



Coalfield Water Crisis

Where & When

February 2023, Wyoming County residents began experiencing water quality issues in the Wolf Pen/Indian Creek area, which brought into focus the water crisis across the region and moved people to action over the last year. *From Below: Rising Together for Coalfield Justice* is focusing on McDowell County, specifically on the following communities: Gary (city water system), Leckie (well water), and Anawalt (public water system). Each of these water sources has been compromised due to various reasons. Gary's city water infrastructure is crumbling without the financial ability to repair it. Leckie's well water began to noticeably change four years ago -around the time surface mining in the area began. These problems have occurred on a regional level for decades throughout the coalfields with little attention.

What

Residents report orange to black tap water sometimes with a thick filmy "goop." Water distributions have continued in the Gary and Anawalt area communities for months. **As of May 24, 2024, 2,060 cases of water or 82,400 bottles, funded entirely by the people, for the people, have supplied clean water to 280+ homes in McDowell County.**

Some residents drive up to 20 minutes away to retrieve water from a spring along US Route 52 in Maybeury on the Mercer County line, and other area roadside springs. Senior residents rely on their neighbors to retrieve this water for them. Many residents routinely spend over \$100 per month on bottled water. Doing laundry can ruin clothes, and cooking and cleaning is a hardship. When some shower in the community of Avondale, they experience chemical burns on their skin. The orange-black water corrodes their plumbing fixtures and it cannot be scrubbed away from tubs, sinks, or other fixtures. One man spent \$4,000 twice in 15 years on water filters. McDowell County is one of the poorest counties in America.

On May 4, we had our second community water meeting at Boyd's Chapel UMC in Leckie, WV where representatives from Virginia Tech distributed twenty well water testing kits and a 5-page petition to start the \$7 million Anawalt public water project that has been approved but not funded was collected. This petition was sent to the WV Governor's Office and has yet to receive any response.

Action Needed

We need attention, donations, and pressure on politicians to act. This is a long-lasting widespread regional crisis. We cannot forget coalfield residents throughout the region with similar struggles. We ask for your support in the following ways:

#1 Take Action Now!

Contact the WV Governor's Office and your WV state representatives asking for the Anawalt public service district (PSD) project to be funded and for the state to also provide clean water to coalfield residents throughout the region by declaring a state of emergency until the Anawalt project and others needed throughout the region are completed.

- [Email the WV Governor](#)
- Call the WV Governor: (304) 558-2000
- Write a letter to the WV Governor:
Office of the Governor
State Capitol, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E
Charleston, WV 25305

#2 Donations

Donations can be sent to the Hope for McDowell Fund at Hope in the Mountains to keep this work going by supporting the work and presence of the Welch Charge of the United Methodist Church.

- Donate online at: <https://hopeinthemountains.com/donate> (be sure to select the Hope for McDowell fund)
- Donate via check at Hope in the Mountains, Inc.
PO Box 1675
Sophia, WV 25921
(specify Hope for McDowell on the memo line)

#3 Help Spread the Word

- Facebook Group: [From Below: Rising Together for Coalfield Justice](#)
- X: [@HollerGospel](#)
- Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/200611596@N04/albums/>
- Webpage: <https://wvfaith.org/>

Related News Articles

Lorelei Goff, "How McDowell County, West Virginia, is Addressing its Decades-old Water Problems," [Appalachian Voices](#), April 8, 2024

West Virginia Democratic Party, "WV Delegate Adam Vance (R-35) Pleads With His Republican Super Majority for Help From a Toxic Pipe," [Youtube](#), Feb. 29, 2024

Robert Castillo, "Gary Residents Detail Concerns Over Discolored Water," [WVVA](#), Feb. 23, 2024

Erin Beck, "As Coal Companies Point Fingers, Wyoming County Residents Say They're Being

Poisoned By a Contaminated Creek," [Mountain State Spotlight](#), March 25, 2024

Thank you,

From Below: Rising Together for Coalfield Justice Team