

## Myths and Facts

**Myth:**

***Mountaintop removal mining provides jobs.***

**Fact:** As more coal is produced in mountaintop removal strip mining, the number of coal mine workers decreases. Although coal production rose 32 percent between 1987 and 1997, mining jobs dropped 29 percent during the same period. *Source: Citizens Coal Council; <http://www.citizenscoalcouncil.org/facts/mtntop.htm>*

**Myth: *Mountaintop removal mining improves local economies.***

**Fact:** The top 15 coal producing counties in West Virginia (where mountaintop removal mining has been in practice the longest) suffer from some of the worst poverty levels in the nation, even though they produce 15% of the nation's coal. *Source: United States Census Bureau; West Virginia Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training*

**Fact:** In 1998, tourism pumped far more money into the West Virginia economy than the coal industry. *Source: Citizens Coal Council; <http://www.citizenscoalcouncil.org/facts/mtntop.htm>*

**Fact:** Coal companies force people living near the mines to sell their homes and leave. Whole communities, such as Blair, West Virginia, have been wiped out. *Source: Citizens Coal Council; <http://www.citizenscoalcouncil.org/facts/mtntop.htm>*

**Myth: *Mountaintop removal mining does not harm the environment; rather it maintains or improves the quality of local ecosystems***

**Fact:** In just the last decade, mountaintop removal has obliterated the natural beauty that took millions of years to form. Mines in West Virginia alone have buried over 1,000 miles of streams and cut down over 300,000 acres of hardwood forests, eliminating hunting, fishing, camping and wildcrafting opportunities. *Source: Citizens Coal Council; <http://www.citizenscoalcouncil.org/facts/mtntop.htm>*

**Fact:** The natural return of forests to mountaintop mines reclaimed with grasses under hay and pasture or wildlife post-mining land uses occurs very slowly. Full reforestation across a large mine site in such cases may not occur for hundreds of years. *Source: Earth Crash Earth Spirit; <http://eces.org/articles/static/98886600092645.shtml>*

**Fact:** West Virginia's Coal River was named one of the country's ten most endangered rivers in 1999 and 2000 because of the environmental danger posed by mountaintop removal and valley fills. *Source: West Virginia Rivers Coalition; <http://www.wvivers.org/whatismtr.htm>*

**Myth: *All surface-mined land today is reclaimed equal to or better than it was prior to mining.***

**Fact:** The Appalachian Highlands is characterized by some of the best forest habitat in the world. Current reclamation practices are converting these forests into grasslands, which may significantly impact neotropical bird populations and other sensitive species if left unchanged. *Source: Trial Lawyers for Public Justice; <http://www.tlpj.org/EPAslideshow.htm>*

**Fact:** In the original mining permit application, companies are required to include specific details which demonstrate that the land can and will be put to some productive use, such as recreational, commercial, agricultural, etc. Curiously, a number of mountaintop removal permits have been approved which included no specific details about post-mining land use. *Source: <http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/9638/reclaim.html>*

## **Some Coal companies destroying Appalachia**

Arch Coal Inc.  
One City Place Dr., Suite 300 St. Louis, MO 63141  
314.994.2700, 1.800.360.4519

National Coal Corporation  
8915 George Williams Rd. Knoxville, TN 37923  
Phones: 865-769-3749, 865-690-6900, 866-703-COAL  
Fax: 865.691.9982

Mountainside Coal Co.  
7692 South Highway 25W  
Williamsburg, KY 40769

Crestview Capital Funds  
95 Revere Drive, Suite A, Northbrook, IL 60062  
Phone: 847.559.0060 Fax: 847.559.5807

Cunningham & Company  
730 W. Randolph St., 6th Floor Chicago, IL 60661  
Phone: 312.876.1070 Fax: 312.454.0261

Massey Energy  
4 North 4th Street, Richmond, VA 23219  
Phone: 888.424.2417, 804.788.1824

West Virginia Coal Association  
P.O. Box 3923, Charleston, WV 25339  
Phone: 304.342.4153 Fax: 304.342.7651

## ***Do we need MTR coal?***

Mountaintop Removal Mining (MTR) and other forms of surface mining only provide an average of 4-5% of the nation's coal energy. With energy conservation alone, we could save an average of 20% of our current energy demands. MTR mining is not needed and serves only to provide short term profits for a few, while causing long term devastation to the mountain ecosystems and surrounding communities.

MJS encourages conservation, efficiency, solar and wind energy as alternatives to Mountain Top Removal and all forms of surface mining.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the world's winds could supply more than 10 times the current total world energy demand. With today's wind turbine technology, wind power could supply 20% of the United States' electricity.

