



DEP veterans Rusty Joins, left, and Mike Dorsey head up the agency's Homeland Security and Emergency Response Unit. The unit's headquarters have been in Elkview since 2003.

DEP's Adkins among the elite

By Colleen O'Neill

He is among the elite.

Jamie Adkins, the procurement manager for Administrative Services in the Office of Administration, has received the honor of being named "Procurement Officer of the Year" for the entire state.

Adkins is one of only three Department of Environmental Protection employees who can tout this honor.

Adkins actually knew he had won the award before it was announced at the annual Purchasing Conference at Canaan Valley. When the conference planning committee realized that Adkins hadn't registered for the con-

See **ADKINS**, Page 3

Only a call away

■ **Editor's note:** This is the second in a series of stories on DEP offices located around West Virginia.

By Tom Aluise

Mike Dorsey and Rusty Joins spent New Year's Day, 2009, cleaning up a mercury spill in Cedar Grove.

On Jan. 2, 2008, they missed West Virginia University's stunning 48-28 victory over favored Oklahoma in the Fiesta Bowl because a tanker truck crashed on Route 34 in Putnam County. It was leaking part of its 6,000 gallons worth of



flammable solvents.

"We were out there all night," Dorsey said. "The truck driver's excuse was that the

road was narrow and there were big trucks coming right at him."

Welcome to the world that is the Department of Environmental Protection's Homeland Security and Emergency Response.

"People can call at all hours, and they do," said Dorsey, who is chief

See **CALL**, Page 5



The DEP's Jamie Adkins, right, is recognized by Chuck Bowman as West Virginia's "Procurement Officer of the Year."

Youth Environmental Conference



Participants in October's Youth Environmental Conference take a boat ride over for a tour of historic Blennerhassett Island.



Chris Gatens, left, leads kids on a nature hike at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ohio River Islands Refuge.



Inside of the Ohio River Islands Refuge headquarters, kids got a look at Ohio River fish and learned about freshwater mussels.

Teens tour Blennerhassett

By Tom Aluise

WILLIAMSTOWN — Madison Syner spends much of her free time at home in Fayette County splashing in a nearby creek with her dogs.

So, it wasn't surprising to learn that the Nuttall Middle School seventh-grader enjoyed her trip to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge headquarters here.

Syner visited the facility on Oct. 10, along with 50 other teenagers taking part in the Department of Environmental Protection's Youth Environmental Conference.

"I thought it would be really cool to come up here and learn some stuff," Syner said.

The conference, sponsored by the DEP's Youth Environmental Program, took place Oct. 9-11 at North Bend State Park and included kids ages 13-18 from 10 West Virginia counties.

The conference included workshops, motivational speakers, field trips and other entertaining activities that focused on the environment. Ideas also were exchanged about how to make future conferences better.

In addition to their visit to the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge, the kids also took a



Included during the stop at Blennerhassett Island was a tour of the mansion.

boat trip to historic Blennerhassett Island, where they toured the

See YOUTH, Page 3



Youth Environmental Conference participants enjoy a wagon ride tour of Blennerhassett Island. They also visited the Blennerhassett Museum of Regional History.

YOUTH

Continued from Page 2

Blennerhassett Mansion and took a carriage ride around the island to learn about its history.

Before heading over to the island, the group stopped by the Blennerhassett Museum of Regional History in downtown Parkersburg.

At the Wildlife Refuge, the DEP's Chris Gatens led the group on a nature hike to look at native West Virginia plants and trees.

Inside the Refuge headquarters, the kids learned about the migratory birds and freshwater mussels that are among the important wildlife emphasized on the Refuge. A 1,200-gallon aquarium featured live Ohio River fish.

The Ohio River Islands Refuge was established in 1990 and stretches some 362 miles along the upper Ohio River. It includes 22 scattered islands and three mainland properties. The mission of the Refuge is to protect

wildlife and habitats native to the Ohio River and its floodplain.

Diana Haid, coordinator of the Youth Environmental Program, said the trips to the Refuge and Blennerhassett offered the kids a nice mix.

"It introduces them to some things they probably don't get much exposure to," Haid said. "We're combining our state's natural history with environmental education."

Having the conference at North Bend also made sense, said Haid, who schedules venues based on nearby educational opportunities.

"Places like this (Wildlife Refuge) draw me to an area," Haid said.

During past conferences, field trips have included visits to surface mines and power plants.

"I wanted to rotate to different state parks and take advantage of the educational opportunities in close proximity," Haid said. "This fell together. It made sense."

ADKINS

Continued from Page 1

ference, it blew the whistle.

"I wasn't going to go since I've been before and there were people who haven't gone," Adkins said. "The director of the state Purchasing Division, David Tincher, called my supervisor, Jim Calvert. He came into my office and we had a one-on-one. He told me that I had won the award and that the presentation would be on Oct. 1."

Besides having the prestigious title, Adkins received a framed certificate and plaque. Both the

certificate and the plaque grace Adkins' office.

But just one award presentation wasn't in the cards for Adkins. Because it was considered such a prestigious honor, Adkins was recognized again during October's employee awards presentation at DEP headquarters.

"On Oct. 13, at the employee awards presentation, the award was presented to me," Adkins said. "I wasn't expecting it. When I saw Chuck Bowman of the Purchasing Division, I knew something was up. He, with Secretary (Randy) Huffman, made the presentation. It was really nice."

Permit writers like life without paper

By Tom Aluise

LOGAN — It has been close to a year since the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection began requiring that all mining permit activities be conducted electronically.

And for the most part, the mandatory switch from the paper world to the computer screen for permit writers and regulators has gone smoothly.

"Most people were hesitant," said Amy Halstead, who conducts ePermitting training classes for the DEP's Division of Mining and Reclamation. "You get used to doing something a certain way. So, it's been nice to hear people say, 'Yes, we really like it. We never want to go back to the paper world.'

"And the people just coming into the business ... they love it. They don't have anything to compare it to."

Electronic permitting goes

See PERMIT, Page 7

indepth

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The community of Ashland in McDowell County was settled in 1894 and, until last month, had never had a wastewater treatment system. A new pilot project for the community is eliminating straight pipe discharges of raw sewage into nearby streams.

By Tom Aluise

ASHLAND — There are no quick fixes to the well-chronicled problems that plague rural McDowell County in southern West Virginia.

Still, a sense of pride and determination exists in its people. They're eager for change, willing to make the necessary sacrifices and focused on finding the resources needed to improve their quality of life.

A perfect example of that positive energy is in the small community of Ashland. The former coal camp is the site of an innovative wastewater treatment pilot project, partly sponsored by the Nonpoint Source Pollution section of the Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Water and Waste Management.

The project is equipping 23 homes and two businesses with a viable onsite wastewater treat-

Pipeline to prosperity

Wastewater treatment plan is reshaping McDowell community

ment system for the first time. It also is eliminating the community's archaic practice of dumping raw sewage into local streams, an environmental hazard that is all too prevalent in McDowell County.

