

NewsStreams

A publication of Kentucky Waterways Alliance: Working to protect and restore Kentucky's waterways.



NO Mercury in the Ohio

BECAUSE CLEAN WATER CAN'T WAIT!

River

Environment



Consider this scenario: a company discharges water with a toxic chemical into a river. The chemical is too concentrated to be safe for the aquatic life in the river. Now, imagine that there is a "mixing zone" where that concentrated chemical is diluted with the flowing water of the river so that at the end of this mixing zone, it meets acceptable levels.

While in reality, a mixing zone in the middle of a river can't actually, physically exist, it is a concept used by regulators and industry. Mixing zones are a decades-old water pollution approach still being used and still failing our waterways across the country.

In our Winter *NewsStreams* edition, we reported that the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO or the Commission) was considering changes to water quality protections for the Ohio River. Well, the Commission has officially proposed changes - the most devastating is to lift a ban on these mixing zones for bioaccumulative chemicals of concern for facilities that existed before 2003.

Bioaccumulative chemicals of concern, or BCCs, include mercury. As mercury (or its more common form, methyl mercury) is eaten and moves up the food chain, from small fish to larger fish to birds and humans (who eat the fish), it becomes more and more potent. Mercury has the greatest potential to impact fetuses and young children. Oh, and mercury doesn't just go away. It persists in the environment

and can't be cut out or cooked out of fish.

Existing data show that significant lengths of the Ohio River already have too much mercury in fish tissue, and other stretches of the river are getting precariously close. Fish consumption advisories for mercury have been in effect for years. This is unacceptable.

We should be able to eat the fish we catch!



The Ohio River is a drinking water source for 5 million Americans! It is a huge recreational, subsistence, and commercial fishery. We need to be able to drink the water and eat the fish and not worry about our health.

The good news is that through our No MORE campaign, nearly 16,000 citizens submitted comments! We anticipate ORSANCO will make a final determination on the issue later this summer.

Given how crucial this is for the future health of the Ohio River, we're now gathering support and signatures for a petition. We'll be delivering the petition and signatures to the Commission at their fall meeting, where they'll be making the final decision on this issue.



What she eats,
her baby eats.

Sign the petition today at
www.KWAlliance.org

Tell the Commission No MORE!

Message From the President

Can You Eat The Fish?

Can we eat the fish? Is the water safe to drink? Can we swim in the water safely?

As an environmental engineer with a focus on water, these are the questions I get asked the most often about the Ohio River.

The Ohio River is a source for drinking water, fisheries, and water recreation from Pittsburgh to Paducah. It is also the biggest and closest water resource for millions of Kentuckians. Many of us recreate on the Ohio and have a great time with absolutely no ill consequences. But, answering the safety concerns is complicated.

Let's focus on fish. There are fish advisories for the Ohio River (and other Kentucky waterbodies) for mercury and PCBs. These advisories answer specific questions about how much of what fish you can eat how often (<http://water.ky.gov/waterquality/Pages/FishConsumption.aspx>).

Mercury and other PCB chemicals are currently being discharged into the air and water at levels of concern by coal burning power plants and other industries. This creates pollutants pervasive in the environment from past and current use.

For a little perspective, keep in mind how far we've come. The Ohio River fish population has rebounded amazingly well since the Clean Water Act of 1972 required industries and cities to reduce the discharge of pollutants of all kinds. A fivefold increase in fish density in 40 years reflects the success of what has been done. There is a viable Ohio River commercial fishing industry, and sport fishing events on the river are now commonplace.

But still, we must understand that we haven't done enough and recent trend studies by ORSANCO indicate a disturbing fact: Assessments from 2012-2014 show regular mercury contamination violations in *all* Ohio River monitoring stations for water and fish tissue measurements and with greater frequency in the lower third of the 981-mile river.

KWA is a leader in efforts to oppose the backsliding by ORSANCO, the river watchdog we depend on to set and enforce standards consistently throughout the eight Ohio River states.

Some have said to me "I don't eat Ohio River fish." My response is that mercury is a global issue. The mercury that is discharged or deposited into the Ohio River ends up in the Gulf of Mexico and eventually the oceans of the world. Just avoiding Kentucky fish won't do you much good.

Ocean predators in the Pacific, especially the larger sports fish we consume like tuna, are experiencing an increase in mercury around 4% a year. This is not sustainable or healthy. We are poisoning the fish and our oceans.

