

The Clean Water Protection Act

Protect Our Mountains, Drinking Water and Communities



Produced by The Alliance for Appalachia

Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining and Valleys Fills



Photo by Vivian Stockman / www.ohvec.org

“The streams that are buried by the valley fill are called headwater streams – they are those regions where rivers are born. Without headwaters, larger streams and rivers below lose the nourishment and source of clean water that fuels them.”

-Dr. Margaret Palmer Laboratory Director Chesapeake Biological Laboratory University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences



Blasting in Kentucky



Buried Vally in West Virginia



Poisoned Water in Kentucky

Imagine turning on your tap one day and finding your drinking water looks like tomato soup and smells like rotten eggs; this water is all you have to bathe in, to clean with, and to drink, and perhaps you are one of the families that cannot afford bottled water because poverty is high in the region.



- The waste from mountaintop removal mining operations is dumped directly into nearby valleys, burying streams and impairing water quality. The waste from these sites contains high concentrations of heavy metals such as arsenic, lead, mercury, and selenium.
- Valley fills from mountaintop removal mines have buried or seriously impaired 2000 miles of streams in Appalachia. - *EPA Guidance For Mountaintop Removal Permits.*
- More than 100 million pounds of heavy metals could be leached into the drinking water supply of many eastern and mid-western U.S. cities from the waste already created by surface mining in Central Appalachia. - *Wilson Orr, USGS Science Impact Center.*
- Many Appalachian coal seams lie deep below the surface of the mountains. Accessing these seams through surface mining can require the removal of 500-800 feet or more of elevation. Blowing up this much mountain is accomplished by using millions of pounds of explosives in Appalachian communities.