"It's been straight pipes into the creek since 1894," said Jackie Persiani, who grew up in Ashland and now serves as president of the Ashland Community Utili-



Straight pipes like this release untreated wastewater into streams throughout McDowell County in southern West Virginia.

See PIPELINE, Page 17

CALL

Continued from Page 1

of the operation that's been around since the 1980s. Joins is Dorsey's assistant.

"Over the years, people have gotten my home phone number and they'll contact me directly," Dorsey said. "That's not a big deal."

The DEP's Homeland Security and Emergency Response unit is equipped to handle a long list of jobs but most frequently responds to hazardous material threats around the state.

The threats can come in the form of flammable, corrosive or toxic substances introduced into the environment through a myriad of ways, from transportation accidents and illegal dumping, to industry spills and home owners trying to properly dispose of household chemicals.

Dorsey, a 22-year DEP veteran, and his staff make about 150 site visits a year in response to calls. They are on duty 24-7.

"You never know what you're going to stumble into," Dorsey said. "Some chemicals that age become unbelievably powerful. People can't comprehend a quart jar with a clear liquid being able to take this room apart."

There have even been cases of explosions produced by amateurs trying to make fireworks.

"We try to use our talents, abilities and equipment to mitigate hazardous material dangers, whatever they may be," Dorsey said.

The state offers a Spill Line for the public to report accidents. Information is transferred to Dorsey's unit. The Emergency Response team also gets calls from West Virginia county officials, seeking assistance in proper cleanup procedures.

"A lot of times we'll just talk somebody through it," Dorsey said. "But if the county calls



DEP Emergency Response workers take many precautions when they're in the field dealing with potentially harmful materials. Wearing a hazmat suit is one way to protect yourself.



Headquarters for Homeland Security and Emergency Response are located on Route 119 in Elkview. The complex includes office and storage space, plus a hazardous waste storage pad.



Matthew Smith, left, does a lot of chemical analysis of materials dealt with by the DEP's Homeland Security and Emergency Response unit. Smith has a doctorate in chemistry from Northwestern. The facility's hazardous waste storage pad, right, has four layers of containment.

and says 'We need you to go' we go. We had a well service truck leak some acid on the ground in Buckhannon earlier this year. I thought it was being handled well by the company but the Upshur County director of emergency services

said, 'Look, I would feel better if you guys came up here and oversaw this.' So we went."

Many trucking companies contract out cleanup services to private businesses, which are trained in properly handling hazardous ma-

terials.

"There is no need for us to go out there if people know what they're doing," Dorsey said. "But sometimes people can't deal with it. More often than not, if there is a

See CALL, Page 6

Emergency Response trucks...a closer look at what DEP puts on the road

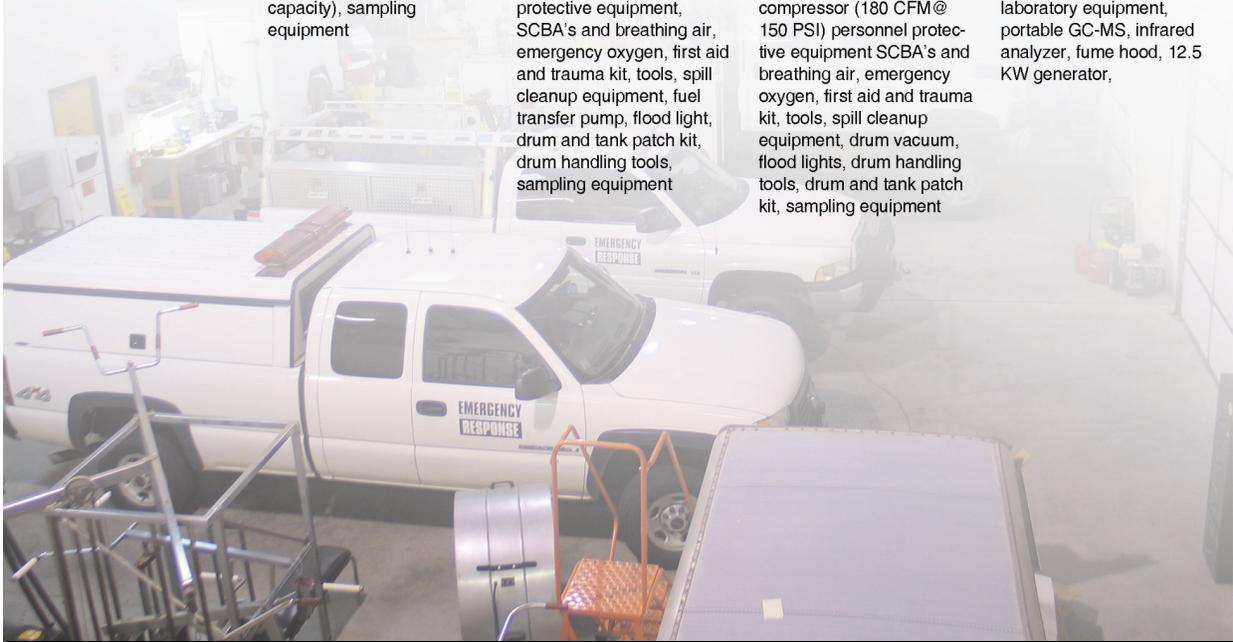
2005 GMC Pickup truck
4-wheel drive, warning lights and siren, commercial truck cap and integral tool boxes, agency two-way radios, dedicated cell phone with hands-free unit and booster, tools, personnel protective equipment, sampling equipment

2001 Dodge Pickup truck
4-wheel drive, warning lights, flood light, agency two-way radios, dedicated cell phone with hands-free unit and booster, lift gate (1,500 pound capacity), pipe rack, tool boxes, tools, personnel protective equipment, winch (12,000 pound capacity), sampling equipment

2008 Ford Crane truck
4-wheel drive, warning lights and siren, agency two way-radios, dedicated cell phone with hands-free unit and booster, lift gate (1,500 pound capacity), crane (3,000 pound capacity), winch (12,000 pound capacity), personnel protective equipment, SCBA's and breathing air, emergency oxygen, first aid and trauma kit, tools, spill cleanup equipment, fuel transfer pump, flood light, drum and tank patch kit, drum handling tools, sampling equipment

2004 GMC Crane truck
All wheel drive, warning lights and siren, agency two-way radios, dedicated cell phone with hands-free unit and booster, lift gate (1,600 pound capacity), crane (6,000 pound capacity), winch (12,000 pound capacity), air compressor (180 CFM@ 150 PSI) personnel protective equipment SCBA's and breathing air, emergency oxygen, first aid and trauma kit, tools, spill cleanup equipment, drum vacuum, flood lights, drum handling tools, drum and tank patch kit, sampling equipment

1998 Ford Laboratory truck
All wheel drive, warning lights and siren, agency two-way radios, dedicated cell phone with hands-free unit and booster, emergency oxygen, first aid and trauma kit, tools, personnel protective equipment, SCBA's and breathing air, safety shower, laboratory equipment, portable GC-MS, infrared analyzer, fume hood, 12.5 KW generator,



CALL

Continued from Page 5

serious spill they'll want DEP people there to make sure they're doing everything right."

