

DECKERS CREEK Currents

online

DEALING

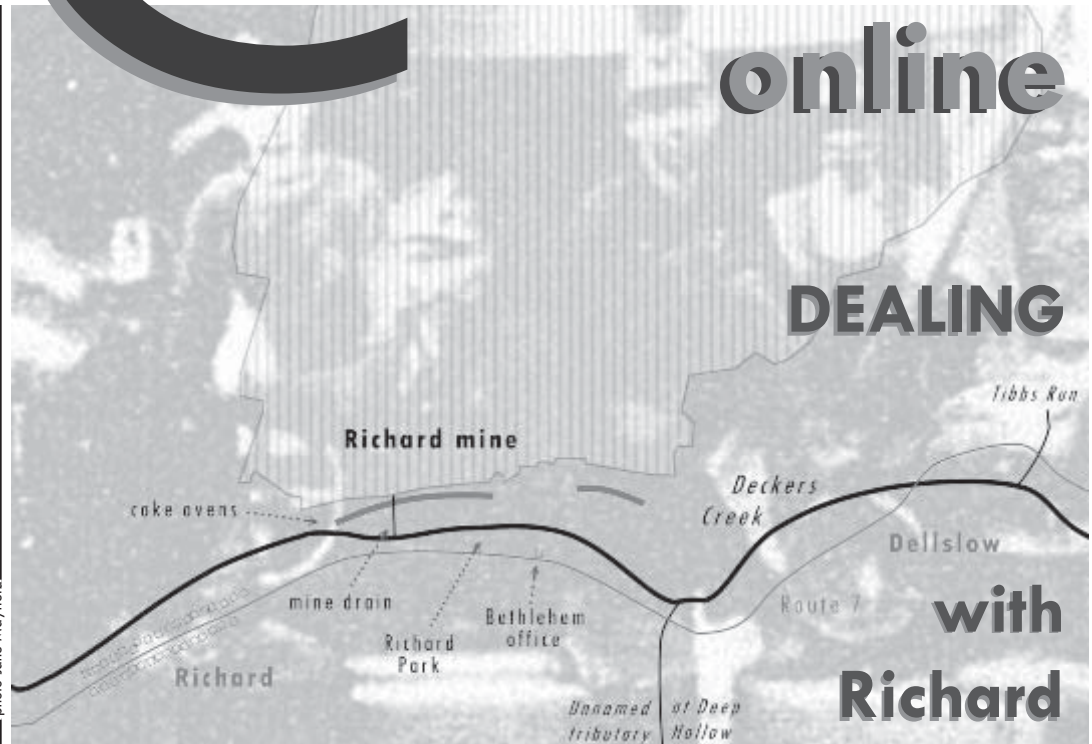
with
Richard

2003
SUMMER
number 10

CREEK MEETS TRAIL DURING FLOOD SEASON;
MASONTOWN, REEDSVILLE, & BRETZ DOING THEIR
PART; LOOKING AT RICHARD'S HISTORY & LEGACY;
DECKERS CREEK ALMANAC; RESERVOIR GETS
A FACELIFT; GETTING READY TO
CELEBRATE AGAIN: CARPFEST 2003



photo Jane Mayfield



CHANGING USE OF ARTHURDALE DAM BRINGS UPGRADE

Possible lead contamination complicates renovation

by Hanna Wheeler

"SITE 6" IN ARTHURDALE LOOKS LIKE A LARGE POND complete with lily pads and floating ducks. A clover-covered earthen dam holds the water back. This spot is one of five impoundments created for flood control in the Deckers Creek watershed in the 1960s and '70s. Now, thirty years later, the dam needs to be renovated, and conflicting uses have several state and local organizations uncertain about how to proceed. The good news is that the problem of Site 6 has encouraged different groups to talk together—possibly setting a precedent for issues to come.

On June 25th, sixteen people representing seven areas of interest and expertise gathered at the Valley Elementary parking lot to discuss Site 6. Representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Public Service District 1 (PSD-1), Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Army Corps of Engineers, Valley Community Preservation Coalition (VCPC), and Friends of Deckers Creek (FODC) were present.

After casual introductions, everyone retreated to the shade. NRCS—the group responsible for organizing the meeting—mediated discussion. Each group discussed its current use of Site 6, its perceptions of the site's value and problems, and its hopes for the renovation's outcome. Everyone then walked along the dam for a closer look.