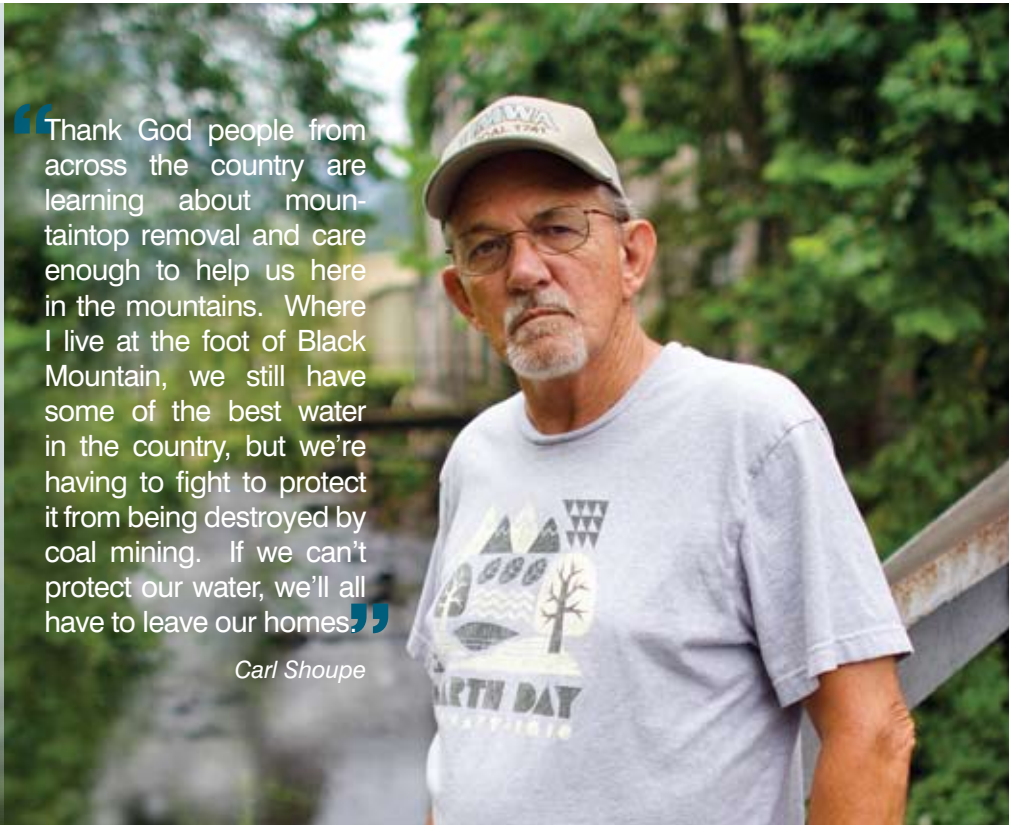
Faces of Mountaintop Removal

Impacts to Mountain Communities

Carl Shoupe is a third generation underground coal miner, former United States Marine and United Mine Workers Organizer. Upon returning from the Vietnam War, Carl worked as an underground coal miner, where he suffered tremendous injuries when an unstable roof collapsed on top of him. He is currently fighting a proposed mining operation near his home that would completely destroy the drinking water source of his community. American citizens, who have contributed so much to their country, should not be forced to live with this type of destructive mining in their back yard.

“Thank God people from across the country are learning about mountaintop removal and care enough to help us here in the mountains. Where I live at the foot of Black Mountain, we still have some of the best water in the country, but we’re having to fight to protect it from being destroyed by coal mining. If we can’t protect our water, we’ll all have to leave our homes.”

Carl Shoupe



“The mining companies want to destroy the land, and the water, but I am not leaving. I am here for the long haul. I’m going to continue fighting.”

– Maria Gunnoe, Bob White, WV

In 2000, a 1,200-acre mountaintop removal mine began on the ridge above Maria Gunnoe’s home. Today, her house sits directly below a 10-story valley fill that contains two toxic ponds of mine waste comprised of run-off from the mine. Since the mine became operational, Gunnoe’s property has flooded seven times. Before mining began, Gunnoe’s property was never prone to such flooding. She is now forced to deal with near constant blasting, toxic coal and rock dust, destroyed property and the loss of 5 generations worth of family history on her land.



“Mountaintop removal coal mining has to stop and it has to stop now. It’s poisoning our water, destroying our health, changing the landscape, destroying homes and making communities unlivable. Our ability to live here depends on stopping mountaintop removal. It’s immoral to steal the future of a people, and that’s what mountaintop removal is doing.”

Bev May



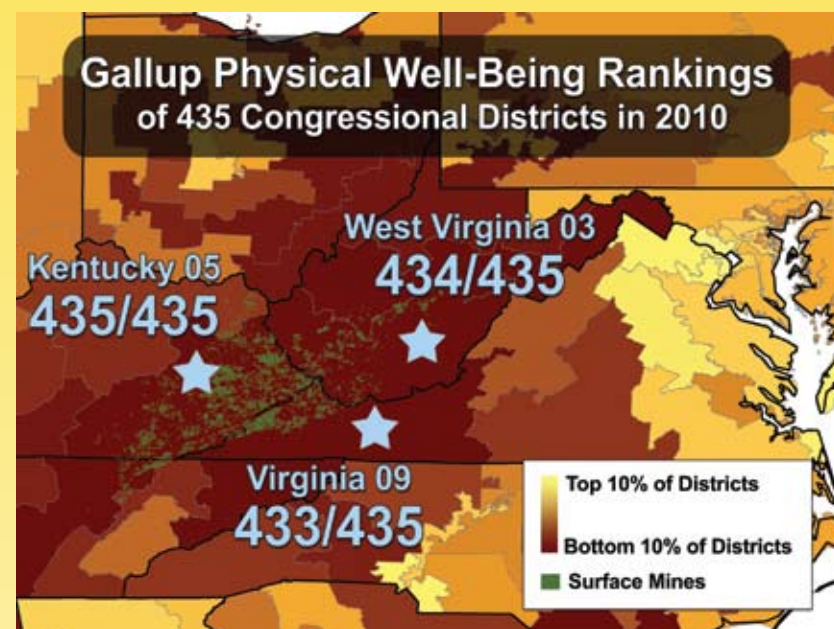
Poisoned water is a reality for many residents throughout the Appalachian coalfields. Mountaintop removal waste exacerbates the contaminants of already compromised water tables; the EPA estimates that 2000 miles of Appalachian headwater streams have been buried and polluted by the toxic waste from mountaintop removal