That's essentially what happened last winter when a truck carrying chocolate powder wrecked on Interstate 79, not far from Charleston, spilling its contents all over the highway.

Initially, the DEP wasn't needed. It wasn't long, however, that Dorsey got a call from Kanawha County Emergency Services Director Dale Petry.

"I said, 'I thought you guys didn't need me?'" He said, "Well, now the powder is on fire.' It's hard to call chocolate powder a hazardous material, but as long as it's on fire, I'm going to call it that," Dorsey said.

Plus, Dorsey said, as workers watered down the powder, it became a potential threat to nearby Sandy Creek, via drains in the roadway.

"It was pretty neat in an environmentally bad way," Dorsey said.



Wheatcraft



Spatafore



THE HOMELAND Security and Emergency Response headquarters are located on Route 119 in Elkview, about four miles from interstate access. The 7,200 square foot building opened in February 2003 and includes office, lab and storage space, as well as a garage area for the operation's five emergency response vehicles.

The trucks feature various communication devices, tools, personnel protective gear such as hazmat suits and lab equipment (see above graphic).

"A big component is maintaining our equipment," Dorsey said. "If the equipment is not right, it's useless. Things must be maintained properly. We keep our

equipment in working order."

When fully staffed, the Homeland Security Emergency Response unit employs seven people.

On staff now, in addition to Dorsey and Joins, are chemist Matthew Smith; equipment specialists Dave Wheatcraft and Louis Spatafore; and office assistant Maureen Clemons.

Dorsey said the DEP's move into its new Kanawha City headquarters prompted his unit to explore alternative locations.

"We were going to be in the new building and we knew we wanted a hazardous waste storage pad," Dorsey said. "We couldn't get a permit for a pad in Kanawha City.

"Also, it wouldn't have been easy getting equipment in and out of Kanawha City. We were looking to get somewhere out of town."



A VISIT to the Elkview facility's 30-by-70 hazardous waste storage pad is an eye-opener

and a revealing look at the scope of materials Dorsey and his crew collect, sample and dispose of.

Yellow United Nations-approved storage drums, certified for shipping around the world, line part of the pad and many, like books on a library shelf, have fascinating stories inside.

"We get some interesting stuff," said Smith, who has a doctorate in chemistry from Northwestern.

"We're permitted to handle anything and everything and we've got it," Dorsey said.

One drum is labeled "acid contaminated dirt and kitty litter." It resulted when office workers tried to contain an acid spill near their building with kitty litter.

Another drum carries this label: "Ronceverte meth lab dump." Dorsey explained that a woman was using the area under her children's backyard trampoline to dispose of meth waste.

Other drums contain

See CALL, Page 14



The DEP's Diana Haid, left, and Theodora Plumley engage some kids in a game of Junk Jeopardy during the annual Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins in early October.

Recycling success stories shared

By Tom Aluise

MORGANTOWN — In Wood County, a recycling program helped fund needed renovations at a ball field.

In McDowell County, law enforcement officials are jumping on board in the fight against litter.

In Harrison County, they relied on advertising to get the word out about a one-day trash collection event and the numbers were impressive.

Those were among the success stories shared during the 2009 Educational Conference on Litter Control and Solid Waste Management. The three-day conference was held in mid-October at the Waterfront Place Hotel here and was sponsored by the Association of West Virginia Solid Waste Authorities and the Department of Environmental Protection.

See **SUCCESS**, Page 16

DEP makes first showing at annual Forest Festival

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's Youth Environmental Program participated for the first time in the annual Mountain State Forest Festival in Elkins.

First started in 1930, the Forest Festival is dedicated to the preservation and conservation of the state's natural resources.

The festival annually attracts 100,000 to 125,000 visitors.

The YEP had a display at the festival from Oct. 1 through Oct. 3. It featured Junk Jeopardy, where participants answered multiple-choice questions dealing with the environment.

The YEP's display was set up in a portion of the festival grounds known as Conservation Village.

Close to 1,300 school-age kids visited Conservation Village on Oct. 1.

PERMIT

Continued from Page 3

back about five years but wasn't officially required by the DMR until Jan. 1, 2009. It allows all aspects of the permitting process — preparation, delivery, review, corrections, approval and publication — to be conducted live over the Internet.

Halstead said West Virginia might be the only state with extensive ePermitting technology in place. In fact, Halstead figured the DEP's ePermitting efforts would be a popular topic at a late October meeting of the Interstate Mining Compact Commission she was scheduled to attend in Chicago.

"Yes, there's room for



Jason Dingess, an engineer with Patriot Coal, picks up ePermitting pointers during training at Chief Logan State Park.

improvement," Halstead said. "But I really think we've done a good job. I think we're going in the right direction."

That seemed to be the common sentiment at an October ePermitting instructional class Halstead conducted here at Chief Logan State Park.

Jason Dingess, an engineer with Patriot

Coal, was attending his second training session. Dingess said Patriot does much of its permit application work in-house. He began using the ePermitting process about a year ago, when he essentially taught himself.

"At first I didn't like it," Dingess said. "Now I like it. And I'm sure it

will improve. The first couple of months I did it, I learned a whole lot. Once I got the hang of it, it was easy to get used to. Everything is right there. It's a lot quicker. It takes half the time.

"Plus, you've got all the paper saving. It was amazing how much paper you went through the old way."

As with any change, Patriot Coal was reluctant to go all electronic with its permitting, "because it was something new," Dingess said.

"We thought there would be some problems with the water quality data but there haven't been any problems at all," he said.

Kristi Maynard, who

See **PERMIT**, Page 11

DEP October retirements



Earl Billingsley

Division of Air Quality

Date of hire: Nov. 16, 1994

Last day: Oct. 30, 2009

Billingsley says: "As a previous boss said upon his retirement, I am retiring with mixed emotions

— somewhere between happy and extreme ecstasy."

"Leaving is not pleasant, but the anticipation of moving on certainly is.

"I have had a great 15 years with the Division of Air Quality. What started out as a short stay, after a previous retirement, became a career that lasted nearly as long. I hired on at Air Quality during a time of expansion and was the 'old man' of the incoming group, and of those already here. In the early years, I was an inspector and when there was an opportunity, I was promoted into a supervisory role.

"I have been blessed to work with and for a great group of professionals. I truly believe they kept me young of heart and mind. I know they have had a great influence on me and I hope that in some small way I have had some influence in their lives.