The problem

The Site 6 dam is outdated. Built in 1965, the site was intended for flood control purposes only. Now, the dam does not meet engineering standards. Several people at the meeting pointed to the site's leaning riser (a structure that allows water to spill out under the dam) as evidence of the dam's disrepair.

The dam was originally designed as a Class B structure. This classification indicates that the dam was built in a rural agricultural area. Failure of a Class B dam results in damage to isolated homes, highways, and railroads.

Now, because of growing development downstream, the Site 6 dam has been reclassified from Class B to Class C—meaning that failure of the dam would cause serious loss of life and significant damage to property and infrastructure. Class C dams must be able to safely control a "Probable Maximum Precipitation" storm or, as many call it, a "one hundred year storm." The Site 6 dam can not.

Complicating the issue is that fact that Site 6 is now used for more than flood control. PSD-1, which provides drinking water for Reedsville, Arthurdale, and Gladesville areas, has installed new lines in order to use the reservoir as a source.

And a further complication is the site's possible lead contamination. A faucet-manufacturing company dumped lead-filled sand from its molds into the Site 6 area. It is unknown whether disturbing the surrounding soil during renovation could cause lead contamination in the water.

The issues: Who wants what

- The landowner was invited but not present at the meeting. He owns all the land surrounding the reservoir, including the dam.
- NRCS is generating options for improving Site 6's flood control capacity. Any other use, they say, is between the landowner and the interested party.
- PSD-1 currently uses Site 1, a Deckers Creek impoundment on the WVU Reedsville Farm, as a water source, but its population is growing and it wants to use Site 6 as well. In addition, even if Site 1 were expanded to provide enough water, PSD-1 would still be required to have a secondary water source for drought and security reasons. PSD-1 has had the water currently in the reservoir tested for lead and is satisfied with the results.
- DHHR's interest is in verifying the safety of PSD-1's water sources. It approves of PSD-1's testing results.
- The DNR representative raised issues of fish habitat and public access. With today's focus on multiple water uses, such as fishing and recreation, newer dams are built with public access in mind. However, since Site 6 is on privately owned land, DNR is concerned about spending public money without public access.
- Representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers were present to consult with the group. They gave information on the ways in which they construct and control their own projects.
- VCPC is trying to track down the sources of the high disease rate in the upper Deckers Creek watershed. The group worries that disturbing Site 6's soil would pollute the area's water source.
- Friends of Deckers Creek was pleased to see such varied groups talking to each other and hopes all stakeholder interests are met. FODC's concern is water quality in the Deckers Creek watershed. FODC's Martin Christ and others have found that the lead concentration in Site 6 water exceeds the "chronic" standard for the protection of fish and other aquatic life. FODC has passed on this data to the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The Site 6 dam withstood July's floods. NRCS hopes to complete its report on the costs, benefits, and risks of various renovation options by October, and will solicit public comment. FODC will notify people on our e-mail list when the comment period begins.

photo Martin Christ



There's still time to get involved in CarpFest 2003!

Volunteer at the Fest for:

- » bike shuttle
- » set up or break down
- » parking
- » kids' activities
- » photographs
- » carp costume

Volunteers get free food and drinks, a t-shirt, and a year's membership! Contact us at 292.3970 or info@DeckersCreek.org

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DECKERS CREEK CURRENTS

This issue

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FLOOD! FOUR MILES OF DECKERS CREEK TRAIL CLOSED

by Ella Belling, Martin Christ, and Adam Polinski

SUMMERTIME BRINGS OUT THE EXTREMES in the water levels of Deckers Creek. Recent flash floods, especially the one on July 8, when four inches of rain fell in less than three hours, saw churning waters charge through creekbeds, wash over banks, and inundate yards, fields, parking lots, and buildings.

Sabraton, a major confluence where Knocking Run, Aarons Creek, and Hartman Run all enter the mainstem of Deckers Creek in less than a mile, was hit so hard that Route 7 was temporarily closed. Many buildings were flooded and parking lots covered. Normally, many people driving through Sabraton probably aren't even aware that the creek is there.

Only a few summers back, a severe drought resulted in a relative trickle for the mainstem, with barely any flow at all for some of Deckers' smaller tributaries. During that drought, farmers in the upper watershed had to truck water in for their cattle, and safe drinking water for humans was an issue.