**Help protect our mountains**  
**[www.mountainjusticesummer.org](http://www.mountainjusticesummer.org)**

## **Mountain Justice Summer**

### **Mission Statement**

Mountain Justice Summer (MJS) seeks to add to the growing anti-MTR citizens movement. Specifically MJS demands an abolition of MTR, steep slope strip mining and all other forms of surface mining for coal. We want to protect the cultural and natural heritage of the Appalachia coal fields. We want to contribute with grassroots organizing, public education, nonviolent civil disobedience and other forms of citizen action.

Historically coal companies have engaged in violence and property destruction when faced with citizen opposition to their activities. MJS is committed to nonviolence and will not be engaged in property destruction.

## **Why Mountain Justice Summer**

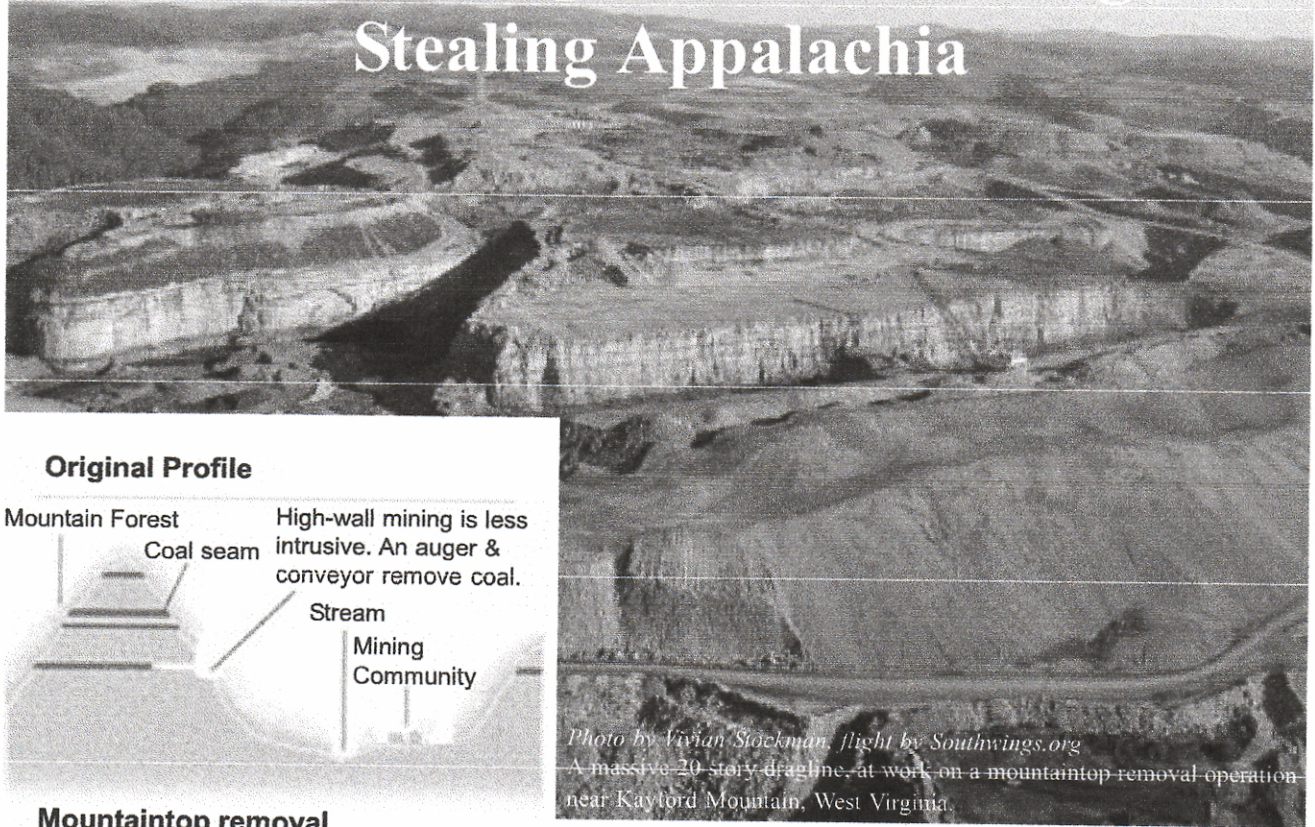
Mountain Justice Summer is a call to action and a request for help.

Over 1200 miles of stream have been buried and destroyed and countless mountains and ridge tops have been blown up. Additionally, under the Bush administration laws have been altered to encourage and accelerate the destruction. Our state and federal agencies charged with protecting our environment are liquidating our mountains.