"This second career at Air Quality has, in many ways, been an eye-opener. My previous jobs included project design, project installation and maintenance engineering in the chemical industry. Coming into the regulatory business was a very new experience. Taking action to enforce our environmental rules against the industry of which I had been a part caused conflicting feelings and was not always pleasant.

"It is my experience that those who work in industry, in general, intend to do no harm to the environment. However, their focus on the environment can become tempered by the limiting nature of rules, the pressure to make product and the pressure to maintain profitability. It is our jobs as regulators to help industry keep their treatment of the environment in focus and take action when they don't.

"Although I intend to enjoy my retirement, I will miss my work and the friends I have at DEP and especially Air Quality. I wish only the best for everyone at DEP and hope all can enjoy the career that I have enjoyed."

On the future: "The downside of retirement is the loss of daily interaction with the folks I have worked with for so long. The upside of this new phase of my life will be a slower pace with more time for grandchildren, more time for all those unfinished projects lying around the house and more time to use the camper and to travel."



Bill Brannon

Division of Water and Waste Management

Date of hire: Aug. 23, 1976

Last day: Oct. 30, 2009

Brannon says: "It is with a measure of regret, a modicum of trepidation, but an overwhelming sense of anticipation for the future that I will be retiring from

state government service as of Oct. 30, 2009.

"In my mind, at least, I have been a contributing member of the staff of the Division of Water and Waste Management, and its various iterations, for over 33 years. During that time, I have had the opportunity, and indeed in many cases, the honor to serve with a broad array of individuals who have truly been dedicated to protecting and enhancing the environment of the state. I hope in some way I have helped make a difference.

"Looking back, for my first 27 years, I, along with the rest of the Division of Water, was housed in what was considered to be the worst office building in the whole of DEP. While I have many fond memories of the people and times, the building itself had many problems. I guess what turned out to be the most memorable was that day in June, 2003 when we were washed out of our Greenbrier Street office.

"The weeks that followed were also memorable as the entire staff pulled together to move what was salvageable to our new Summers Street office and to clean out the mud and debris that was left. My office in particular was one of the hardest hit with just about everything I had, lost. I guess my new office in our current headquarters might have been some measure of retribution for that."

On the future: "The only real plans I have made for retirement, for now, is a move to Cincinnati where my wife's parents live. As parents age, it's a comfort for them and us to be near. I hope my wife enjoys many long years with them. I will be alongside, sometimes golfing, sometimes helping. I do intend to find some sort of work in my retirement years. Not too taxing or stressful. Maybe I'll be a greeter at Wal-Mart or a ranger at the golf course.

"Also, I've spent most of my career as the designated traveler for the Division. I've been from Virginia Beach to San Diego; from Montana to Texas; from Florida to Seattle — all for business-related functions. I plan to do a little traveling in retirement as well.

"In closing, I wish to note that the entire staff of the Department of Environmental Protection is a group of true professionals who know their jobs and are committed to performing them. I will miss the support and camaraderie I have enjoyed over the years. I count everyone I've worked with over the years as friends and I hope many consider me one as well. Thank you and thanks to everyone for a truly enjoyable career and life."



Carroll Cather

Division of Water and Waste Management

Date of hire: June 30, 1989

Last day: Oct. 30, 2009

Cather says: "I am retiring at the end of October and would like to thank all of the fine people within the Department of Environmental Protection and those

See RETIRE, Page 9

RETIRE

Continued from Page 8

fine people outside of the agency as well who have made my working years fly by. Thank you.

“From this point forward, I can only hope that my upcoming retirement years do not pass by as quickly as the past 20 working years have. One thing is for certain, as I settle into retirement, I am going to cherish the small pleasures of life, such as enjoying a cup of morning coffee without the extra-long commute, or setting the alarm with the knowledge that I can turn it off and go back to sleep.

“After a week or so of those kinds of indulgences, however, I will begin work on the many household projects that have *not been completed* because I have been using work as an excuse. Now I’ll either have to get busy or find another credible excuse (hard to do) for not completing those projects. Actually, the first week of November will find me in Buffalo, N.Y., working on a house.”

On the future: “Once all of the house projects are done and the youngest fledgling graduates from high school, my partner and I will live on a sailboat in the British Virgin Islands (and perhaps other parts of the Caribbean as well) each year from November through May. We will try to make the most of that phase of our lives. Once you are too feeble to sail, however, I have heard that you can spend life on a cruise ship for about the same price as a nursing home. I can hardly believe that but it sounds like it would be fun to try.

“Best wishes to you all, and again, thank you. May you have great dreams and live them.”



Phyllis Farley

Public Information Office
Date of hire: Nov. 16, 1988
Last day: Oct. 30, 2009

Farley says: “Amidst many comments such as ‘aren’t you excited?’ and ‘aren’t you lucky?’

from co-workers and friends when they hear that I am retiring, I inwardly withdraw.

“As the retiree, my feelings aren’t that clear-cut! Yes, some excitement, but also sadness enters into the picture as well. Twenty-one years of working with volunteers, co-workers and other agency folk has garnered many friends and a great pride in the work that has been accomplished jointly. I shall miss *the people* so very, very much!

“I and my counterparts were moved from Division of Natural Resources in 2005 to the Public Information Office of the Department of Environmental Protection. The scope of work for us is different from other DEP sections. We are non-regulatory, and trained to be service providers to all public and private sectors. The diversity of our service is awesome! I’ve loved working with West Virginia youth to learn about our environment, assisting a county group to establish a recycling program, coordinating stream cleanups with watershed association volunteers, and facilitating public meetings to engage citizens to become “anti-litter” warriors in their communities.

“The expertise of fellow state employees and their willingness to share their knowledge to reach common goals is impressive. I’ve enjoyed

the interaction with DNR and DEP employees as we’ve worked together on the aforementioned projects.

“My work ‘past’ will be haunting as my daily schedule changes — no early-morning winter driving, no jangling phone, no lengthy work days, no long trips to events. Hmmm, maybe my retirement is good!”

On the future: “So, how will my days be spent? Initially, I will be assisting my mother as she resettles in a new home and enjoying a more leisurely holiday season. Visits to my brother in Arkansas, to an aunt in Florida and to my son in Texas are on the horizon. And, of course, my self-generated home chores “Phyllis to-do list” are growing! My husband, the great gardener, will hopefully teach me his green-thumb skills so I may at last have a flower garden, or so I may help with his vegetable gardens. Oh, perhaps I’ll dust off my sewing machine and re-learn clothes-making!

“Oh, yes — on my list is a reminder to visit occasionally with DEP folks!”



Russell Keaton

Division of Mining and Reclamation
Date of hire: May 24, 1976
Last day: Oct. 30, 2009

Keaton says: “As I begin tying up loose ends in preparation for my retirement on Oct. 30, I find myself reflecting on 33 years worth of memorable experiences. A lot of things have happened since I started working for the Forestry Division of DNR after college.

