

Watershed Association called on to assist with Frog Run water issues

GRAFTON – In all, 21 Taylor County residents are being adversely affected by the lack of city water and the contamination of water wells. According to residents of Frog Run, in Knottsville, since the gas drilling activity has started in the area, the water in their wells has been contaminated.

Mountain Statesman Staff Writer Bobby Jennings reported in January about the condition of Frog Run water.

Residents reported, at that time, that besides complaints of roads destroyed and water wells being lost, they noted that those who still have water, although in small amounts, that water is even turning their silverware black, due to the iron that is now in the water. Another resident in the area needing water complained that they had a well that the water could now be “lit on fire” because of the contamination of gas.

On Monday evening, Taylor County Commissioner Dave Gobel was in attendance at the regular Save The Tygart Watershed Association (STTWA) meeting at its headquarters Beech Street in Grafton.

“People in Knottsville have lost drinking water because of gas drillers,” Gobel stated. “We are currently trying to find the funding for water out there.”

STTWA President Leroy Stanley asked Gobel about the reports of people having gas in their water, and if anyone had contacted the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. Gobel informed the group that the residents of Frog Run have been dealing with this for over a year, and that the Commission wants to work together with the Watershed Association to help get assistance for these residents.

“I know you guys do great projects to protect the water,” Gobel stated. “I think what you guys are doing is great.”

Stanley stated, “This is a great opportunity for us to help out the people in Frog Run.” Stanley informed the group that he is going to get a list of residents in that area and contact them to see what can be done. “We’re going to do some investigating and see what we can do to help these people,” Stanley concluded.

Stanley then informed the membership that the Association had received a letter from the West Virginia Make it Shine Program.

The WV Make It Shine Program is a comprehensive program aimed at making WV the cleanest state in the nation. Throughout the state, groups of volunteers, businesses, community organizations and local governments are working to accomplish this goal.

The statewide cleanup is held during the first two weeks of April each year. During this time, volunteers can receive assistance in conducting cleanups on public lands. The resources available include gloves, bags, hauling (in conjunction with the DOH), and landfill fees.

The Association has decided to meet on April 14, to start cleaning from Curve Bridge and heading up river. Stanley also informed the members that he can possibly get some assistance from the Taylor County Corrections Program for the clean up.

Glenn Waldron, volunteer coordinator for Mon River QUEST, was in attendance to explain the project and invite the Association to participate in its efforts to coordinate the areas watershed groups.

Waldron explained that Mon River QUEST has been monitoring the Monongahela River basin for three years now. The Mon River QUEST is a comprehensive water quality monitoring and reporting project for the Monongahela River being undertaken by the West Virginia Water Research Institute (WVWRI). Bi-weekly samples are collected and lab-analyzed with the resultant data presented on this website utilizing a Geographic Information System database and map.

Waldron explained that regular testing is done at 16 different sites along the basin. He stated that the organization is reaching out to local watershed associations to help by furnishing water samples to the project.

“We are not looking to change the way groups are monitoring, or where, we just want to bring the information together,” Waldron stated.

Waldron stated that the program is looking for PH balance, conductivity and water temperature from the Tygart River Basin, as it is a major tributary to the Monongahela River. Waldron stated that in return for the cooperation, the WVWRI will try to help the Association out by providing equipment, offering training sessions and listing the Association’s upcoming events on the Mon River QUEST website at www.monriverquest.org.

Paul Baker asked Waldron where the best places would be to get the samples for the project.

“You guys know your watershed better than we do,” Waldron stated. “Wherever you are monitoring is fine, we are not trying to make to many requirements.”