

Forums on water crisis set

Feb. 18, 2014 @ 10:42 PM

SHANE ARRINGTON

HUNTINGTON — Several area environmental and community organizations have joined together to put on a forum providing people the opportunity to listen to experts speak and ask questions about the Elk River Chemical Spill.

Water Unites West Virginia will consist of two forums. The first will be Thursday from 7 to 9 p.m. at Marshall University Student Center's Shawkey Room in Huntington. The second will take place Friday from 7 to 9 p.m. at St. Timothy's in-the-Valley Episcopal Church in Hurricane.

"There have been many events in the Charleston area, but these events give people in Putnam and Cabell counties the chance to hear experts talk and ask whatever questions they may have," said Cindy Ellis, president of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy.

Robin Blakeman, special events organizer for the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, said the event is important because even people whose water was not affected by the chemical spill should be aware of the environmental impacts that matter to all of West Virginia and beyond.

"I think people should come out for current and future concerns for their tap water supply in the wake of the recent crisis," Blakeman said. "We've assembled a panel of independent scientific experts who can speak about the issues regarding our water supplies."

Speakers will include Andrew J. Whelton, assistant professor of environmental engineering with the University of South Alabama, who is co-leading an independent taxpayer-funded research team testing homes affected by the chemical spill; Evan Hansen, president of Downstream Strategies, who has taken a key role in presenting environmental concerns to the Legislature; Maya Nye, spokeswoman for People Concerned about Chemical Safety; and Cathy Kunkel, Independent Public Policy Consultant representative.

Forum sponsors are the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Marshall University Student Environmental Action Coalition and Marshall University Students for Appalachian Socialism.
