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Newsletter Contributors

Bill Pennington

Goodbye to the Bretz Coke Ovens

by Holly Purpura

The 140 Bretz Coke Ovens, some of the last survivors in the region, have recently been torn down. Once visible from the Deckers Creek Rail Trail, the ovens were in operation until 1980, making them some of the last functional beehive coke ovens in America.

Initially owned a coal mine operated by the West Virginia Coal Company, in 1906, the Elkins Coal & Coke purchased the property and began construction of the ovens.

The Bretz Coke Ovens were declared a National Historic Landmark in 1983 as part of the Elkins Coal and Coke Company Historic District. Yet, because the coke ovens were on private land that has never taken federal funding for preservation, little could be done to protect or save them.

Other notable, standing structures included in this district include the Elkins which included the coke ovens as well as the Elkins Coal and Coke Shop. The Richard Beehive Coke Ovens near Dellslow are also still standing.



Water Ecology Intern, Richard White, laments as he walks towards the remnants of the Bretz Ovens

AMD Remediation Updates

by Nick Revetta

Slabcamp Remediation System

Last summer, we successfully completed construction on a new passive acid mine drainage (AMD) treatment system off of a tributary to Slabcamp Run. The project raises the pH of the water from a very acidic average of 2.5 to a much more neutral average of 6.5. The numbers speak for themselves!

Effectiveness of Slabcamp Treatment Site

Measurement	Average Loads Before Project (lbs./day)	Average Loads After Project (lbs./day)	Load Reduction (lbs./day)	% Reduction
Acidity	300.36	34.60	265.77	88.5%
Iron	3.66	1.82	1.84	50.4%
Dissolved Iron	5.33	0.78	4.54	85.3%
Aluminum	24.70	1.61	23.09	93.5%
Dissolved Aluminum	22.03	0.02	22.01	99.9%

Ingrand System a GO Thanks to Emergency Land Purchase

Construction is almost complete on our newest passive AMD treatment system, which will treat drainage from the Ingrand Mine. The water discharging from this site in Preston County has an average pH of 3.1 and carries 8.8 lbs./day of iron and 8.4 lbs./day of aluminum into Kanes Creek and Deckers Creek. We aim to reduce these contaminants by 90%, drastically improving the water.

This project would not be possible without the support of the individuals that contributed to the land purchase in 2014. Your support and dedication is what made this project possible. Thank you!

Valley Point #12 Upgrades

By the end of 2016, we will finish construction on Valley Point #12, an older site that was constructed in 2008. Due to wear and tear, as well as additional seepage, the site needs renovated and upgraded. As a result, we are gearing up for renovations and plan to remove 6.3 lbs./day of iron, 3.5 lbs./day of aluminum, and improve the pH at this site.

Kanes Creek Success Story

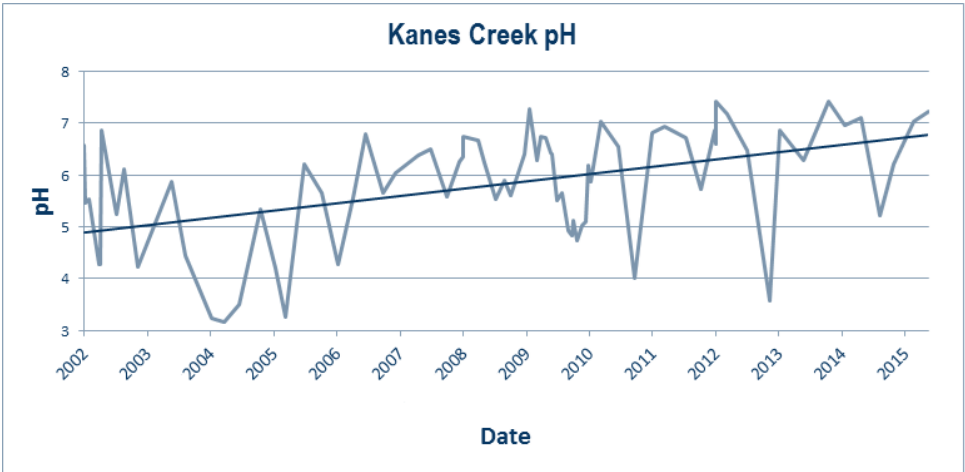
by Nick Revetta

At the tail end of 2015, the EPA released a story highlighting FODC's success in remediating Kanes Creek, a major tributary to Deckers.

The report notes that the lowest reach of Kanes Creek has met water quality standards for AMD parameters more than **90 percent** of the time since April 2010.

Recent fish surveys have found creek chub, yellow bullhead catfish and green sunfish in sections of the stream where **no fish were found before 2006**.

Benthic macroinvertebrate sampling yielded **6 organisms per square meter in 2003 compared to 275 per square meter in 2012**.



