

Hello Friends and Colleagues,

A couple of years ago I was talking with a mule skinner in upper Middle Tennessee. Now just so some of you don't panic, mule skimmers were the original teamsters who trained and and drove mules for commerce. By that description alone you can probably tell that this fellow had been around a good long while.

We were talking about water, of course, and he said to me,

"Ma'am, I remember a time when we had a lot more creeks around here. Why that ravine yonder held a spring and a stream when I was a boy. We used to go swimming there every summer."

Yes, he really did talk that way. We were sitting in his dim living room, our backs sinking into a couch long since past its prime. I asked him when it stopped flowing and he reckoned that would have been a few years back.

Those of you who have known me for a bit, know that protecting source water, and water in streams in general is important. Powering our mules may not be as critical as it once was, but powering our businesses, our communities and our homes still *is* critical. In some parts of the country, including some portions of the Southeast, we're losing a greater number of streams (or at least healthy flow in them) every year. There are a lot of reasons for this, but no one thing, person or company is to blame. Frankly, I think we're all about sick of "blame" anyway. So, I prefer - as do many of you - to work on solutions.

That's what today's newsletter is all about - keeping water in streams. Some of you live in the Western U.S. and are familiar with the challenge of water rights. Some of you may know about this model. Others of you are from other parts of the U.S., Mexico and Canada. You all may not be as familiar with this model. http://www.ted.com/talks/rob_harmon_how_the_market_can_keep_streams_flow.html The model itself is not a be-all-end-all; but it's a start. It represents a viable way of looking at our water supply and one potential solution which can help keep a river a river, a stream a stream, our wildlife healthy, and an old mule skinner happy.

It's just one possibility. Can you think of others?

Best to you and our watersheds too,

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Give good people good information and they'll do good things.

(If you've just received this single newsletter, it may be because I thought you'd be interested in this particular subject. You may or may not get others. If you want on my list regularly, e-mail me. If you want off my list, e-mail me. Thanks!)