Help us speak up and do our part. It matters a lot.

On behalf of a healthier Kentucky,

Gordon Garner

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**Want to be in the know about water-related happenings?
Visit our website at
WWW.KWALLIANCE.ORG
to check out upcoming events in Kentucky!**

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Three New Faces

KWA's Governing Council (the Council) recently added three new members to its ranks! **Join us in welcoming Pamla Woods, Caron Fausel, and James Craig**, all of whom will be working with the Council throughout the summer to develop our new Strategic Plan.

KWA is always seeking people with diverse talent and skills for our Governing Council.

Are you our next addition? Join our team today!

Pamla Woods returns to the Council as the Kentucky Basin Delegate, filling a gap left by the retirement of Kenny Book. Pamla lives in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, and has been an active member of KWA and sometimes-Council member for a number of years. She has experience on a number of environmental nonprofit governing boards, and helped guide KWA through our last strategic planning process in 2010.

Caron Fausel joins the Governing Council as an at-large member. A local artist, designer, and photographer who also works nationally on many types of design projects, Caron first came to KWA through our 20th Anniversary celebration in 2013. She has since donated several beautiful works of art for our silent auctions, and enjoys painting water scenes.

James Craig also joins the Governing Council as an at-large member. James has been practicing law in Louisville since 2004, and has earned a number of distinctions since that time, including being recognized as "Best Lawyer" in consumer law by Louisville Magazine in 2013 and 2014, and by Louisville's Business First as a member of its 2012 "Forty Under 40" class. He lives in Louisville with his wife and two children.

We'd like to wish a warm "Welcome!" (or "Welcome back!") as the case may be) to our three newest Governing Council members.

Exciting Times for the Green and Barren Rivers!

At a meeting held on April 30th, approximately 60 people got together to discuss the future of Locks and Dams 3, 4, 5, and 6 on the Green River and Barren River Lock and Dam 1. The meeting, which included multiple County Judge Executives, water utility officials, state and federal agencies, and staff of Kentucky Waterways Alliance and The Nature Conservancy, sought to continue the discussion regarding removal possibilities.

The US Army Corps of Engineers' recent study of the locks and dams recommends that the Corps dispose of all 5 of these archaic and non-functional facilities. The dams were all built between 1836 and 1934. Green River 3 was closed to navigation in 1981. Green River 5 and 6 haven't been used since 1951. Green River 4 failed in May of 1965 and its failure made Barren River 1 useless for navigation purposes.

If all of these old locks and dams were removed, we would reclaim nearly 100 additional miles of free flowing rivers in the Green, Barren and, Nolin Rivers! This would help enhance and expand one of the most diverse intact fresh water ecosystems in the world.

By the end of the meeting, there was broad agreement that the

Corps or another party could and likely should remove remnants of Green River 4, 5, and 6, as well as Barren River 1. The future of Green River 3 remains the biggest question because of the municipal water supply and industrial intakes located in the pool created by the dam.



This photo by Judy Petersen captures the hazards created by the failing Green River Lock and Dam 6. The resulting ledge, sieves, and strainers can be deadly obstacles for unsuspecting boaters. These threats will persist and worsen in some instances if these old structures remain.

Still, KWA is advocating for removal of Lock and Dam 3. While there certainly would be costs to modify water intakes for a free flowing river rather than the current impounded river status, there are considerable costs and liabilities to maintaining and repaired these obsolete (and in some instances failing) structures.

This story is far from finished, but removal of this decaying infrastructure will make the rivers safe for all recreation, enhance wildlife habitat, and create ecotourism opportunities by enhancing the Green River Blueway Trail that is

already under development!

After the conclusion of the meeting, a small group of people drove to Brownsville to look at Lock and Dam 6 on the Green. As you can see from the picture above, the dam as well as the lock walls are in a state of failure, and we hope that controlled demolition will occur before complete failure.

KWA Works Every Day on Behalf of Our Families for Clean Water POLICY... IN BRIEF: what we're doing to protect your water resources

By Tim Joice, Water Policy Director

DOW Triennial Review

Kentucky's Division of Water (DOW) is required to assess the state's water quality protections every three years for potential updates or changes. Later this year, they'll be officially beginning this process by proposing any such changes and requesting public input. KWA is already involved in the process, and we'll let you know when the public have an opportunity to make their voice heard!

