



# WEST VIRGINIA RIVERS

3501 MacCorkle Ave. SE #129  
Charleston, WV 25304-1419

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# HEADWATERS

*Conserving and Restoring West Virginia's  
Exceptional Rivers and Streams*

Summer 2019

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**Rhea Mitchell**



01

## Safe Water for West Virginia

Our Safe Water programs are kicking into high gear this summer. Multiple projects in the Eastern Panhandle, a water festival in Buckhannon and a community park in Marlinton are bringing community members together for increased drinking water protections. Each community has its own specific needs to better protect drinking water and our Safe Water projects are diverse. Community members and partners drive the development of our programming, whether it's working with farmers to adopt practices to protect headwater streams, or planting trees in riparian areas.

But there is one universal threat to drinking water, and it might be a surprising one. It's stormwater runoff. It sounds innocuous, but stormwater runoff poses a serious threat to drinking water. It starts with problems like washed-out driveways, flooded parking lots, and standing water on roads. Where does all that water go? It flows directly into our water supplies carrying chemicals and pollution with it like lawn fertilizers, automotive fluids, sediment, and animal waste.

To help community groups and watershed organizations across the state tackle stormwater runoff, we developed a toolkit called Stormwater and You. The toolkit provides groups with resources, like a brochure, a slideshow, and a social media plan, to develop a campaign to help their community address runoff. You can find the toolkit here: [WVRIVERS.ORG/STORMWATER](http://WVRIVERS.ORG/STORMWATER)

### WV Rivers

3501 MacCorkle Ave. SE #129

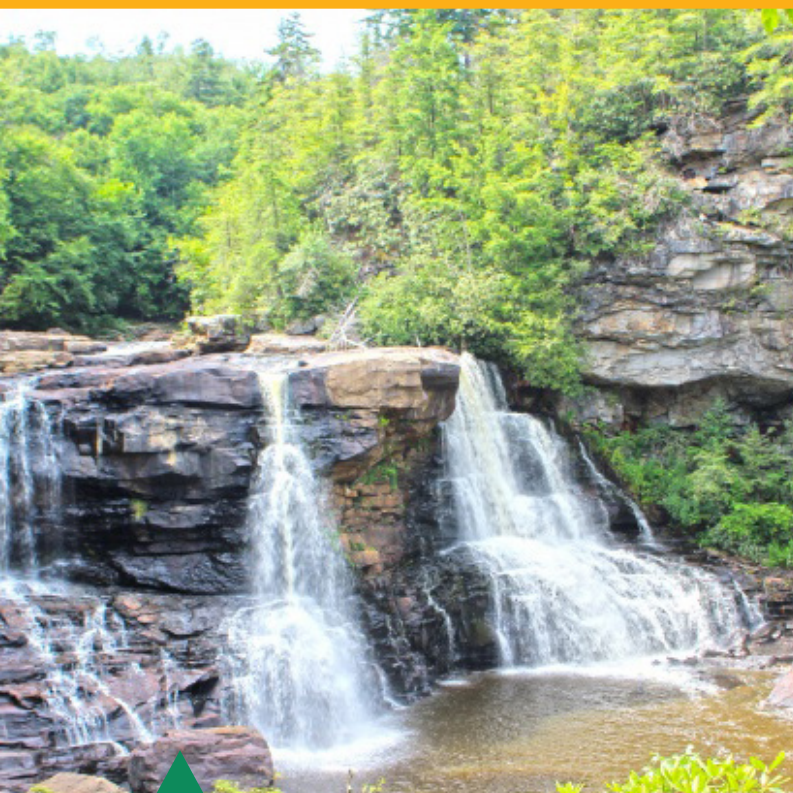
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[wvrivers@wvrivers.org](mailto:wvrivers@wvrivers.org)

Find us on Facebook and follow us

on Twitter: @OurWVRivers



**Yes!** I want to help West Virginia Rivers protect our streams for recreation, wildlife and for our health and enjoyment.

I'd like to donate:

☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of gift: ☐ One time ☐ Monthly

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You can also donate online at [WVRivers.org](http://WVRivers.org).

**Conserving and Restoring West Virginia's  
Exceptional Rivers and Streams**



02 Pipeline Companies Gear Up to Cross Streams  
Monitor Construction from Your Computer



Court actions have halted unlawful stream crossings for the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines for now, but the companies are voicing their confidence that legal challenges will be resolved in their favor so that construction across streams will begin this Fall. These two pipelines alone involve 513 stream crossings, adding to widespread risk to our waters.

Regulatory agencies are already struggling to keep up with the enforcement responsibilities. With about five inspectors for the whole state, WVDEP can't adequately respond to the water quality violations we know are coming.