“After a couple of years of mainly fighting forest fires in Logan County, I was fortunate enough to join the Reclamation Division as a Reclamation Inspector.

“During the next 30 years I was blessed to have worked with some of the most professional, dedicated, hard working and caring individuals. The environmental regulation of the mining industry has undergone major changes since 1979. It wasn’t easy, but I believe we have the best program in the nation and that’s due to the quality employees at the Department of Environmental Protection.

“We’ve been through good times and bad times, but through it all, I’ve always been supported by good people.”

On the future: “It’s now time for me to do something different. I’ve got an extensive ‘honey-do’ list from Susie, my wife, and I plan to spend more time with my family, church and friends.

“As I turn my duties over to someone else, I want to say thanks for the great memories.”

Jim Maurin

Division of Land Restoration
Date of hire: Nov. 5, 1979
Last day: Oct. 27, 2009



Charles Morris

Environmental Enforcement
Date of hire: Oct. 1, 1982
Last day: Oct. 20, 2009

Morris says: “After 27 years I’m retiring. Thanks to all for some

See RETIRE, Page 10

RETIRE

Continued from Page 9

great memories and for all of your support. I will miss everyone.”

On the future: “I’m thinking about doing some traveling and simply enjoying life. Also, I’m considering taking up writing. I have always thought I’d like to write a novel but I’ve never started because I couldn’t think of anything to write about. I might be thinking about that until I die.

“My wife is a middle school teacher in Barboursville and she plans to retire after this school year, so she’s going to be joining me in retirement next year.”



Bill Simmons

Division of Mining and Reclamation

Date of hire: Nov. 28, 1977

Last day: Oct. 16, 2009

Simmons says: “Since my retirement on Oct. 16, I have been at my camp on the Greenbrier River in Pocahontas County bow hunting and hiking. I must admit that seeing the sun rise over the mountains is much more appealing than the rush-hour traffic in the Kanawha Valley.

“However, the last 32 years working for the various agencies that have become the DEP were very satisfying with a sense of accomplishment in protecting the environment.

“I started working for the DNR as a forest ranger, fighting forest fires in Logan County, and transferred to the Division of Mining and Reclamation in 1979.

“In those days, the Forestry Division and the Division of Mining and Reclamation shared a trailer near Chief Logan State Park with the three members of the Forestry personnel in one room and Reclamation’s two-person staff in the other. The Logan office is now staffed by 60 people.

“Many people who have worked in the Logan office are scattered throughout the DEP state-wide in the various divisions and offices. I transferred to the St. Albans field office in 1981 and moved to South Charleston. I met Linda at a Christmas party in 1984. The mistletoe I picked at a mine site the day before the party led to our marriage on Valentine’s Day in 1986.

“The transfer also gave me the opportunity to meet a lot of the Charleston staff in Mining and Water Resources while we played in the golf and softball leagues. I returned to work in Logan in 1990 when the Kanawha Valley field office was closed.

“Working in the Division of Mining and Recla-

mation was never boring. Frustrating sometimes, but never ever boring with many battles fought along the way. Good luck to all of you in the challenges ahead.”

On the future: “I plan to enjoy the outdoors, umpire baseball games, hunt and fish with Will and my three brothers and open a canoe and kayak livery in the spring. Working for the DEP has been full of wonderful learning experiences including my last weeks of work.”



Mary Thornsbery

Division of Mining and Reclamation

Date of hire: Aug. 5, 1986

Last day: Oct. 15, 2009

Thornsbery says: “As I come to the end of a chapter in my life, I am filled with apprehension, joy and sadness. I have been in the Department of Environmental Protection’s Oak Hill office for only a short two years and 10 months, but I can truly say that it has been the best work experience of my life.

“The people here are so good and they actually care about you as a person and care about what is going on in your life. I will never forget them. If it had not been for Sue Cassell and Betty Hall, I do not know what would have become of me. I will never ever forget their friendship and the friendship of all the people at the DEP.

“I want to especially take this opportunity to extend my greatest heartfelt thanks to Keith Porterfield for hiring me and allowing me to come back to work at the DEP. Thank you does not even begin to express my gratitude. He is my supervisor, but he is also my friend. I hope that our paths will cross again.”

On the future: “My future plans are to go to our camp in Pocahontas County for the month of November.

“My youngest daughter will have our first grandson near Christmas this year. I hope to be able to stay with her as long as she needs me. I will now be able to attend my granddaughters’ soccer games.

“My husband and I have always wanted to go to Yellowstone Park and then to Alaska. If it is God’s will and our health continues to be good, we plan to do that next summer. My children have made many plans for me and I hope to be able to do all of them.

“If any of you are ever in Pocahontas County (second camp back on the right on Luster Shrader Road) or in Jolo (who would ever come to Jolo?) I hope that you will come by to say hello.

“My door will always be open (let me know ahead of time and lots of food will be on the table). Goodbye and so long for now to all of my dear friends.”

Make It Shine Clean Community awards granted

The West Virginia Make It Shine Program recently announced its six winners of Make It Shine Clean Community awards.

The awards are given annually to municipali-

ties across the state which go above and beyond in their efforts to beautify and clean up their respective communities.

Each municipality’s application is judged in

several categories, including cleanup, recycling, youth participation and beautification.

This year’s winners are: the City of Ranson; the City of Bluefield; the City of Dunbar; the Vil-

lage of Beech Bottom; the Town of Fayetteville; and the Town of West Union. Each winner will receive two road signs designating their municipalities as clean communities.

Employees of the month



September Employee of the Month, Laura Adkins, receives her award from Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman. Adkins works in the Office of Oil and Gas.



October Employee of the Month Megan Grose receives her award from Huffman. Grose works in the Division of Water and Waste Management.

September, October winners announced

September Employee of the Month

■ Laura Adkins, environmental technician, OOG, Charleston. Adkins is extremely knowledgeable in the oil and gas field and office activities. She currently reviews oil and gas well permits for completeness and technical adequacy to ensure protection of ground water, coal and other natural resources. She issues permits in a timely manner and strives to keep her workload current. She also deals with the public and industry in a professional manner and has the ability to quickly assess situations and get them re-

solved independently. Huffman: "Laura is punctual and manages her time very effectively. Without hesitation or complaint she continues to complete her tasks over and above what is expected of her. "She has a great attitude and is an asset to the staff."

"She has a great attitude and is an asset to the staff."

October Employee of the Month

■ Megan Grose, environmental resource specialist, DWWM, Charleston. Grose has been given several tasks over the past few months including to help develop the Stormwater Team's policy on Tier 3 im-

See WINNERS, Page 12

Farley noted for work in litter program

October retiree Phyllis Farley was honored as the Adopt-A-Highway "Coordinator of the Decade" for her efforts with the DEP's statewide cleanup program.