Comment on Impaired Waters

The DOW recently announced open comment period on the state's list of unhealthy waters. The Clean Water Act requires states to assess the health of their waterways every two years. This list, called the 303(d) list, is submitted to Congress as part of the Integrated Report on Water Resources in Kentucky. After listing waterways as impaired, the state is required to work towards restoring the health of those waters.

The Integrated Report is also often referred to as the 305(b) report, and includes details of the state's efforts to improve impaired waters.

If you have information about the health of waterways near you, and those waters aren't listed, let us know!

Thank you, Aveda!

We'd like to extend a heart-felt THANK YOU to Aveda salons and stores throughout the state for once again stepping up during Earth Month to raise funds and awareness for clean water projects in Kentucky. Earth Month was created by Aveda in 1999 as a chance to love, celebrate and raise funds to protect the earth and its peoples. Since then, they've raised more than \$38 million to support more than 40 regional organizations and projects that directly affect environmental change in more than 70 countries around the globe.

Kentucky Waterways Alliance is proud to be one of the organizations chosen to receive a portion of funds raised during Earth Month. 2015 marks KWA's 6th year as Aveda's Kentucky Earth Month partner. Since 2010, we've enjoyed getting the chance to meet some fantastic new people and attend a multitude of different events all around the state, supporting our projects from river cleanups, to Best Management Practice implementation, to policy initiatives.

This year's theme was "When you protect water, you protect what you love. Animals, kids, our environment – everything." We couldn't agree more. Through raffles, fashion shows, wine tastings, stream cleanups, haircut-a-thons, and even securing donations of change dropped into water fountains, we were overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and support we received this year.

If you frequent any of the participating Aveda salons or stores, be sure to thank them for their support!

No MORE Mercury Campaign

This campaign has already generated lots of support but we want it to spread across the entire Ohio River Basin. Does this sound like a statement you can support?:

"We, the undersigned, do not want toxic amounts of mercury dumped into the Ohio River. We want state and federally-appointed officials charged with improving water quality in the Ohio River to uphold the ban on toxic chemical hotspots, or mixing zones. We want government officials to put public health before corporate profits. We want the Ohio River to be free of mercury, from Pittsburgh to Paducah."

87% of Kentuckians said that our Governor should prioritize protecting water over keeping costs for business low. If you agree, sign our petition today.

After signing on, please encourage your contacts to sign our petition today to tell our appointed officials to put public health before corporate profits - because clean water can't wait!



Stylists from Allure Salon in Shelbyville, KY at their "Drink Wine, Save Water" event held at Talon Winery.

Pots were decorated by students at Piner Elementary School in Morning View, KY. The potted flowers were on display at Inspire Salon in Independence, KY.



Watershed Updates

By Tessa Edelen, Watershed Program Director

Red River project completed!

We are very proud to announce that the Red River Gorge Watershed Plan and Implementation project is complete! This concludes over four years of work by the Red River Watershed Team (made up of community members), the Daniel Boone National Forest, KY Division of Water, Wolfe County government, Eastern KY PRIDE, and Kentucky Waterways Alliance.

The Daniel Boone National Forest initiated the project as a follow-up to their Limits of Acceptable Change process to assess Forest Service natural resources in the Gorge area. The project was funded by a Nonpoint Source grant from the KY Division of Water to focus on private lands where the creeks that feed into the Red River begin.

The watershed plan for the headwater sections of Swift Camp Creek, Indian Creek, Clifty Creek, and Gladie Creek was written in collaboration with community members from the watershed areas, Eastern KY PRIDE, local governments, and the KY Division of Water. Water quality and habitat data were collected, in some combination, at sites in all four sub-watershed areas. These data were used to select Best Management Practices to directly address the issues at each site.

To learn more about the area, please read the watershed plan! The plan as well as additional resources can be found on KWA's website under What We Do => Watershed Planning => Red River Gorge.

The next phase of the project will be implementation. The Daniel Boone National Forest has obtained an additional Nonpoint Source grant from KY Division of Water to implement the plan. Implementation will take many forms including a septic system assistance program, trail work, creek cleanups, and hiring a local watershed coordinator.



Picture provided by Claudia Cotton.

