

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Contamination hurts Appalachian streams

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Sadly, we often hear about the abuse of our public streams – from the coal-ash pond failure in East Tennessee, to recent wastewater treatment plant failings across western North Carolina, to high mercury levels in fish in Lake Fontana. These problems degrade water quality, which impairs our ability to enjoy and use the river – from tubing and fishing to revival baptisms. They also hurt the wildlife in a river.

Last month in Eastern Kentucky, a company pled guilty to dumping two chemicals used in the production of natural gas, into a Knox County, KY stream, without a permit. The dumping killed the federally protected blackside dace fish as well as other stream life. The company, Nami Resources Company, plead guilty to violations of the Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts. They were fined \$50,000.

In the Southern Appalachians, our streams and rivers belong to everyone. That communal ownership brings with it a responsibility – to keep those streams and rivers clean and healthy so downstream users can enjoy them and use them just as much as upstream users. Unfortunately this responsibility isn't always taken very seriously. In such cases, we have laws designed to protect streams and the imperiled wildlife that inhabit them. Its nice to see that in Knox County, Kentucky, people abusing the streams of their community wear brought to justice.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.