

Monday, August 18, 2014 12:07 pm

**Kristen Buckles**

**Dozens 'Float The Nolichucky' To Protest Pipeline Plans**

The environmental advocacy group Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee (CWEET) hosted a river-float event at The Nolichucky Vineyard in Russellville on Sunday.

The event sought to bring critical attention to the proposed double-pipeline between the US Nitrogen plant at Midway and a point on the Nolichucky River about 10 miles away.

One pipeline would be used to bring as much as 1.9 million gallons of water per day from the Nolichucky River for the company's cooling process.

The other pipeline would be used to return as much as 500,000 gallons of water per day to the Nolichucky River.

The double-pipeline would be built by the Industrial Development Board for Greeneville and Greene County.

The Industrial Development Board has been granted permits by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) to build the double-pipeline from the river to US Nitrogen, partly along state right-of-way.

The double-pipeline would be used for the benefit of US Nitrogen and, potentially, for other industries in that area in the future.

The "Float the Nolichucky" event began at 2 p.m. with participants floating the river on inner tubes, canoes, rafts and other floating devices.

Sponsors of the event included CWEET, The Birdhouse and The Nolichucky Vineyard.

Participants in the float exited the river at the vineyard beginning at 6 p.m.

Just before 7 p.m., those who stayed for an "after-party" at the vineyard heard from representatives of CWEET and from local residents Eddie Overholt and Donahue Bible.

Those participating strongly objected to US Nitrogen's locating in Midway. The company plans to produce liquid ammonium nitrate.

US Nitrogen officials and Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation officials have said the levels of nitrogen and ammonia discharged into the river would be amounts too low to affect the river ecosystem downstream.

Environmental groups and concerned property-owners downstream, however, have contested that claim. Many on Sunday expressed specific concern for the endangered mussels living in the river.

Save the Nolichucky River, a grassroots organization objecting to these plans, was a major participant in Sunday's events.

Overholt has become a widely known figure within the group following his arrest in connection with a July IDB meeting in Greeneville. He faces Greeneville charges of disrupting a public meeting and resisting arrest.

The charges were placed as he was being escorted out of the IDB meeting by a Greeneville police officer after Overholt spoke out to ask members of the board to talk more loudly so all in the standing-room-only audience at the meeting could hear them.

IDB Chairman and County Mayor Alan Broyles had just cautioned the audience at the sometimes-noisy meeting that he would have them removed from the building if there were "any more outbursts."

When Overholt spoke out to make his request about the IDB members' speaking more loudly, Mayor Broyles asked that he be removed from the meeting.

Overholt has said he did not believe his request would be viewed as the type of "outburst" to which Broyles had referred in his warning.

No microphones were in use at the meeting, and there had been a number of complaints from the audience that many of those in the large room could not hear the board members' discussion.

Overholt did not address the circumstances of his arrest during his speech Sunday, choosing instead to review what he called a list of misconceptions and facts presented by US Nitrogen.

He expressed his lack of belief in the company's presentation of the facts.

He stated that, under the pipeline proposal, the company would withdraw water from the river without paying for it through a utility district.

He also said that this is the first plant of this type to be built by the parent company, Ohio-based Austin Powder Co.

"It seems to me that what they're doing here is kind of having a little bit of an experiment," he said.

In Bible's address at the rally Sunday evening, he emphasized what he said was the need for those objecting to take their concerns to state officials.

"At this point, it's going to have to be between our attorneys and their attorneys," Bible said.