Harrods Creek Alliance

The Harrods Creek Alliance is a community group working on behalf of our beloved creek that runs from Henry County, past the forests and cliffs and Great Blue Heron rookeries and turtles, all the way to the Ohio River. The creek has many beautiful areas to protect and a few areas that need help.

This new watershed team has been busy! Recently, the team has written the first two chapters of a watershed plan, launched a new website designed by Windham Designs, organized several meetings, collected water quality data, selected a name and logo, and put on a special Celebration of Harrods Creek!



Image from www.HarrodsCreek.org

The plan is focused on the upper portions of the creek, including the headwaters, Brush and Berry Creek, Ash Run, and the main stem of Harrods in parts of Henry and Oldham Counties.

The plan is important because it is the foundation upon which data analysis and best management practices implementation are based. As we like to say, it makes sense to plan carefully for something as important as our water.

As we continue working on the plan, we also want to engage our community and get others involved. We'll have more events and celebrations, so stay tuned.

Beargrass Creek Alliance

Exciting news: The Kickstarter Campaign to launch initial production of a documentary about Beargrass Creek was successful!! Great work everyone!!

The film being created by writer, producer, and director Morgan Atkinson will be called *Beargrass: the Creek in Your Backyard*. A look at Louisville's Beargrass Creek- its history, its miseries, and its glorious possibilities. It's not your usual documentary.

Atkinson, and his company Duckworks, Inc., produce programs that examine issues of community and culture. He has created several films including Wonder about the lives of Harlan and Anna Hubbard, and several films about Thomas Merton.

Fundraising needs are ongoing. Look for it out sometime next year!

No Dumping Please

Guest article about Nick Campbell, Louisville Eagle Scout

Have you noticed any new labels in St. Matthews? On March 21st, 2015, a beautiful Saturday morning, members and friends of Boy Scout Troop 325 labelled 200 storm drains in St. Matthews, a Louisville neighborhood, with the "No Dumping - Drains to Beargrass Creek" labels. This project was led by Nick Campbell, a Trinity High School freshman as his Eagle Scout Project.

Nick became involved with the Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KWA) because of his appreciation for nature. After attending a presentation by the Beargrass Creek Alliance (BCA), Nick learned of the difficulties of Louisville's combined sewer system and the pollution problems that exist with Beargrass Creek. He decided to take on labelling storm drains to help combat these problems.

With the help of Lisa Santos of BCA, Tessa Edelen of KWA, and Wesley Sydnor of MSD, Nick was able to identify and obtain storm

drain maps for a several mile area in need of labelling. With the help of approximately 15 volunteers, the drains were cleaned, labelled, and recorded. The troop was educated on the pollution problems, as were neighbors they encountered while working on the project.

As a result of Nick's Eagle scout project, residents of St. Matthews have visual reminders of the way their lives impact Beargrass Creek. Hopefully, Nick's project will emphasize the importance of the creek and its close connection to our community.



Beargrass Creek Trail Committee Raises Funds

Guest Article by Mark Knoll, Bicycling for Louisville Board Member

The Beargrass Creek Trail Committee, a community group made up of representatives from several organizations, has raised \$75,000 in matching funds for a conceptual plan to connect the approximately 1.5 mile missing link between the Beargrass Creek Greenway and Butchertown Greenway along the Middle and South Forks near Irish Hill and Butchertown. The plan will also include recommendations for ecological restoration along the creek.

This project will ultimately create a continuous off-street pathway between Waterfront Park and Cherokee Park and complete a key corridor identified in the Louisville Loop Master Plan. Beyond providing an excellent recreational and transportation opportunity

for walkers and cyclists, the project also aims to improve water quality and provide habitat restoration along Beargrass Creek.

The Army Corps of Engineers will develop the conceptual plan as the first of several stages of work that are needed to construct the pathway and conduct creek restoration. Work on the conceptual plan is expected to begin in August and be complete by Summer 2016. Future phases of work include right-of-way acquisition and the ultimate construction of the pathway. While no definitive funding for these future phases have been identified, the committee is exploring Federal transportation funding, private donations, and grants from local, state, and national organizations.

Wild Times!

By Judy Petersen, Executive Director

Since joining the organization last year, KWA has attended numerous National Wildlife Federation (NWF) events. In late February, KWA Board vice-president Ward Wilson participated in the "Teaming with Wildlife Coalition" efforts to educate our Congress on the value of wildlife funding and conservation. Ward flew to Washington DC where he teamed up with staff from NWF and the Association of

Fish & Wildlife Agencies to meet with every office in Kentucky's congressional delegation.