Farley, whose last day with the DEP's Public Information Office in Oak Hill was Oct.



Farley

30, helped establish the Adopt-A-Highway litter cleanup program in the late 1980s. She continued to be instrumental in its success until her retirement.

"This is the first time we've given this award," said Anna Shahan, Adopt-A-Highway coordinator.

"We wanted to give this to Phyllis because she has been an exemplary coordinator," Shahan said. "She has gone above and beyond what she was required to do.

"She started with this program when it began. She was instrumental in helping set policy and figuring out how to do things."

Farley received her award on Oct. 19 during the 2009 Educational Conference on Litter Control and Solid Waste Management at the Waterfront Place Hotel in Morgantown.

PERMIT

Continued from Page 7

works for Compliance Monitoring Labs in Chapmanville and writes permit applications for coal companies, has been using electronic permitting for about a year. The Logan training class was her first.

"The first time I did it I thought, 'Oh my gosh.' But I worked out all the kinks and now I can breeze through it," Maynard said. "It makes it a whole lot easier. There is so much time saved.

"I could do an entire permit in a half a day if I had all the information in front of me. The old way it would take several days."

The DEP's Halstead pointed out that industry isn't the only sector benefitting from her agency's high-tech approach to permit applications. It's making the DMR's job much more manageable, as well.

"ePermitting tries to make it easier, not just for those wanting permits, but for DEP people, too."



This photo, taken by Rebecca Holmes, will be on the cover of the 2010 Roadsides in Bloom calendar, due out this month.

Promoting our beauty

Michigan native lands calendar cover

By Tom Aluise

Rebecca Holmes isn't a native West Virginian but she's head over heels in love with the state's natural beauty.

The Pocahontas County resident shows her affection for the Mountain State in a unique way.

"Mostly what I do is go around and take photographs for you guys," said Holmes, joking about her passion for taking pictures of West Virginia wildflowers and entering her photos in the Department of Environmental Protection's annual Operation Wild-

"It's a hobby of mine to promote West Virginia and the beauty of it — the unspoiled look. It's such a gorgeous place."

Rebecca Holmes



flower "Roadsides in Bloom" calendar contest.

The contest also is sponsored by the state Department of Transportation.

Holmes, 68, submitted three photos this year and, for the first

every year and quite frequently is a winner, but she's never gotten the cover," said Anna Shahan, coordinator of the DEP's Adopt-A-Highway program. "That's her goal every year."

Holmes, a Michigan native who taught high school biology for 10 years and worked 40 years in international health in South America, moved to West Virginia 11 years ago. She was immediately mesmerized by the Mountain State's charm and experienced a calling to photograph its environment.

time, one of her shots was selected to serve as the 2010 calendar's cover. Twelve other contestants will have their pictures displayed throughout the calendar. "She (Holmes) enters

See BEAUTY, Page 14

WINNERS

Continued from Page 11

plementation; to develop guidance for Qualifying Local Programs; and to develop a tracking

system for the Stormwater Team, allowing it to comply with TMDL cap loading assigned by the Watershed Assessment Section.

Huffman: "Megan's computer and GIS skills have saved the

Stormwater Team a considerable amount of money by allowing us to complete the task in house.

"Her work-related service is above and beyond what is expected."



Department of Environmental Protection diver John King specializes in dive photography and keeps a photo log of activities.

DEP dive team has many tasks

By Colleen O'Neill

The Department of Environmental Protection is equipped to protect the land, air, and even the water.

It has inspectors who safeguard all three. It has a land program to deal with things such as illegal dumping of trash. It has a section that deals with air emissions and monitors and regulates the daily release of pollutants into the air.

It has a unit that addresses watersheds, from their environmental health, to assisting the citizen groups formed to help nurture and protect those watersheds.

One of the weapons contained in the DEP's environmental arsenal is the dive team. The team consists of eight members, four divers and four support staff, all of whom work in the Division of Water and Waste Management.

The divers are Brad Swiger, who is captain, Dave Chaney, Doug



The DEP's dive team consists of divers and support staff. Members of the dive team, from left, are Dave Chaney, Tim Andrew, John King, Eric Philyaw, Doug Wood and Debbie Keener. All of the divers are trained to different levels of expertise and continue their training annually.

Wood and John King. The support staff includes Debbie Keener, Tim Andrew, Eric Philyaw and Newt Harman.

"All of the divers are trained to different levels of expertise and we all continue our training each year with a variety

of skill sets, whether it is working on our communication skills, or more challenging events such as orienteering underwater in low visibility conditions," Swiger said.

"Each dive is a challenge for multiple reasons, such as weather, current or altitude, and

we have committed to making several dives per year if only for practice and team building," Swiger said. "We also maintain CPR and first aid, and recently began swim tests to measure our strengths and iden-

See DIVE, Page 16

BEAUTY

Continued from Page 12

“It’s a hobby of mine to promote West Virginia and the beauty of it — the unspoiled look. It’s such a gorgeous place,” said Holmes, who also likes to hike and bird watch.

“I’m very much an environmentalist,” Holmes said.

“I’ve done a lot of work in the environment.”

Holmes, who shoots most of her photos around her home near Cass in Pocahontas County, said she’s thankful for the opportunity to display her pictures in the “Roadsides in Bloom” calendar.

“I’m glad we have the chance to show rural

West Virginia and the beauty of it,” Holmes said. “I like for people to enjoy the unscarred countryside.”

The “Roadsides in Bloom” calendar is free to the public and should be available by mid-November, Shahan said.

Shahan said 5,000 copies were made for the calendar’s inaugural release eight years ago.

“They were gone in two weeks,” she said.

Now, 20,000 copies are made each year.

West Virginia’s Operation Wildflower beautification program is a joint effort between the DEP and the state’s Division of Highways. It includes more than 250 acres of wildflowers grown on West Virginia’s roads.

DEP trio completes marathon

Three Department of Environmental Protection workers successfully completed the Nationwide Better Health Columbus Marathon on Oct. 18.

Division of Air Quality employees Rich Boehm, James Robertson and Josh Woody ran the 26.2-mile race through the

streets of Columbus, Ohio.

Boehm finished in 3 hours, 54 minutes, 9 seconds. Robertson’s time was 4:27:11, while Woody completed the course in 5:31:54.

Over 4,000 runners finished the marathon, which started in near-freezing temperatures.

Reaching out



Jennifer DuPree, Southern Basin coordinator for the Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Water and Waste Management, works with fifth-graders during the National Park Service’s annual Water Festival at Grandview National Park.

CALL

Continued from Page 6

items such as used oil, liquid poisons, solid poisons, solid mercury compounds, corrosive liquids and contaminated flood materials.

The hazardous waste storage pad is located in a highly secure area within the always-locked gates of the Emergency Response headquarters.

Joins said his office also collects abandoned drums from the field, a task that normally picks up when the economy is down and people don’t have the money to properly dispose of waste. Some drums turn out to be empty, or simply filled with water.

