And moratoria are being declared in many jurisdictions. The most recent is Quebec, "On her way into her first cabinet meeting Thursday morning, Natural Resources Minister Martine Ouellet told reporters she does not believe natural gas can ever be safely extracted from shale rock. She vowed to impose a complete moratorium on the industry until a new and more complete environmental assessment by the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) is completed."

So, Gov. Corbett, there are good reasons. You can't see them because your eyes are closed. And your mind, too. If you don't open them, the world will pass you by.

Retraction

We apologize for the incorrect spelling of Sturm Environmental in a previous newsletter.

If you would like to join our organization and receive a copy of our quarterly newsletter, send \$5 per calendar year to one of the officers listed below. To receive a free electronic copy of our newsletter, email John Eleyette at JMELEYETTE@rocketmail.com

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