The graph above illustrates the pH improvements seen in Kanes Creek's lowest reach over the years. It's worth noting that pH below 6 is generally too acidic to support aquatic life.

Year to Go Green & Green Business Coalition

by Holly Purpura

Acid mine drainage, the largest polluter of Deckers Creek, resulted from a lack of understanding about the effects coal mining on the environment. While coal mines along the watershed have not been active for almost half a century, the creek still runs orange to this day.

Heeding the adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of a cure," FODC aims to combat other future threats to the creek through education about prevention. Thanks to the support of the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation, FODC has joined forces with Downstream Strategies and the Morgantown Green Team to promote sustainable business practices in the Morgantown area.

Morgantown City Council declared 2016 the Year to Go Green, and as part of this, over the past year, FODC has been establishing a Green Business Coalition in Morgantown to open dialogue with businesses to determine their current level of sustainability and to give them recommendations on what they can do to save money while going green.

Interested in joining? Email holly@deckerscreek.org.

CITY OF MORGANTOWN



YEAR TO GO GREEN 2016



Appalachian Stewardship Foundation

Deckerscreek.org Updates

Deckerscreek.org is getting a MAJOR facelift and updates should be live by the end of the August.

Check us out and follow us on social media!



Friends of Deckers Creek /groups/deckerscreek/



@FODC_WV



@FODC_WV

Share your fishing pics!

Fishing in Deckers Creek 2016

by Bill Pennington

First and foremost, I am a trout fisherman. To be specific, a fly-fisherman.

I have many hobbies and I can certainly be called many things. But fly-fishing for trout is what completely defines me and my personality. It’s my world. When I am not fishing, I am thinking about it. When I dream at night, it’s usually about catching fish. When folks at work see me pondering and think that I am deep in thought about some problem, I am most likely daydreaming about fish. I am a trout fisherman.

When something like that becomes your world, it invades your thoughts and observations all the time. As I drive around from place-to-place around West Virginia, every stream, creek and river within sight is noticed. From the road, I look for pockets and try to read the water.

So it was with Deckers Creek. In the early ‘80s, I remember driving out Rt. 7 on my way to Kingwood. I saw Deckers Creek for the first time as a trout fisherman and immediately investigated the possible fishing destination. Deckers Creek in the area of Pioneer Rocks appears as a classic trout stream. It has everything. Shade. Flow. Depth. Gradient. Laurel and rhododendron brakes. Terrain. Plunge pools. Aeration. Boulders.

What it did not have was clean water. Back then, Deckers Creek was seen as a sewer. It was used as a sewer. It was - in fact - a sewer. Although there were many wistful thoughts of what Deckers Creek must have been 100 years ago, I had no further ideations of ever fishing in the beautiful creek.

When I was 5 years old, my parents built a sandbox for us kids. Back then, you could drive up to Greer Limestone and buy bags of sand. On a hot summer day on the way back from Greer, we stopped at a Rt. 7 roadside pull-off and were allowed to wade in Deckers Creek. I vividly remember only being allowed to wade. We were warned not to let the water get in our mouths or eyes. Over 50 years ago, it was well-known to be dirty and unsafe.

Driving up Rt. 7 through Cascade back in those days was an adventure. There was a lot to see in Cascade: a power plant with a cooling water sprayer pool, houses along both sides of the road, a coal mine and tipple and a row of smoke-belching coke ovens. To drive through Cascade at night was especially exciting. The coke ovens filled the sky with orange-lit smoke that could be seen a mile away. This little pocket of industry was largely to blame for the condition of Deckers Creek. Years later, when the coal mines were sealed and the coke ovens were shut down, Deckers Creek remained a sewer. Literally. Pollution flowed endlessly from abandoned mining and manufacturing sites. Roadside dumps grew and festered. Straight pipes from local household were everywhere.

More years passed and the process of restoring Deckers Creek had already begun when I first heard of Friends of Deckers Creek. The railroad tracks along Deckers were removed and places like Cascade and Bretz had become Superfund sites for clean-up and remediation. Roadside dump sites were cleaned up. Over time, shacks and trailers located close to the stream disappeared and with them went the raw sewage straight pipes. Still, the very notion of a trout being alive anywhere in the reaches of Deckers Creek was not something that ever seemed likely in our lifetime, if ever. That was just not going to be.

Still, the very notion of a trout being alive anywhere in the reaches of Deckers Creek was not something that seemed likely in our lifetime, if ever. That was just not going to be.

Friends of Deckers Creek appeared at the right time to take remediation efforts to the next level, and advanced effort would be needed to restore Deckers Creek as a valuable, recreational and freshwater resource for the local area.

