

A Big Win for West Virginia Rivers Coalition!

The state of West Virginia must do a better job of cleaning up acid mine drainage from abandoned mines under a federal court ruling handed down by U.S. District Court Judge Irene M. Keeley in mid January.

By ruling in favor of WVRC, Judge Keeley concluded that the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection is violating the Clean Water Act by not writing pollution permits with discharge limits at 18 abandoned mines in north-central West Virginia. Essentially, even where the DEP is operating treatment systems, it is not reducing the pollution from these sites enough to meet water quality limits.

This ruling strikes right at the heart of the issue of adequate funding for reclamation at abandoned mines. Traditionally there has not been enough money in the special reclamation fund to cover the cost of abandoned mine clean up. WVRC hopes that with this ruling on the books we are moving toward better funding for maintaining clean water at all of these sites across the state.

This victory for WVRC is also a victory for the citizens of West Virginia. The WVDEP will be required to complete the same permit process for these sites as for any other polluting discharge location. This means that individuals will be better informed about what is going into the water around them, and they will have the opportunity to voice their concerns through that process.

A similar lawsuit, concerning three abandoned mines in the southern coalfields, is pending in the Southern District.

WVRC is working to protect your water.