The spectrum of possible water levels for Deckers Creek during any given summer is extremely wide. You can see some of the variability at <http://ww.usgs.gov/wrt/>. Follow the link to Monongahela and then to Deckers Creek. The USGS posts the height of Deckers Creek every half hour, as measured at the bottom of Kingwood Street, next to Wilson Equipment Repair. Many storms raise the height of the creek to two feet on this gauge; the July 8 flood brought it up to eight feet.

Due to damage caused by the recent flooding, the Mon River Trails Conservancy (MRTC) has had to close four miles of the Deckers Creek Trail. The closed section begins near mile 7, about 1.2 miles uphill from Mellons Chapel, and ends near mile 11, 2.3 miles downhill from Masontown. Within the closed section are the road crossings at Greer Limestone Company, Deckers Creek Limestone Company, and Dave's Snack Shack.

While the trail is closed, MRTC will be assessing the damage, getting quotes on repair costs, and trying to obtain funding needed to finance the repairs. Since both Monongalia and Preston counties were declared national disaster areas, MRTC will be obtaining some of the repair funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

You can see more photographs of the flood damage and updates on repair progress at MRTC's Web site, www.montrails.org.

FODC and MRTC expect repairs to take place soon enough so that a bike shuttle to Masontown can be included in the CarpFest on September 27.



photos: Dave Watson



Get your feet wet! Using the new FODC Stream Monitors' Manual and our volunteer monitoring packet, you can adopt a section of the creek. Visit occasionally to measure its pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and stream height. Notice any changes in the landscape or water over time.

Stream monitoring is a great way to learn more about the watershed. Directions to the monitoring sites and instructions on using the tools is included in the packet. FODC intern Hanna Wheeler developed the program with support from the U.S. Office of Surface Mining. To get involved, contact Hanna at 282.8446 or hanna.wheeler@oberlin.edu.

NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Dave Bassage, George Breiding, Susan Breiding, Cheryl Brown, Linda Butler, Mike Chevalier, Daniel L. and Lindemarie Crawford, Pete Daly, Ann & Gary Devine-King, Ann DiMarco & Joseph Donovan, Donna Ford-Werntz, Mary Ann Furedi & Charlie Kelly, Ryan Gaujot, Peter Groce, Angela Higgins, Deana Kleine, Mary Beth Korf, Scott & Patty Fogarty, Candace Jordan, Ron Justice, Pam Kasey & Evan and Reese Hansen, Laura Hartsell, Nicholas Iannone & family, Carson Knagge, Rick Landenberger, Glenn Larew, Garth Lindley, James & Iretta Luzier, Julian Martin, Wes McCauley, Cathy McConnell, Robert A. McNeill, Paul & Mary Anne Meleady, Ron & Lyndell Millecchia, Susan Nemeth, Katherine Payne, Sabra Petersmann, Todd & Tricia Petty, Jane Rector-Donaldson, Bill Rodd, Jill Ross, Paige Royse & Christian DeLeon, Angela Schaffer, John Schmitt, L. Zane Shuck, Don Spencer & Carol Hamblen, Georgian Steinhardt & family, Jason Stewart & Katrina Klugh, Tim Terman, Bill & Anna Thorne, Mike Vanderberg, Barbara Walker, Chain-Wen Wang & Craig and Corbin Mains, Nancy Weber, Susan Weber & Chris and Lilly Madsen, Alison Weddle, Rich Weedfall, Elisabeth Wheeler, Lori Wilson & family, Sally Wilts, Terry Wimmer, J.R. Wolfe, Bill Wonderlin & Linda Shuster, Petra & John Wood, Pam Yost & family



MASONTOWN SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT ONLINE

Almost everyone hooked up; almost all the problems solved

by Pam Kasey

THE NEW MASONTOWN-REEDSVILLE-BRETZ sewage treatment plant went online in the spring. Most watershed residents know that the plant, planned for the past few decades, has had a complicated history. Finally, though, the residents came to agreement, officials found funding, and the contractors completed their work. Nearly everything is done.

Homeowners and businesses are responsible for making their own connections to the system. Of about 600 total connections expected, about 500 were hooked up by the end of July. Masontown mayor Lydia Main gave users a deadline of August 15 to get hooked up, after which time they would have to pay a penalty.

