

[Illegal dumping affects Mahoning, rivers leading to Gulf of Mexico](#)

(Posted by [Rachel Lundberg](#) in [Audio](#), [Community](#), [Fracking](#), [WYSU](#))

Things had been looking up for Youngstown, Ohio's long-polluted Mahoning River until last week. That's when an Ohio company intentionally dumped up to 60,000 gallons of fracking waste into one of its tributaries.

Rachel Lundberg brings us the story of one man, his river and the community fighting for revival. Lauren Schroeder visited the Mahoning River about a mile downstream from where crude oil and brine from an illegal dump would flow into the waterway. (Mary Sweetwood/TheNewsOutlet.org) Lauren Schroeder, a retired biology professor, is in his 45th year of studying and trying to clean up the Mahoning River.

The water quality today in the Mahoning River is much improved.

The Mahoning snakes through the Rust Belt city of Youngstown, Ohio.

For almost 100 years, Youngstown's former steel companies would dump waste into the Mahoning River. The steel giants caused so much damage that there's still a ban on swimming, wading, fishing, any contact with about 30 miles of the river.

The river was once the most polluted streams in the entire United States. Sometimes the temperature in the river often exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Industry again threatens the river. But this time, instead of steel companies, it's gas drillers. The communities surrounding Youngstown are rich with gas and oil reserves and the industry is making itself at home.

This is a bad omen that people will dump their waste to avoid paying the costs of proper disposal.

Dan Mamula, manager of the Mahoning River Corridor Initiative, says he wants the industry well monitored and held accountable.

Right off the get-go. It has to be known that we will not tolerate shoddy business practices.

Schroeder thought the days of dumping were over.

One incident of the spill itself will not have very much impact on the river, but if they occurred frequently that would have a degrading effect.

And these waters won't be the only ones threatened. Dumping into the Mahoning means pollution is carried to the Beaver, the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers and eventually to the Gulf of Mexico.

Anybody living along there would be impacted by what we dump in the river in Ohio.

This is just another set back in Youngstown's struggle to bounce back from the steel crisis of the 1970s. State officials continue to investigate the incident.

It's a tragedy and very disheartening.

Caitlin Cook contributed to this story. Reporting for TheNewsOutlet.org, I'm Rachel Lundberg.

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