Trout Unlimited (TU), a national conservation organization that focuses on water resources, is inhabited by people like me: trout fishermen. TU members have a tendency to keep tabs on water quality in and around their local areas: TU guys like to do peculiar things like plant temperature loggers in streams and collect real water quality data for their own personal edification. They often know when the water in a stream improves or deteriorates. A few years back, a local TU member who lives within sight of the upper reaches of Deckers decided it was time to try some trout in the creek, and the DNR listened. There were at least two stealth stockings in Upper Deckers by the DNR, and for at least three years now, and in the years to come, the local

TU chapter has stocked fingerlings in Deckers Creek. Deckers Creek will someday receive trout fingerlings from local Trout in the Classroom setups that TU operates in area schools.

No sooner than the first trout stockings in Deckers Creek began that reports of fishing success began filtering back through the local fishing circles.

I was initially excited when Holly asked me to write something about trout fishing in Deckers Creek. But my second thought was that I am actually not qualified to do it. I have never caught a trout in Deckers Creek. I have never even fished in Deckers Creek. To do this right, I would need to do research.

There are two sections of Deckers Creek that appear as viable trout water. One is the grade above Dellslow in the Pioneer Rocks area. The other is further upstream in Preston County near the Cascade Lions Club Pavilion on Rt. 7. The initial focus for stockings was on the upper section near Cascade. Although there was recently a report of a large brown trout caught near Pioneer Rocks, I chose Cascade as my destination due to a few reliable reports of good trout fishing in the area.

On July 3, 2016, I got out my rod, put on wading boots, tied on a size 12 Adams, climbed over the bank and - for the first time in my life - cast a fly into the waters of Deckers Creek.

It didn’t take long. Not much time was spent on the big deep waterfall plunge pools adjacent to the Lions Club park. I bouldered my way downstream to some more fishy-looking pockets. The water temperature was 68 degrees at 3:00 p.m. on a July day. My first fish was a brown trout that rose aggressively to my dry fly. As I played it in gently on a 6-foot 2-weight rod, I noticed several other sizable game fish exhibiting frenzy behavior around it in the water as it struggled and fought. Naturally, after the trout was photographed and released, I decided to see what I could do to catch those other fish.



I ended up catching and releasing over 12 fish from that same pocket. Elsewhere, I caught three more brown trout and at least a dozen more sunfish and creek chubs. As the day wore on and I reached that point where good judgment finally overcomes the drive to make one more cast, I had not yet reached the far end of interesting fishing water in the Cascade section. I was downstream close to a mile from the Lions Club Park and the pocket water continued to run downstream as far as the eye could see.

Deckers Creek will continue to improve and the future is bright. I now have a new trout fishing destination and it’s within 15 miles of my home. That’s incredible. Work remains to be done on Deckers Creek. The effects of massive pollution and abuse is very much visible and apparent to anyone who gets close. However, I can now foresee a day when trout populate longer reaches of the stream and in greater numbers. To a trout fisherman like me, this is something that was pure folly or nothing but a pipe dream barely a generation ago.

To a trout fisherman like me, this is something that was pure folly or nothing but a pipe dream barely a generation ago.

Now it’s reality. Thanks FODC. Thanks TU.

Now it’s reality. Thanks FODC. Thanks TU.

Let’s not keep this a secret. Go fish Deckers Creek. Get the word out. More fishermen can only make it better.

Deckers Creek already has its own fly shop too! On your way out Rt. 7, stop in to Dan McBee’s fly shop for a few supplies, some fishing stories and some good advice. It’s the first building on the left after you turn into Brookhaven Road. Tell Dan I sent you.

See any fishy business?



Report pollution at CreekDog.org and the appropriate agency will be notified instantly!

YWC Expansion

by Holly Purpura

Thanks to our good friends at State Farm, between 2015 and 2016, the FODC Youth Action Board (YAB) has been expanding Youth Watershed Connections to students across Appalachia and the continental United States.

This first youth-led watershed guide and interactive mapping tool was initially created by the FODC YAB in 2014 as a way to educate students about watersheds. First, students explore their watershed to GPS points of interest: parks, pollution sites, waterfalls, and so on. Then, upon return, students enter coordinates into the mapping interface and post brief descriptions and images about each location.



Youth Watershed Connections



Staff and Board Updates

Holly Purpura, Executive Director

Although many of you have already met Holly, she has been with us since May 2015 and is overdue for her newsletter introduction. Our new ED comes to us locally, born and raised in West Virginia. A WVU Geography alum, she worked at National Geographic Education and the Hunger Project UK prior to joining FODC.



Brad Stephens, Board Member

In addition to serving on the FODC board, Brad also practices law in Morgantown. He received his J.D. from the West Virginia University College of Law and specializes on negotiating leases on behalf of surface and mineral right owners. He aims to chiefly provide representation to organizations and individuals forwarding the causes of environmental stewardship and sustainable development.