Mountaintop Removal Mining destroys watersheds. Water is going to matter more to future generations. **The Pentagon has predicted that many of the future wars on our planet will not be fought over coal or oil—but for water.** The short term profits of large corporations are at the expense of our collective future. Now more than ever we must unite and demand the future we desire. A life for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

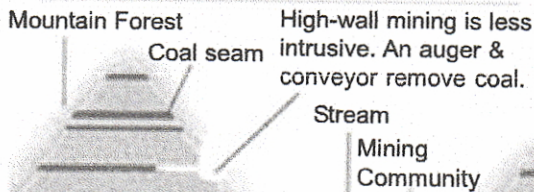
We do not want to see the coal companies get away with their current devastation. We demand that they halt all forms of mountaintop removal mining or destructive surface mining practices and employ the good people of Appalachia in sustainable jobs such as: restoration of past mine sites, investment in green energy, and responsible deep mining. We also demand financial reparations for the damages that they have done to the mountains and people of Appalachia.

# Mountaintop Removal Mining Stealing Appalachia



*Photo by Vivian Stockman, flight by Southwings.org*  
A massive 20-story dragline at work on a mountaintop removal operation near Kayford Mountain, West Virginia.

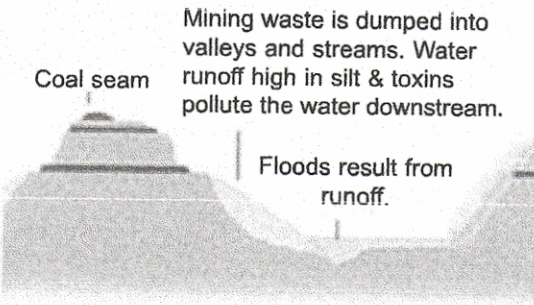
## Original Profile



High-wall mining is less intrusive. An auger & conveyor remove coal.

## Mountaintop removal

Mining companies strip forests and topsoil, then blast the mountain apart layer by layer to get to coal seams.



## Reclamation

Mining waste is smoothed out and steep slopes are terraced. Even with chemical treatments & fertilizers, forests & vegetation at MTR sites have a hard time regrowing.



Adapted from original by  
Patterson Clark--The Washington Post

## The Future of Appalachia?

With the price of coal skyrocketing, Appalachia is feeling a dramatic increase in surface coal mining practices now destroying entire mountain ranges. Mountaintop removal mining--which includes steep slope strip mining, cross ridge mining, and area mining is currently ravaging southern West Virginia, southwestern Virginia, eastern Kentucky and is moving into eastern Tennessee. The communities, mountains, forests, and water of Appalachia are bearing the brunt of these coal mining practices.

Once the mountains are destroyed, the few jobs obtained from this practice will also disappear, leaving a wake of devastation and unemployment

behind. Instead of fishing, hunting, camping, collecting medicinal and edible plants, instead of clean water from healthy watersheds, and clean air in a peaceful community deeply connected with the surrounding mountains, we will be left with the ravaged, crumpled, barren remains of what was once the backbone of our Appalachian heritage.

Coal companies are currently obtaining mining permits for vast tracts of mountains in Tennessee. Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne, Scott, and other coal counties will be directly impacted. Tennesseans would do well to look at the devastating affects of mountaintop removal on the people and mountains in West Virginia and Kentucky to see what is in store.

# Steps & Effects

**1** Forests are clear-cut; often scaping away topsoil, lumber, understory herbs such as ginseng and goldenseal, and all other forms of life that do not move out of the way quickly enough. Wildlife habitat is destroyed and vegetation loss often leads to floods and landslides.

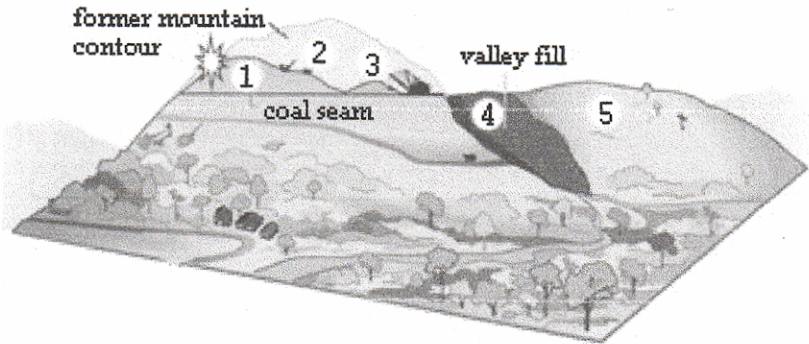


Next, explosives--up to 100 times as strong as those that tore open the Oklahoma City Federal building--blast up to 800 feet off mountaintops. Explosions often cause damage to home foundations and wells. "Fly rock," more aptly named fly *boulder*, can rain off mountains, endangering resident's lives and homes.