While FODC has focused mainly on acid mine drainage, we've been looking forward to the big progress the new plant would bring against bacteria pollution in Deckers Creek. We talked with plant manager Troy Ruddle to find out how it's going.

Troy described the system. "The solids are removed, then the water is run through an ultraviolet system, which disinfects any pathogens," he said. "Basically, you're just creating an environment at the treatment

plant to let the bacteria get rid of the waste, and then you're disinfecting the water before it leaves the plant to get rid of any disease-causing organisms."

Troy said the plant has had a problem of receiving too much water. "There's a flow meter that shows exactly how much water's coming into the plant,"

I said,

"I would like to go look at the old treatment plant."

And they said,

"There is no old plant!"

he explained. "On a dry day, we'll get fifty, sixty thousand gallons a day, up to a hundred thousand a day. But then when it rains, it'll go to five hundred and six hundred thousand. It's really out of hand," he said.

But it doesn't mean the discharge isn't being treated. "It still comes through the plant, but it makes it very difficult to operate the plant as it should be operated," he said. "It increases electricity use, use of pumps—it's just not good. Costs a lot of money in the long run."

Troy and others are working to solve the problem. "We're in the process now of trying to get the West Virginia Rural Water Association to bring a camera in that we can run up the lines." That will help identify the leaking pipes so they can be fixed.

In general, Troy is positive. "Things have been going really well at the plant itself. If we could get the ground water issue addressed, I think the plant will do a very good job. We hadn't been running very long when DEP came in from Charleston and inspected the operation from one end to the other and we're currently awaiting the results from that inspection but I think it went really well."

Troy said that Scott Sypolt is working now as an operator-in-training, preparing for the basic certification as a Class I Public Water System Operator.

—plant manager

Troy Ruddle

Asked if he would swim in the creek now, Troy said, "Sure!" Asked if he would let his children swim in the creek, he said, "To tell you the truth, I'd have to give the plant a little more time."



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RICHARD: FRIENDLY COMMUNITY, UNFRIENDLY MINE PROBLEM

by Martin Christ



Our summer benefit at the West Virginia Brewing Company was a success!

Thanks to contributors to the raffle:

Appalachian Gallery
Mary Beth Korf Massage
The Phone Store
West Virginia Brewing Company
Whitetail
Petra Wood

... to bands:

The Brewhouse Crew
The Brown Dog Band
Sixty Dollar Band

... to the Flying Rutabaga Circus for its command performance

... and to all who came, contributed, and spent an evening out with us!

Special thanks to the West Virginia Brewing Company for its generous support.



FODC received the West Virginia University Office of Service Learning award in June for the student participation aspects of our Clean Creek program.

The Office of Service Learning promotes programs that integrate community volunteerism into student coursework. Students from WVU Fisheries professor and FODC board member Todd Petty's fisheries classes visited several sites on Deckers Creek to monitor water quality.

HEADING EAST OUT OF MORGANTOWN, Route 7 crosses Deckers Creek twice in just a couple miles. Deckers flows from left to right under the bridge by the Rock Forge Inn, and from right to left under the bridge in Dellslow, just past Turnbull Chiropractic Clinic.

The creek is almost always cloudy under the first bridge, but it is usually clear under the second. The Richard mine discharges into and completely changes the creek between the two bridges. Friends of Deckers Creek has been learning all it can about the mine so that the acid mine drainage (AMD) coming out of it can somehow be treated. As we have poked about, we have learned that the mine once supported a tight community.

History

When it opened in 1936, the mine was known as "Industrial Collieries Corporation #21." It became "Bethlehem Collieries Corporation #21" before it closed in 1952. In the intervening years, it produced more than six million tons of coal. At its peak in 1942, it produced about 670,000 tons and employed roughly 540 workers.

The industry became the basis of a small community, and many landmarks from those days can still be seen. The Bethlehem office building was sold to the county for use as a school. That building now houses Sankbeil Tire. The company store now houses United Janitorial Supply.

John Field was born while the mine was in operation, into a coal mining family. His grandfather worked the mine, as did three of his uncles. A fourth uncle studied mine engineering and worked one summer in the mine as well. His father worked as a butcher for the company store for the Richard mine, and later managed the company store for the mines at Cascade, near Masontown. John entered first grade in 1953, the year the Bethlehem building opened as a school. As a youngster in the years just after the mine closed, the landscape seemed ideal for wholesome mischief. Mr. Field remembers hunting rabbits among the shacks and abandoned mine equipment, and exploring the abandoned company store building.

