

January 21, 2014

## WV coalition recommends changes after chemical leak

by **Whitney Burdette**  
Daily Mail staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The West Virginia Rivers Coalition and Downstream Strategies have co-authored a report outlining specific recommendations they think the Legislature should take in light of the recent chemical leak.

Angie Rosser, executive director of West Virginia Rivers Coalition, said in a news release this report is the only one of its kind to emerge after the Jan. 9 chemical leak that contaminated the water supply for 300,000 residents and West Virginia American Water Co. customers.

"We speak for those who expect more of our government, more in its approach and much more in its attitude toward protecting our water supplies and our health," Rosser said.

"We bring the voices of all West Virginians whose water is threatened by contamination. They demand meaningful change and accountability at every level of government."

The 84-page report focuses on issues, information gaps and policy remedies as they relate to environmental laws most relevant to the chemical spill, including the Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act and Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act.

Evan Hansen, president of Downstream Strategies, said the report presents "comprehensive reforms to protect our water supplies."

"We show how state and local governments could have significantly reduced the risk of this spill occurring and more effectively responded to it," Hansen said.

Downstream Strategies is a Morgantown-based consulting firm specializing in environmental science policy and research and water system research. The firm announced last week it is available to conduct independent testing of a consumer's water supply.

The report makes several recommendations, including:

- Officials "change their tone and expectations to hold the Department of Environmental Protection accountable for fully and consistently enforcing its permits and all environmental laws,"

- The Legislature should require the Bureau for Public Health and other entities to write protection plans and fund those plans,
- The Legislature should provide state-specific protective standards for chemicals used in large quantities in the state, and
- Support local emergency planning committees and local governments in planning efforts to manage and minimize risk.

\* \* \*

The Senate passed its first bill Monday, 12 days after the start of the 2014 session.

Senate Bill 278, which defines "scrap metal," passed 30-0 with four members absent. Sen. Corey Palumbo, D-Kanawha, Senate Judiciary chairman, said the bill cleans up some language in a bill the Legislature passed a couple of years ago.

"The purpose of this bill is when we passed the bill a couple of years ago, it inadvertently included jewelers," Palumbo said.

SB 278 amends code to exclude "gold, silver, palladium or platinum where the platinum is in the form of jewelry, bullion, ingots or coins" from state code regulating scrap metal.

The bill will now go to the House of Delegates.