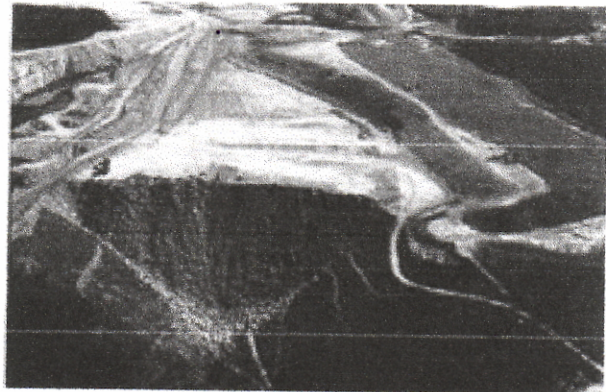
**2** Huge Shovels dig into the soil and trucks haul it away or push it into adjacent valleys.



**3** A dragline (which can weigh up to 8 million pounds with a base as big as a gymnasium and as tall as a 20-story building) digs into rock to expose the coal. It moves 100 or more cubic yards in a single bite--each cubic yard can fill the back of a half-ton pickup truck. Explosives and massive machines allow coal companies to hire fewer workers. A small crew can tear apart a mountain.



**4** Giant machines scoop out thin layers of coal, dumping millions of tons of "overburden" -- the former mountaintops -- into the narrow adjacent valleys, thereby creating valley fills. Coal companies have forever buried over 1,200 miles of biologically crucial Appalachian headwaters streams. In TN the overburden is moved to another location and then "replaced". Aquifers and underground springs are destroyed in this process, making it difficult to impossible for forests to return to the fragmented piles of rubble which were once lush and diverse ecosystems.



**5** Coal companies are supposed to reclaim land, but all too often mine sites are left stripped and bare. Even where attempts to replant vegetation have been made, the mountain is never again returned to its healthy state.



# Community Impacts

**Coalfield employment** has dropped dramatically in the last 30 years while the tonnage mined and the profits of the big companies have increased. In West Virginia alone, coal employment has dropped from 150,000 workers in the 1960's to 15,000 today. Employment decreases as the use of large expensive machinery and dangerous explosives increase. Steep slope strip mining requires huge amounts of explosives (made with ammonium nitrate and deisel fuel) to blast of the tops of mountains, ridges and the so-called "overburden". In West Virginia alone, three million pounds of explosives are used every day.

**Flooding** has also become a problem for communities that live in the shadow of these mining sites as forests which slow down and filter rain water are removed. Without vegetation,

water cascades over steep slopes, forming intense flash floods. In early July, 2001, devastating floods raged



across southern West Virginia. 1500 families lost their homes and thousands more had damaged property. Hundreds of residents were forced to evacuate their homes and community when a State of Emergency was declared, costing 20 million dollars in damages. In May of 2002, intense rain brought more flooding, resulting in the loss of six lives in five counties. Floods returned in July of that same year, and again in 2003 and 2004. So far flooding in southern West Virginia has cost 1.5 billion dollars in damages. Taxpayers, not the profiting coal companies, end up paying for the clean up.

**Coal washing** often results in thousands of gallons of contaminated water that looks like black sludge and contains toxic chemicals and heavy metals. The sludge, or slurry, is often contained behind earthen dams in huge sludge ponds. One of these ponds broke on February 26th, 1972 above the community of Buffalo Creek in southern

West Virginia. Pittston Coal Company had been warned that the dam was dangerous, but they did nothing. Heavy rain caused the pond to fill up and it breached the dam, sending a wall of black water into the valley below. Over 132 million gallons of black wastewater raged through the valley. 125 people were killed, 1100 injured and 4000 were left homeless. Over 1000 cars and trucks were destroyed and the disaster did 50 million dollars in damage. **The coal company called it an "act of God".**

**Another coal slurry pond broke** in October of 2000. This time it was in Martin County, Kentucky. The pond had leached into an old underground mine shaft and broke out. Over 300 million gallons of the black toxic slurry was released into the headwaters of Coldwater and Wolf Creeks near Inez, Kentucky. Hundreds of area residents had to contend with black, toxic sludge in their yards. This incident remains the largest environmental disaster east of the Mississippi, but it got almost no mention in the national media. The Bush administration effectively shut down the investigation of the incident and the lead inspector resigned in protest. **Massey Coal Company called it "an act of God".**

**Mining activity poisons residents.** The Independence Coal Company operation in Sundial, WV. has its coal loading silo within 200 feet Marshfork Elementary School, posing a health risk to both students and teachers. Every day that children spend in class is a risk. Fumes from cancer causing coal-binding chemicals sprayed on the coal as it is loaded onto coal cars, coal dust and other chemicals used used to wash coal, are breathed by children in class or on the playground. When last checked by a concerned resident, the school air intake vents were coated with black soot. The school has been called a 'cancer cluster': a vice principal, three teachers and a 17 year old girl have all died from cancer within the past few years; and another 17 year old student is currently battling ovarian cancer.

