



## OSM/VISTA Upper Guyandotte River Watershed, WV

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# UGWA

Deep in the Appalachian Mountains of Southern West Virginia lies beautiful but distraught Wyoming County. This dynamic area is home to an intricate series of rivers and streams that create a diverse watershed. However, from Twin Falls State Park down through the city of Mullens, recent floods have not only devastated the economic structure, but have also devastated the pristine beauty and pure quality of the Guyandotte River and its rivulet's terrain. These floods have also threatened the health and livelihood of the county's inhabitants, including human life as well as flora and fauna. In the winter of 2002, Wyoming county citizens decided to take action. To protect their health, their home, and their environment, the Upper Guyandotte Watershed Association (UGWA) was formed. These community activists could no longer tolerate polluted waterways caused by the flood devastation, so they created the UGWA to restore healthy waterways for all citizens to use and enjoy, and to protect the wildlife that depend on the rivers and streams for survival. West Virginians are known for their fierce pride of heritage, and so the UGWA strives to help local citizens embrace and preserve the legacy of their watershed.

### What we do...

**Physical Testing**- Pollution can be detected through simple observation and water analysis. Flow rate, water temperature, water color, and smell are some of the methods used in the process of physical testing.

**Chemical Testing**- Certified laboratories are used to examine and identify different types of metals and other chemicals in the water samples taken from various aquatic trouble spots throughout the watershed.

**Biological Testing**- Benthic Macroinvertebrates (visible animals without backbones) are monitored to determine the quality and the health of the water because different organisms can endure different levels of pollution.

### **Who we are...**

The Upper Guyandotte Watershed Association is comprised of a diverse group of citizens. Officially started in December of 2002, the need for an organized watershed effort had been unavoidable. In association with the Rural Appalachian Improvement League (RAIL), an OSM/VISTA was requested to facilitate the development of a watershed association. Meetings, water analysis, and environmental education have been initiated. To date, the OSM/VISTA has facilitated biological testing training, chemical examination, mapping projects, and watershed education efforts in local schools. Attendees of meetings include local schoolteachers, city council members, reporters, coal miners, local business owners and retired citizens. As a direct result of local media coverage, community groups such as Girl Scouts and 4-H organizations have expressed interest in getting involved.

OSM/VISTA Suzi Zakowski came to us in the fall of 2002. During her term of service, she was instrumental in researching and writing grants, preparing the watershed association for sustainability, and working with important community contacts to develop an overall long- term plan for the watershed. Correspondence with local, state and national factions was a large and important part of her workday as well as local community involvement. In addition, some stakeholders in the watershed association are currently trying to start a Trout Unlimited chapter in the area, and they looked to her as a knowledgeable source for biological and chemical testing methods. She also worked with Stream Partners, Common Council Foundation, WVDNR, WVDEP, Ohio DNR, EPA, NALGEP, OSM, Appalachian Laboratories, City of Mullens, Wyoming County EDA, Eramet, Twin Falls State Park and Wyoming County Board of Education. The organization that sponsored Suzi (our OSM/VISTA) is the RAIL non-profit organization based in Mullens, WV.

Marion Nolly, Treasurer, Millicent Smith, Secretary

### **About RAIL....**



The Rural Appalachian Improvement League, is a non-profit organization established in Mullens, WV, in May, 2001. After a flood in the summer of 2001, RAIL was able to acquire the old Mullens' elementary school and rename it "The Mullens Opportunity Center." The building is presently a base for community activities, meetings, and cultural events. It also houses several small businesses and provides internet accessible computers for public use.

The Mullens Opportunity Center is the base of operations for two Americorps VISTAs and one OSM/VISTA who are working in conjunction with RAIL to enhance the economic and environmental quality of life in Mullens. Also, the Upper Guyandotte Watershed Association has a unique partnership with RAIL, in association with West Virginia Stream Partners and the Office of Surface Mining.

### **Contact Information**

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