

Stream cleanup targeted

BY JOHN CONLEY
Associate Editor

Cleaning polluted streams is a challenge.

Doing it in a practical, affordable way is the challenge taken on by the Upper Guyandotte Watershed Association.

Formed in 2002, the 140-member UGWA has conducted cleanups and an appliance drive. Now it's focused on a wastewater project.

"We need to do something (about stream pollution)," said Terry Tilley, president of UGWA. "We have a great resource (in the Guyandotte River) that we need to improve."

The watershed encompasses the eastern half of Wyoming County and the lower third of Raleigh County, according to Kelly Jo Drey, the UGWA's project coordinator. It stretches, roughly, from Coal City to Pinnacle Creek.

There are 7,500 people and 3,300 households in the watershed area.

Two-thirds, or 67 percent, of those people do not have a permitted form of household sewage disposal, Drey pointed out.

That doesn't mean they like it that way.

"We did a survey during the Dogwood Festival (in

consensus," he said.

"We try to build partnerships," Drey agreed.

"(The UGWA) is an opportunity for people who don't always get their opinions heard to come to the table," she explained. "Everyone in this area has a right to live in a healthy environment, and we want to help make that happen."

For more information, check the association's website at www.uga.wv.org.

City of Mullens, Division of Highways, Solid Waste Authority and others have also been helpful.

The DOH will assist in marking the boundaries of the watershed.

UGWA meets on the second Monday of each month at the Mullens Opportunity Center at 7 p.m.

"We welcome everybody from age 7 to 70," Tilley stated. "A lot of people know that we're here but they don't know what we're doing."

"We're a proactive group, and we work pretty much on

wastewater plan and looking for feasible, affordable ways to implement it.

Some aspects of the project could go into effect in five years, Drey said. "Some are 10-year projects, and some are 15-year projects," she added.

Local response to the UGWA's efforts has been good, Drey indicated. "The Wyoming County Commission has been one of our biggest supporters," she remarked.

The DEP, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),

UGWA

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Mullens) and 93 percent of those who took the survey felt that raw sewage was one of the chief causes of river pollution," Drey said. "And most of them were willing to pay to fix that problem."

Building a sewer plant in rural areas and small communities is cost-prohibitive, Drey noted. "But that's not the case with some of the new, decentralized techniques," she commented.

The UGWA, aided by the Division of Environmental Protection (DEP), is developing a comprehensive