NWF staff stated, "Ward was terrific as an advocate!! He brought great information supplied by KY Fish and Wildlife and wove in some really good examples related to water conservation." As we continue to engage in this new partnership we hope that wildlife conservation can help build additional support for clean water.



Monarch image provided by Patricia Wood.

Ward and I traveled to the National Conservation Training Center in March to represent KWA at the NWF annual meeting. The Training Center is a great facility on the banks of the Potomac River. Dan Ashe, Director of the US Fish & Wildlife Services, welcomed NWF to the Training Center and spoke about how working together we can face and prioritize the challenges and opportunities of wildlife conservation and protection to make a real difference. Ashe stated that we are at the edge of the sixth mass extinction in world history.

He believes that we need to think bigger – but make things simpler. That means focusing on species that share the landscape with many others or that can serve as barometers for ecosystem health. By focusing on these Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, we can provide greater conservation benefits for hundreds of other fish, wildlife, and plant species that share the landscape with them. The current focus on Monarch Butterflies is one of these Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.



Inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children's future

Giving birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife a wing up

In response to the White House issuing a Presidential Memorandum calling for a federal strategy to help pollinators, National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has entered into a landmark agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to increase habitat for monarchs and other pollinators.

Bats, bees, butterflies and other pollen carriers fertilize more than 85 percent of the world's flowering plants and two-thirds of crop species. Yet pollinators have been declining during the past few decades due to loss of habitat, disease and other stresses. The agreement with FWS is part of a series of initiatives by NWF and its partners that help pollinators. For example:

- NWF's Garden for Wildlife™ program has certified 130 communities, 180,000 gardens and some 4,500 schoolyards.
- NWF successfully advocated for a "sodsaver" program in the 2014 Farm Bill, which reduces crop insurance subsidies for lands recently converted from native grasslands.
- NWF is working with FWS to help 24 schools replicate habitat found at nearby national wildlife refuges, creating outdoor classrooms that will attract local pollinators.

May is Garden for Wildlife Month, so there is no better time to sign up for the NWF Garden for Wildlife™ newsletter. It's free and you will receive great gardening tips and learn how to certify your yard

or community through NWF's Certified Wildlife Habitat® program.

To learn more, please visit <http://www.nwf.org/Pollinators.aspx>

Content adapted from National Wildlife magazine; additional online content available at www.nwf.org/nw.



Caterpillar on milkweed photo by Nicole Hamilton

Upcoming Events

Green River Fest Saturday, June 13

At Thelma Stovall Park in Munfordville, KY. Registration for this cleanup is now open at KWAlliance.org

June 20 Ohio River Sweep Covering 3,000 miles of shoreline and tributaries, this basin-wide annual cleanup initiative activates more than 17,000 volunteers to collect over 7,000 tons of trash from the Ohio. Become a coordinator for your local area cleanup today.

June 26 Frankfort River Blast Meet on the Frankfort Riverfront for a celebration with live music, food, boat tours and rentals, ribbon cutting, beer garden, and fireworks.

June 27 Harrods Creek - Creek and Sinks Nature Walk Oldham Co. History Center Director Dr. Nancy Theiss will lead a nature walk on her Winnrose Farm. Participants will look at creek critters, sink holes, and visit a 200 year old dry stone springhouse built by Scottish pioneers. The farm is bordered by Brush Creek in the Harrods Creek Watershed. This event is free and open to everyone ages 8 and up. Please RSVP by June 19th at: HarrodsCreekAlliance@gmail.com Limited to 20 participants. No pets please.

August 1 Fort Boonesborough River Blast Featuring a car show, water exhibits, food, arts, and craft vendors, and fireworks.

August 8 Clean The Green Join us in Greensburg, KY as we clean up the 4th most biologically diverse river in the country.



October 17 Beargrass Creek Alliance Fall Creek Cleanup at Big Rock in Cherokee Park.

As always, please refer to our website www.KWAlliance.org for a complete list of events!



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**Did you know you can become a member of KWA for only \$ 25 a year?
Visit WWW.KWALLIANCE.ORG to join us in the pursuit of healthy waterways today.**