While the Richard mine was operating, coal mining was changing from hand loading, which was accomplished with picks, shovels, and muscle, to mechanical loading, which used a forerunner of today's continuous mining machines. John would hear stories about the hand-loading days from his next door neighbor, "Big Pete" DePallo, who would shovel coal into three coal cars lined up side by side, all at one time. Artifacts of the mechanical-loading days, however, can still be seen on the landscape. The mining machines required electricity. One landmark of the old mine is an electrical substation on Fields Park Road. Alternating current was converted here to direct current to power the machinery inside the mine.

Bethlehem Collieries Corporation treated the community of Richard well. It allowed the workers to buy their own houses—John's father bought his in the late 1940s for \$1,800. The houses, which still stand in neat rows along Route 7 in Richard, were built in pairs, with a single coal house and a single septic tank for each pair. There was also a Richard Park in the open space on the Morgantown side of Sankbeil tire. The park had two swimming pools, a pavilion with

electricity, areas for baseball, basketball, horseshoes, and even marbles. It also had indoor plumbing, which was quite unusual for a park in those days.

The community of Richard, according to Mr. Field, was a tight-knit and well kept community, with carefully cut yards and whitewashed trees. Dinner time brought out cooking smells from families from Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and other countries.

Closure of the mines did not cause immediate economic harm to the community. Many of the miners found jobs at Sterling Faucet, at other industries in Morgantown, or at other mines in the area.

Size

Although the Richard mine is one of the largest in the Deckers Creek watershed, it seems it was never one of the larger mines in the area. For example, **The Monongalia Story**, Earl Core's history of the county, never mentions the mine by either name. The

most important mines in the '40s and '50s were those in the Pittsburgh seam across the Monongahela River, which had larger blocks of flat-lying coal. The Upper Freeport coal in the Richard mine, on the other hand, lies at a relatively steep slope of 8 percent. The coal seam



intersects the ground surface near Tyrone and S. Pierpont Roads at 1,120 feet above sea level, but it lies just 720 feet above sea level near where Dug Hill Road crosses under I-68. At this point, the coal is approximately 500 feet belowground—fifty feet lower in elevation than the Monongahela River.

According to data from the W.V. Geological and Economic Survey, three square miles of mine stretch from near the banks of Deckers Creek in Richard to the intersection of Tyrone and Rockley Roads, less than half a mile from Cheat Lake. At its widest, it stretches 1.3 miles from near Pleasant Hill Cemetery to a high knoll .4 mile from the W.V. Botanic Garden.

Impact

The Richard mine comes at an unfortunate point in Deckers Creek. After passing through the limestone bedrock in the gorge, Deckers Creek is relatively healthy. At Pioneer Rocks, at the bottom of the gorge, FODC has found a fish community that includes largemouth bass, white suckers, creek chub, black-nose dace, yellow bullhead, bluegill, pumpkinseed, and stonerollers. But everything changes at Richard. Behind the Food Lion in Sabraton, for example, a fishing expedition using the same apparatus didn't turn up a single fish.

Jason Stewart and Dr. Jeff Skousen, at West Virginia University, found that the Richard mine adds a ton of acidity to Deckers Creek every day, on average. When that acid mine drainage is cleaned up, the creek will support a thriving fish community from the Monongahela River to Pioneer Rocks, and on up the gorge as far as a fish can swim and jump. Friends of Deckers Creek is looking forward to enjoying that day, hopefully in the company of many former and current residents of Richard.

MANY THANKS

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deckers creek almanac

SEPTEMBER

The **Common Dodder** or **Love Vine** looks like Mother Nature's "silly string" as it attaches itself to neighboring plants to absorb their sap. The stringy, bright orange stems of this plant support small clusters of white flowers. The Common Dodder can be found in the upper watershed.

Look for **Monarch Butterflies** as they are heading for their wintering home in Mexico.

OCTOBER

Early Goldenrod, with its bright yellow flowers and wispy stems, is found throughout the watershed. It has been blamed for seasonal allergies, but in fact blame is due to the **Common Ragweed** that is in bloom at the same time.

Most migrating songbirds have passed through the area by the end of September, but October can be very productive for migrating sparrow species, like the uncommon **Lincoln's Sparrow**.

Our thanks to local naturalists Gary Felton and Karen Toothman.