



# Sleepy Creek Watershed Association

Protecting and Preserving Sleepy Creek in Morgan County, WV November 2007 Vol. 3

## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING SET FOR NOVEMBER 13th SCWA TO HOST GREEN BUILDER

The Sleepy Creek Watershed Association will host local home builder Mike McKechnie as its guest speaker at the fall general membership meeting on *November 13 at 7 p.m. at the Morgan County Public Library*. McKechnie is President of Mountain View

Builders, a company which is focusing its efforts on building environmentally efficient homes in the Eastern Panhandle. He is fully licensed and insured in West Virginia and has been building in Berkeley Springs since 1995. He will discuss improvements homeowners can make to existing homes which will

improve energy efficiency using renewable energy technologies.

SCWA will also hold its annual election for members to the Board of Directors. Nominations will be open from the floor. All members are urged to attend and the meeting is open to the public. For additional information, contact Gale Foulds at 304 258-6155.

### SCWA TOTE BAGS \$15



Natural and forest green canvas with embroidered SCWA logo. 12"x 9"x 12" with 24" handles.

Purchase yours by calling 304 258-6155 or

### PAPER OR PLASTIC OR NEITHER!

Plastic grocery bags are light, sturdy and easy to carry because of built in handles. They are cheaper for merchants than paper. They have the potential for reuse in the home. When they are compacted, they take up less space in landfills, and in some areas they are being recycled.

Plastic bags are made from non-renewable petroleum resources. Plastics can be recycled, but not as easily as glass, aluminum, or paper. Part of the problem of recycling plastic bags is that bags may be made from one of several plastic types. Although two plastic items may look similar, they could be made from different types of resins. This makes separating plastics for recycling difficult. The plastic industry has begun coding plastics with numbers to help consumers and recycling processors identify the type of resin used in production. Some plastic bags have resin codes imprinted on them, but most do not. However, for the most part plastic must be recycled into a product for non-food use. For example, plastic soda bottles cannot be recycled into new bottles. They can be recycled into products such as bathtubs, flower pots, parking lot car stops, toys, and trash cans.

In addition to not being easily

recycled, plastic production and processing require the use of toxic chemicals. Many manufacturing plants that produce these chemicals also produce hazardous waste and pollute the air. In 1986, the EPA ranked the 20 chemicals whose production generates the most hazardous waste. Five of the top six were chemicals commonly used by the plastic industry [propylene, phenol, ethylene, polystyrene, and benzene].

Claims have been made that some bags are degradable. In other words, they will decompose over time. Biodegradation takes place when air is present. Photodegradation occurs when sunlight is available. Most of the garbage we generate is land-filled (about 95%). In landfills, garbage is buried beneath layers of soil that make it difficult for air or sunlight to reach discarded items. The fact is that most plastic bags just don't degrade, even in a compost pile. There are some new starch-based plastics that may be more degradable. But few grocery bags are made from that type of material.

Plastic bags are high in fuel energy if they are burned, but they emit harmful gases that must be prevented from entering the atmosphere.

Brown paper grocery bags have been around for a long time. To provide the strength necessary for groceries, the bags must be made from high quality paper. Consequently, the recycled paper



*A watershed is all the land area that drains to a given body of water.*

*We all live in a watershed!*

in the bags is limited. Although they are made from trees, a renewable resource, the production of trees and manufacture of paper bags can pollute the air and water with chemicals. Paper bags can be recycled -- often into corrugated cardboard. Recycled paper may create less pollution and require less energy than paper produced from virgin materials. Paper bags are biodegradable, but that process is not facilitated in landfills where there is a lack of air.

What is the best solution? The answer is not clear. But, to reduce the waste generated from paper or plastic bags when grocery shopping, reuse the bags, or better yet, take your own strong cloth bags to the store to reduce waste. These re-usable bags avoid either paper or plastic and keep our environment cleaner.

**POLLUTION, PREVENTION, & OPEN DUMPS (PPODS)**

The Open Dump Cleanup Program is a project of WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) which uses landfill fees to clean up illegal dumps and to gather evidence to prosecute illegal dumping activity. Currently, the program has completed 3,693 projects that have resulted in the



removal of an estimated 110,842 tons of material, including 21,901 tons of steel, 49,692 appliances, and 411,448 tires. There are an estimated 15,000 open dumps across WV. The efforts of the PPOD average up to 900 dumps removed yearly, at a total of 9,500 tons/year. With assistance from volunteers, solid waste authorities, and county commissions, PPOD has been able to reclaim 6,000 acres of WV land to date.

If you have discovered an open dump and need help cleaning it up, call Mike Parks, DEP, at 304 822-7266.

For more information, visit <http://www.wvdep.org/item.cfm?ssid=18&ssid=817>.

**VOLUNTEERS BEWARE OF METHAMPHETAMINE LAB WASTE**

As methamphetamine use continues to become a growing epidemic across our state, producers of the dangerous drug are often using the rural and roadside areas of West Virginia as dump sites for their toxic chemicals and byproduct. Volunteers participating in the PPOD, Make It Shine, or Adopt-A-Highway



programs should be aware of the potential hazards these contaminants pose.

**3rd SLEEPY CREEK PROPERTY OWNERS BROCHURE**

The Board of Directors of the Sleepy Creek Watershed Association has spent many hours researching information for the third Sleepy Creek Property Owners brochure, *How to Dispose of Hazardous Household Materials*. This brochure provides suggestions for dealing with common homeowner problems while safeguarding the water in the Sleepy Creek watershed, including the water we drink. *Our brochure* will provide the most up-to-date solutions available at this time for household hazardous waste disposal. We are also working with other watershed organizations to encourage our state agencies to focus on the ever-growing need for recycling sites for hazardous and electronic waste. The brochure will go out to the Sleepy Creek Property Owners in November.

**Membership and Renewal Form**

Membership year is from January-December. Dues should be paid by the first of the year.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 Individual — \$10  Group/Org — \$25   
 Family — \$15  Sponsor — \$100

Mail to: SCWA, Bob Velte, Treasurer  
 P.O. Box 991, Berkeley Springs, WV 25411

*Sleepy Creek Watershed Association*  
 Board Members  
 President: Gale Fouids  
 Vice President: Charles Siggs  
 Treasurer: Robert Velte  
 Secretary: Don Boarden  
 Board Members: Jim Michael, David Cooper

**Don't forget ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** November 13th, 7p.m.  
 Morgan Co. Public Library