Krista Kent, Board Member

Krista, FODC’s newest board member, serves as Director of Planning & Operations with the WVU Foundation. A long-time South Hills resident, Krista wants to help better the beautiful creek that runs near her house. She came to the right place! FODC is excited to have her as part of our team, and we know that her wealth of experience in fundraising and nonprofit administration will do wonders in helping to work towards a cleaner Deckers Creek.



Suzanne Kepple, OSMRE VISTA

With a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science with minors in GIS and Math, Suzanne started her year of service moving to Morgantown from Western Pennsylvania. Previously, she has worked as an intern and volunteer at Shenango River Watchers and Sharon Beautification Commission in Sharon, PA.



Jessi Rouda, OSMRE VISTA

Jessi is a recent WVU graduate with a Bachelor’s degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Management and a minor in Conservation Ecology. As an OSMRE VISTA, she will be working as an environmental steward to build capacity, as well as work in aquatic ecology and mapping. Previously, she interned studying spotted salamanders and volunteered at wildlife rehabilitation hospitals.



Fond Farewells!



Jess Lemley,
OSMRE VISTA



Forrest Conroy,
Board Member



Ben Gilmer,
Board Member

Hartman Run Illegal Dump



On Friday, April 1st, FODC, the Morgantown Utility Board, WV DEP REAP Program, and the Mon County Solid Waste Authority cleaned an illegal dump in a ravine off of Hartman Run.

We extracted 10,560 lbs, 152 tires, and numerous large pieces of furniture and electronics.

Thanks to teamwork, we were able to make Morgantown Shine.

Make-it-Shine Cleanup

If that wasn’t enough, we had spring cleaning fever that weekend. The very following day, we held our annual Make-It-Shine Cleanup. With 55 volunteers, we removed 67 bags of trash, 2 TVs, and 25 tires!

Paint Exchange

As a part of the Year to Go Green in Morgantown, FODC held a Paint Exchange.

This event provided a way to recycle paint: individuals could drop off or pick up paint for free.

We received close to 80 cans and recycled about 50. All remaining paint will be used to paint the YAB mural or donated to ReStore.



Many thanks to the Dominion Foundation, who made this possible.



Hey! I’m a Friend of Deckers Creek!

Individual Memberships

- ____ \$10 **Crayfish**
Student
- ____ \$25 **Stonefly**
Individual
- ____ \$40 **Beaver**
Family
- ____ \$75 **Red Spotted Newt**
Establishing
- ____ \$100 **Smallmouth Bass**
Benefactor
- ____ \$500 **Kingfisher**
Major Donor
- ____ \$____ **A Friend is a Friend**
We’re Easy

Business Memberships

- ____ \$60 **Business Member**
Recognition in our newsletter and on the FODC website.
- ____ \$150 **Drafts on Deckers Sponsor**
Business member + logo on the FODC website
- ____ \$300 **Clean Creek Program Sponsor (CCP)**
Business Member & recognition in the State of the Creek Report and a presentation at your place of business
- ____ \$500 **Major Donor**
All benefits and recognition at our annual Holiday Social



Contact us!

Friends of Deckers Creek
P.O. Box 877
Dellslow, WV 26531
info@DeckersCreek.org
304.292.3970

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

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[kroger.com/communityrewards](https://www.kroger.com/communityrewards)



FISHING IN DECKERS CREEK 2016.
ALSO, GOODBYE TO THE BRETZ COKE OVENS; AMD REMEDIATION UPDATES; KANES CREEK SUCCESS STORY; YEAR TO GO GREEN & GREEN BUSINESS COALITION; YOUTH WATERSHED CONNECTION EXPANSION; HARTMAN RUN ILLEGAL DUMP; PAINT EXCHANGE; AND STAFF AND BOARD UPDATES.

Deckers Creek CURRENTS



Fishing in Deckers Creek 2016

CALENDAR

UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit deckerscreek.org for more information

Sat., August 27 & Sun., August 28	Repainting the FODC YAB Mural at the Morgantown waterfront
Fri., October 21, from 6 pm—12 am	Second Annual Drafts on Deckers beer tasting proceeds night
Sat., October 22	Watershed Celebration Day!
November 2016	Comedy Show fundraiser at 123 Pleasant Street
Friday, December 16th	FODC Holiday Social!
3rd Monday of Every Month: 4:00—5:30	FODC Youth Action Board Meets at the FODC office. Open to interested youth!

DRAFTS ON DECKERS



WV Craft Beers and Great Music
Date: Friday, October 21st, 6pm—12am
Location: Morgantown Brewing Co. Basement
You can't have good beer without good water!



Friends of Deckers Creek
PO BOX 877
DESLLSLOW, WV 26531

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