Others are pots of poison stew.

“We’ll characterize them the best we can in the field,” Joins said. “Then, we’ll bring them back here. We can do more analyzing here. We don’t trust the label.”

Said Smith, “What I wanted to do when I finished graduate work was analytical chemistry and that has kind of continued here.”

Dorsey said one storage drum his unit retrieved from Putnam County began to swell the next day as it was sitting on the storage pad.

“It turned out to be corn mash they were using to make liquor,” Dorsey said. “We had to vent it.”

Hazardous materials on the storage pad have four layers of containment.

“It is as safe as we can make it,” Dorsey said. “And we’re real careful about putting things out there that might have an adverse effect on other things out there.”

But what about the safety of the Emergency Response team?

One chemical-reaction-gone-wrong in the field or one exposure to a hazardous material could result in serious injury.

“I’m a man who lives on the edge of danger,” Dorsey said with a laugh.

“Really, you can’t forget about the dangers,” he added with more seriousness. “If you do, you’ll get hurt. You do what you can to minimize the risks and then take the risks that are left.”

Joins said it should be obvious that he likes his job. He’s been doing it for 18 years.

“It’s always something different,” he said. “It’s always something interesting. You never know what you’re going to run into.

“As far as the element of danger, I realize it’s there but you also know you have the equipment to take care of those issues. I look at the risks as being minor.”

NEW ADDITIONS

Recent DEP hires:

- Harry Dunmire, DMR, Oct. 1
- Mathias Hickman, DWWM, Oct. 1
- Devin Smith, DLR, Oct. 13
- James Connolly, AML, Oct. 16
- Nicolas Pahoundis, YEP, Oct. 16



Participants attach bottle caps to a work of art in progress. The exercise, called “recycle and reuse” making environmental art, was part of a session during the Litter Control and Solid Waste Management Conference.

Conference snapshots

The 2009 Educational Conference on Litter Control and Solid Waste Management took place Oct. 18-20 at the Waterfront Place Hotel in Morgantown. The event was sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection and the Association of West Virginia Solid Waste Authorities.

The conference included a field trip, speakers, exhibitors, general and breakout sessions and training classes. Sessions included topics such as maximizing recycling revenue; resources for community beautification; needs assessment grant writing; and REAP recycling and E-cycling grant rules. DEP Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman spoke during the banquet and awards presentation.

■ See story page 7 ■



REAP staffers (from left) Chris Cartwright, Chuck Joseph and Greg Roteman the REAP display table during the conference.



REAP Chief Danny Haught (second from left) and Mark Manchin presented Environmental Excellence Awards to several counties during the conference.



Left, the DEP's Theodora Plumley and Travis Cooper present the Clean County Award to Wayne Eads, of Wyoming County. DEP's Anna Shahan, left, recognizes Jeanie Ware as Adopt-A-Highway Coordinator of the Year.

DIVE

Continued from Page 13

tify our weakness.”

The combined total of diving experience for the four divers exceeds 90 years.

Chaney and Swiger each have more than 30 years, while Wood has more than 20 years experience. King, as the newest team member, has six years of experience.

The team conducts dives for a variety of reasons including identification and confirmation of coal tar in rivers; assistance with dam repair and dam inspections; assistance with mussel surveys; and the investigation of submerged discharges, along with identification of associated problems.

The support staff assists divers by helping them in and out of their gear; operating communications equipment, which helps the divers stay in touch with the boat as well as each other; and monitoring the river.

“Everyone works very well together and strives for safety, while maintaining a sense of camaraderie,” said Keener who’s not only the boat’s captain but also serves as a record-keeper and coordinator. Keener can get the DEP tug boat wherever it is needed.

Here is a closer look



Tim Andrew, a member of the dive team’s support staff, maintains radio contact with the divers. Below, the DEP’s environmental enforcement boat is captained by Debbie Keener.



at the divers:

■ Doug Wood — Wood handles the safety planning on a dive. Each dive starts with a dive plan in which goals and

objectives are clearly identified and the phone numbers and locations of emergency services are recorded. A conference between the divers is conducted prior to

diving to discuss the plan.

Wood is an experienced diver who understands the importance of pre-dive preparation and safety awareness. He has been a member of the team since its inception.

■ David Chaney — Chaney maintains the inventory list, reminding divers of equipment checks and inspections. He also tracks the location of equipment. He remains up to date with new equipment and gear, diving trends and those “little” things that make diving easier.

Chaney received his certification in SCUBA in 1974 and has been diving ever since.

■ John King — King handles the dive photography.

He has been instrumental with initiating and contacting other dive teams and assisting with coordination when the team’s help is sought.

King maintains a photo log of the dives and a brief history of the team’s activities. He also assists on survey and investigation projects.

■ Brad Swiger — As the team’s captain, Swiger coordinates and schedules dives and is involved in the purchasing of dive gear. Swiger has his Master Diver certification.

SUCCESS

Continued from Page 7

During one general session of the conference called “Best Practices” representatives of solid waste authorities from nine West Virginia counties were given time to talk about their achievements, as well as what they were doing well.

The DEP’s Sandy Rogers helped moderate the event.

John Reed from the Wood County Solid Waste Authority said creating a recycling program to help pay for updates to a local ball field paid off in more ways than one.

“The kids got real enthused about it,” Reed said. “They went back to their schools and their homes and got their parents to collect bottles.”

Randall Patton, of the McDowell County Solid Waste Authority, said local law enforcement has promised its support in the battle against litter.

“We have the magistrate working with us and we’ve adopted an anti-burn notice,” Patton said. “If litter officers find a burn pile, it’s an automatic ticket.”

Last year, the county staged its first “Make McDowell County Proud Day” and attracted 400

volunteers on a Saturday. They picked up 1,500 bags of trash, Patton said.

Richard Barnett, of the Harrison County Solid Waste Authority, said his county sponsored a one-day collection event and took in 91,000 pounds of electronics, 6,500 tires and 20,000 pounds of rims.

The agency also focused on cutting down on the number of unused medications that end up in local waterways and collected 115 pounds of pills.

Laura Stille, of the Monongalia County Solid Waste Authority, said her county recognizes Earth

Day for the entire month of April.

“We started having an environmental event every Saturday in April,” Stille said.

“We have E-cycling, an open house at our recycling center and an Earth Day 5-K.”

Upshur County involves its kids in its recycling efforts, said Sandy McClure-Malcolm, of the county’s Solid Waste Authority.

“We sponsor field trips to the recycling center and show them old materials waiting to be processed,” McClure-Malcolm said. “We take about 400 kids a year to the center.”

PIPELINE

Continued from Page 4

ties.

Sharon Walden, a Gary native and community development leader in McDowell County, said she was once asked by a curious out-of-state visitor about the abundance of straight pipes in local streams.