Through our partnership with Trout Unlimited we've been training volunteers to monitor streams in the line of fire of natural gas development since 2012. Last year, we piloted an innovative visual assessment program that empowers volunteers to visually inspect pipelines for water quality impacts without any equipment beyond their own

two eyes. Volunteers watch an online training video and report problems to WV Rivers. We then take those complaints to WVDEP and hold them accountable for resolving the problems.

Now, we're taking our visual assessment program one step further. We've partnered with two regional programs—Pipeline CSI to monitor the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and Mountain Valley Watch for the Mountain Valley Pipeline—to make it even easier for volunteers to detect problems. Both programs use online interactive mapping systems to allow volunteers to identify pollution by viewing aerial photography. Like our visual assessment program, volunteers are trained via online videos. Anyone with an internet connection can participate in the program, making it even easier for folks to be guardians of their waters.

To learn more and watch the training videos go here: [WVRIVERS.ORG/PIPELINEVISUAL](http://WVRIVERS.ORG/PIPELINEVISUAL)

03 Public Lands Get a Boost From Congress

The West Virginians for Public Lands Alliance, coordinated by WV Rivers, saw years of advocacy efforts come to fruition this Spring when Congress passed one of the largest pro-public lands packages in decades, including permanent reauthorization of Land and Water Conservation Fund—one of our nation's most successful conservation programs. West Virginia's entire congressional delegation voted in favor of the bill. Senators Manchin and Capito led the bipartisan effort to pass the bill in the Senate. Now, Senator Manchin is

working to make sure the program is fully funded. He's introduced a new bipartisan bill that would appropriate \$900 million in annual funding from off-shore oil and gas royalties to LWCF.

LWCF is an important program for West Virginia, to date the state has received \$241 million from LWCF for conservation and recreation projects in 54 of our 55 counties. Learn more about LWCF here: [WVRIVERS.ORG/OUR-PROGRAMS/PUBLIC-LANDS/ISSUES](http://WVRIVERS.ORG/OUR-PROGRAMS/PUBLIC-LANDS/ISSUES)

04 Water Quality Standards  
WV Rivers Keeps the Focus on Science



The League of Women Voters of West Virginia presented WV Rivers with a donation to the Science Fund during their statewide convention.

Many of you have been involved in our efforts to update human health protections in WV's water quality standards. Because the WV Legislature decided to delay the updates, so that the chemical industry can do their own studies, we need your help to make sure decision-makers hear the science behind protective water quality standards, not just hear baseless claims from industrial polluters!

We are on our way to raising the money needed to bring forward sound-science that tells us the pollution limits needed to avoid unsafe exposure to toxins and cancer-causing chemicals in our water. But we need your help. Make a tax-deductible donation to WV Rivers Science Fund using the enclosed envelope or online at [WVRIVERS.ORG](http://WVRIVERS.ORG).

So far, with your donations, we've been able to hire two scientists to help us gain an in-depth technical understanding of how limits are calculated based on things like cancer risks, body weight, and fish/water consumption.

Now, we're attending public meetings and doing our own analysis of the industry-backed studies. This work is expensive. Chemical manufacturers aren't sparing any expenses to convince lawmakers to keep the status quo or even weaken our water quality standards. Join WV Rivers now. Together, we can ensure decision-makers hear the facts about our water protections.

05 Headwater Streams and Wetlands Could Lose Federal Protections

In the latest attempt by the Trump Administration to rollback environmental protections, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to redefine an important part of the Clean Water Act, that protects headwater streams and wetlands. Known as the "clean water rule" or "waters of the United States" it determines what waterbodies are eligible for protection under the Clean Water Act.

As a headwater state, this loss of protections would be especially devastating. Streams that do not flow year-round or that depend on snowmelt or rain would lose protections and regulatory oversight. Wetlands that don't touch or flow into a larger lake or river could be drained and filled without a permit. The EPA estimates that over 1 million West Virginians depend on drinking water that comes from areas containing waters that could lose Clean Water Act protections. We're still awaiting EPA's final decision.

06 Doing Even More for Our Rivers



WV Rivers' staff members from left to right: Rhea Mitchell, Autumn Crowe, Myia Welsh, Tanner Haid, Kathleen Tyner, and Angie Rosser.

It's been a spring of change at WV Rivers! We added three staff members to better serve West Virginia's rivers and streams. Myia Welsh joined the team in January as our program director. In May, we added Tanner Haid as our first field coordinator, expanding our mission to the Eastern Panhandle; and Rhea Mitchell to serve our public lands coordinator, she's helping to keep our public lands wild & wonderful. Get to know Myia, Tanner, Rhea and the rest of the WV team at [WVRIVERS.ORG/ABOUT/STAFF](http://WVRIVERS.ORG/ABOUT/STAFF).

With a larger team, we're able to tackle more issues, like climate change. Reducing our impact on the environment is something WV Rivers takes seriously. This edition of Headwaters is printed on recycled paper and its shorter length reduces waste. After you've read Headwaters, give it to a friend or recycle it to keep it out of our landfills.