The nearby stream has experienced fish populations die off as a result of the toxins such as: chromium, arsenic, mercury, lead, copper, which have been dumped into the water.

The enormous Schumate's Branch sludge dam, which tenuously holds millions of gallons of toxic coal sludge looms above the school. With only one narrow road winding through the valley, evacuation of all of the students--even *if* the school was notified, would be impossible if the dam broke. Blasting increases of sludge dam failure and falling rock hazards children risk while on their school bus route.

**Intensive blasting** causes problems in surrounding communities. Foundations of homes are cracked and weakened. "Flyrock" (boulders as large as cars that land hundreds of feet from the blast site) causes property damage a safety hazards. Wells of coalfields residents linear the blast zones are often negatively altered and ground water is often contaminated by toxic runoff from the mines. Many residents have lost their life savings as homes they have invested in are devalued due to blasting damage to foundations, coal dust and dangerous roads.

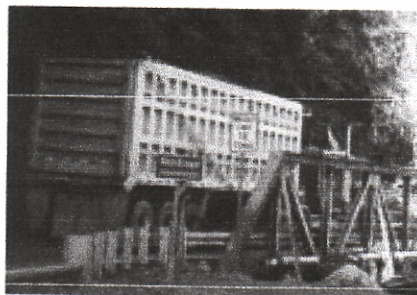
### **Three year old Jeremy Davidson was crushed while sleeping in his bed**

in Wise County, Virginia. In August 2004, A giant boulder was dislodged by a strip mine operator who was working on an unpermitted haul road at two in the morning. The boulder



crashed down the mountain like a cannonball, hit a stump, went airborne, and smashed through the back wall of Jeremy's family home, stopping at the foot of Jeremy's brother after killing him. **The mining company called it "an act of God"** and was only fined 15,000 dollars. The Davidson family is currently attempting to sue the coal company for Jeremy's death.

**Overweight coal trucks speeding** down narrow winding mountain roads have a history of causing many deadly accidents. Many truck operators are paid by the ton, so the faster they drive, the more they get paid. In southern West Virginia, there were 14 deaths from coal truck accidents in an 18 month period between 2000-2001. County taxpayers pay for road degradation due to heavy coal and log truck traffic.



### **Coal companies use threats and intimidation**

to get their way. Larry Gibson has been targeted by over 100 instances of violence, threats and property destruction from the coal company because of his refusal to sell his family land and because of his courage in opposing the destruction that now surrounds him. Larry Gibson's family has owned a patch of Kayford Mountain in West Virginia for multiple generations. The remaining fifty-acres which once sat in a hollow, now perches on a hilltop--almost completely surrounded by the barren remnants of what was once ancient mountains.

Shear cliffs now mark boundaries to his family's land which has been turned into the Stanley Heirs Foundation Park; both to protect what is left and to educate the public about the destruction of mountaintop removal. From the edge of his land he used to have to look up to see the skyline, now he peers over the edge at 17 miles of devastation in one direction, and over 30 miles in another. With tears in his eyes, he attempted to describe what the mountains used to look like...where family and neighbors once lived and gathered...where livestock grazed... and where he fished, swam and played as a child. Headstones in his family cemetery have been repeatedly knocked over by flyrock. His well and abundant springs have gone dry, the once fertile soil is now coated with mine dust from blasting sites, and the road is now hostile and dangerous both to and from his home. He lives in a battle zone, but refuses to leave. He has witnessed friends and entire communities evacuate in the path of mountaintop removal. He says that he does not know how much longer he will live, but he will never give up his struggle to save Appalachia.

Both his tireless dedication and the brave work of other affected coalfield residents have awakened what is quickly becoming a national campaign to save Appalachia, Mountain Justice Summer.

Information without an avenue for action, is destructive to the human spirit. It is by making a stand during moments of crisis that we define our futures and our identities. You can make a positive difference. The future of our mountains, communities, heritage and way of life stands upon a crosshair. Join the growing movement to save Appalachia.