“He asked what they were,” Walden said. “When I told him, he said, ‘My God, in the United States of America?’”

Located about six miles north of Northfork, Ashland was settled over 100 years ago when entrepreneurs from Ashland, Pa., opened the lucrative coal seams in the area. The community took a heavy blow in 1979 when the mines shut down for good but has benefitted economically of late from the popular Hatfield-McCoy Trail System and the recent development of the Ashland Resort campground just a mile up the road.

ATV and motorcycle riders can access the Hatfield-McCoy Trail from the campground, which features cabins, cottages and lodges, as well as RV and tent sites.

Another tourist stop in Ashland is the old coal company store that has been renovated into the quaint Ashland Company Store. It includes a restaurant, as well as homemade crafts, furniture and food items. Close to \$1 million was invested in the project.

“The next big tourist attraction here is going to be trout fishing after we get the stream cleaned up,” Persiani said. “That’s going to be another tremendous economic value for us. Right now, 80 to 85 percent of our visitors are from out of state. Everyone I talk to loves coming here and I think that has a lot to do with the fact that we’re trying to clean up the community. And they love the moun-



A tour group, including the DEP’s Teresa Koon, far right, and Jennifer DuPree, left, visit the wetland cells that are part of the Ashland wastewater treatment system.

tains, just like we do. We have a lot of great opportunities around here.”

None of which will reach their full potential unless steps to protect McDowell County’s natural resources continue.

The foundation for those important measures was laid following devastating floods in 2001 and 2002. After rising creek water contaminated wells with raw sewage, Ashland residents and other county leaders decided to take action.

“The people here wanted to start working on something,” said the DEP’s Teresa Koon, who, along with co-worker Alvan Gale and the Canaan Valley Institute, has been involved with the Ashland project since its inception. “They put together a plan for the county and state calling for different funding. They documented that their streams had water quality problems. They produced a watershed plan for the whole area.”

The Wastewater Treatment Coalition of McDowell County was formed in 2003 with a simple goal: to provide effective wastewater treatment systems to as many homes as possible in the county and to do it cost effectively, both from a construction and



Top, engineer Mark Whittaker demonstrates some of the wetlands technology to the DEP’s Alvan Gale, center, and the EPA’s Leo Essentier and Fred Suffian. Bottom, the Ashland project was made possible through the contributions of many.

operation standpoint.

In 2005, the Coalition, with the help of the DEP and others, released its wastewater treatment plan for the entire county. The plan highlighted McDowell’s impaired streams, its substandard wastewater treatment options and infrastructure and outlined ideas for addressing sewage issues.

It also included the

shocking statistic that 67 percent, or approximately 7,480 households in the county lacked adequate wastewater treatment. Only 25 percent of the county’s households were being served by McDowell’s four municipal treatment plants.

The plan went on to point out that the aver-

See PIPELINE, Page 18

PIPELINE

Continued from Page 17

age American flushes the toilet five times per day.

In McDowell County, that translates to approximately 314,283 gallons of untreated effluent disposed daily into the county's streams.

Ashland, which sits on the banks of Windmill Gap Creek at the headwaters of the North Fork of Elkhorn Creek, was a 100-year contributor to the problem. Fecal coliform counts in the creek were substantially higher than state standards.

It was the perfect place, the Coalition decided, to begin the long journey toward adequate sewage treatment for all households in the county. Ground was officially broken on the \$580,000 Ashland Community wastewater treatment project on Jan. 12, 2009, although work had already begun.

On Oct. 28 — the same day representatives from the DEP and U.S. EPA visited Ashland to inspect and learn more about the operation — Persiani flipped the switch not only on the system's pumps, but on a new era in Ashland history.

"This is going to benefit everybody downstream, all the way to the ocean," Persiani said.

The decentralized cluster system at Ashland uses underground household septic tanks as the primary treatment vessels before pumping the sewage to an adjacent mountaintop. There, it's passively treated in wetland cells before gravity returns the effluent to a drainfield below.

The system is designed to address wastewater issues in narrow stream valleys, where space for conventional septic systems is limited.

Canaan Valley Institute came up with the



The wastewater treatment system's three wetland cells are located on top of a mountain adjacent to the community of Ashland. From here, water will flow down to a drainfield.

concept for the Ashland project and Stafford Engineering Consultants engineered the job, along with Versa-Con Inc.

"This particular system is one of a kind in West Virginia," Persiani said. "If it works like it's supposed to, I'm thinking there will be a lot to follow."

The whole Ashland project — from start to finish — in fact, is worth following. It offers the perfect model for how a community can work together, as well as with outside agencies, to educate itself on an issue and then show a willingness to accept change.

"These are some pretty amazing people ... the fact that they stuck with this project," said Koon, adding that without 100 percent participation from Ashland residents, a permit could not have been issued for the system.

"Every resident had to sign that they were willing to connect to the system," Koon said.

"One of the critical things is we had 100 percent buy-in from the community," Walden said. "There was an educational process involved and it remains an ongoing thing. You know, a straight pipe is free and there is not a lot of maintenance. A lot of people said, 'Why should I do it when a lot of people down the road aren't doing it?' It has to start

somewhere."

Each household in Ashland will pay \$27 per month to the Ashland Community Utilities for wastewater treatment.

Persiani said that won't be easy for all.

"The main thing is that everybody is proud that we actually own this system and that we got involved and did our part to help the environment," Persiani said. "It might not seem like a big thing, but it really is for us."

"It's just a great example of what a community can do with a lot of great people, a lot of great support and a lot of help from the DEP," Walden said.

"I think we're making a difference. We're not building a huge subdivision, but you have to build one septic at a time. We're so proud of what we've done."

The Ashland project was funded through a variety of sources, including state and federal dollars, as well as foundation grants and private donations.

The West Virginia Ministry of Advocacy and Work Camps provided volunteer labor valued at \$35,000 to dig ditches for the drainfield.

"It's an exciting project," said Jennifer DuPree, Southern Basin coordinator for the DEP. "It's been a good example for other watershed

groups."

Koon hopes the momentum from Ashland's success continues as county and state officials work their way downstream on their mission to improve wastewater treatment throughout the county.

"For homes that can go on individual septic systems, we're working with those people to correct their problems," Koon said.

"Where we can put a septic system in, we're going to help do that for a seven-mile stretch downstream."

About eight months ago, the DEP's DuPree and others began going door-to-door downstream from Ashland, encouraging residents who have no wastewater treatment to take advantage of government-sponsored low-interest loans to install individual septic systems.

"We hope to have 15 systems in by the end of next September," DuPree said. "We have a 319 (Clean Water Act) grant to put in 25 systems."

DuPree said most people she visited wanted to move forward with efforts to clean up their streams.

"We told them we just want to see this creek swimmable for your kids and for you to feel safe about living along the creek," DuPree said. "No one slammed a door in our face."