

Friends of the Lower Greenbrier Named 2015 Watershed of the Year; 20 Additional Groups Recognized for Their Achievements

ANSTEAD, W.Va. — Watershed volunteers gathered at Hawks Nest State Park on Saturday, June 6 to be recognized for their work to improve West Virginia's streams and rivers. During the 17th annual Watershed Celebration Day, volunteers had an opportunity to visit Morris Creek Watershed where they learned how the local watershed group is restoring Morris Creek and engaging in other innovative projects, including:

- treating acid mine drainage,
- stabilizing stream banks,
- creating energy using a hydro-generator,
- making Google maps,
- planting trees, and
- partnering with universities for educational programs.

Volunteers also learned the fundamentals of fundraising strategies and received a legislative update from the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. They also were treated to a jet boat ride on the New River.

The event was sponsored by the West Virginia Watershed Network (WVWN) and the highlight of the day was the awards presentation consisting of a compilation of short videos documenting the accomplishments, lessons learned, and featuring the beauty of each of the watersheds.

The West Virginia Watershed Network is a group of state, federal and non-profit resource providers who work closely with these volunteer organizations. This year the network honored 21 watershed groups for their hard work and commitment in protecting and restoring streams and educating their communities about the importance of watershed protection.

"The West Virginia Watershed Network has been working with watershed volunteers since 1996. The members of the network provide resources to the volunteers and also share in the ride of their success. Watershed associations have had a huge positive impact on West Virginia communities and the restoration and protection of our environment" said Jennifer Pauer, watershed basin coordinator with the West Virginia Stream Partners Program. "Everyone who enjoys the waters of our state should thank a watershed volunteer."

This year, the network's highest honor went to one of West Virginia's most longstanding and well known watershed associations. This group has worked for years to bring education and recreation opportunities to its community and continues to carry the torch for clean water as new challenges arise. The Friends of the Lower Greenbrier was awarded the 2015 Watershed of the Year Award. The WVWN also recognized the following watershed associations for their work in 2015:

- Blue Heron Environmental Network "LED – Listen, Educate & Demonstrate" – Hedgesville, Berkeley County
- Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition "Citizens Science" - Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County
- Coal River Group "Can Do Spirit" – St. Albans, Kanawha County
- Coal River Mountain Watch "Uncovering the Beauty" – Whitesville, Boone County
- Davis Creek Watershed Association "Positive, Purposeful Partnerships" – Charleston, Kanawha County
- Doddridge County Watershed Association "Speak for the Creek" – West Union, Doddridge County
- Elks Run Watershed Group "One By One" – Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County
- Fourpole Creek Watershed Association "Partnering for Solutions" – Huntington, Cabell County
- Friends of Blackwater "Honoring History & Heritage" – Thomas, Tucker County
- Friends of Deckers Creek "Raising Money, Raising Kane" – Morgantown, Monongalia County
- Friends of Milam Creek "Live, Learn, Grow & Prosper" - McGraws, Wyoming County
- Friends of Mill Creek "Youth Stewards" – Ripley, Jackson County
- Friends of the Cheat "Twenty Years of Promise" - Kingwood, Preston County
- Friends of the Hughes River "UnMuddying the Waters" – Harrisville, Ritchie County

- Greenbrier River Watershed Association “Organize and Educate” -Lewisburg, Greenbrier County
- Morris Creek Watershed Association “Put Feet to Our Projects” – Montgomery, Fayette County
- Opequon Creek Project Team “Trees, Trails & Treasures” – Martinsburg, Berkeley County
- Piney Creek Watershed Association “Creating Community Connections” –Beckley, Raleigh County
- Sleepy Creek Watershed Association “Leading through Communication” – Berkeley Springs, Morgan County
- Warm Springs Watershed Association “Membership Magnificence” - Berkeley Springs, Morgan County

Sponsors for this year’s event include: Dominion Foundation, Capitol Conservation District, Eastern Panhandle Conservation District, Elk Conservation District, Greenbrier Valley Conservation District, Guyan Conservation District, Little Kanawha Conservation District, Monongahela Conservation District, Northern Panhandle Conservation District, Potomac Valley Conservation District, Southern Conservation District, Tygarts Valley Conservation District, Upper Ohio Conservation District, West Fork Conservation District, Western Conservation District, National Park Service- Rivers and Trails Program, U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, West Virginia Conservation Agency, West Virginia Division of Highways, West Virginia Rivers Coalition and the West Virginia Watershed Resource Center.

The West Virginia Watershed Network is an informal association of interests with a mission to collaboratively support efforts and provide resources necessary to empower local residents to make decisions for sustainable management of their resources.

CONGRATULATIONS & THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!