Increased Flooding



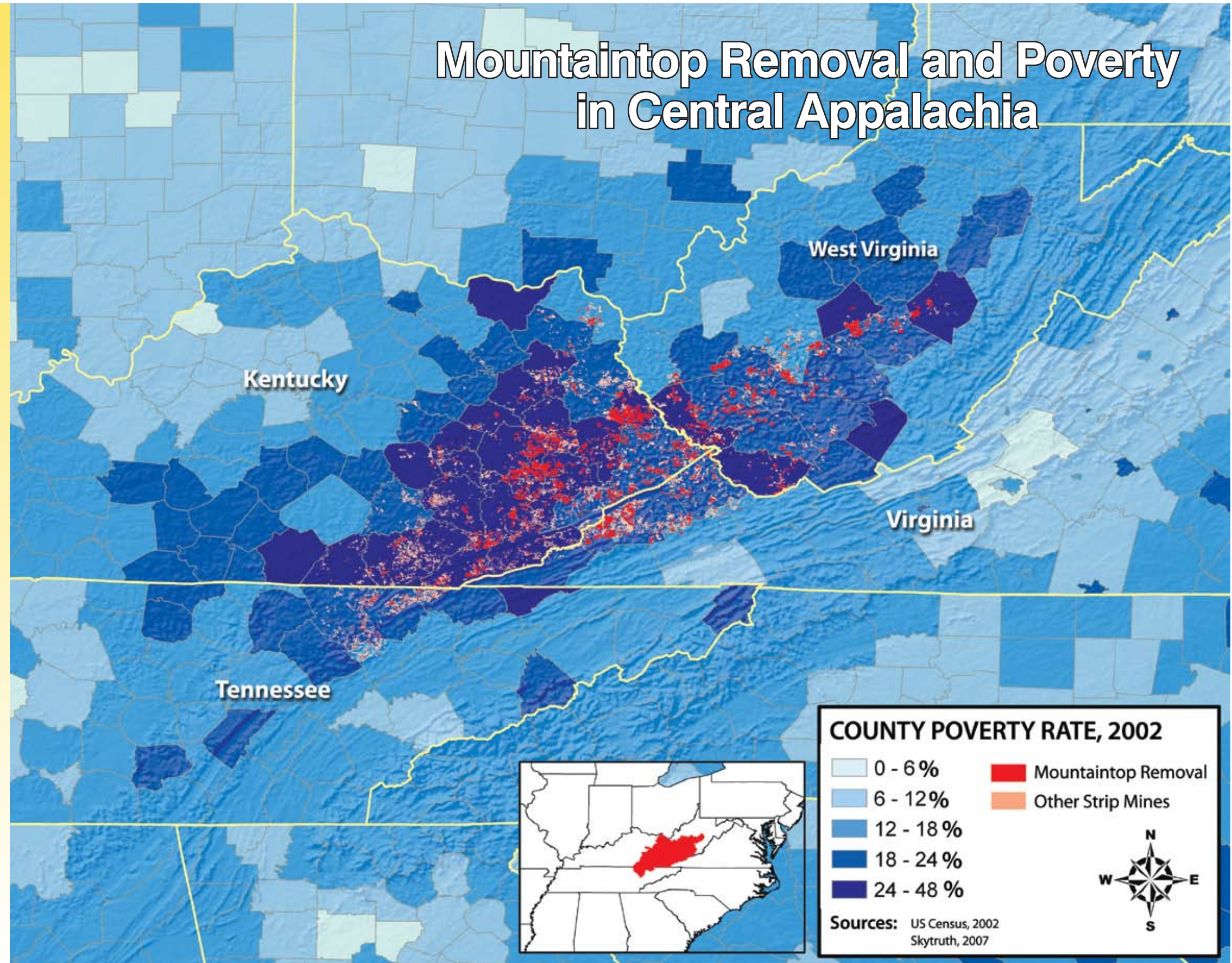
Communities near mountaintop removal mining sites are often subject to powerful flash floods. Without trees on steep mountains and valley fill slopes, rainfall quickly becomes dangerous. The coal industry maintains such floods are “Acts of God.” A recent study conducted by Dr. Johnathon Phillips of the University of Kentucky found that “There is a clear risk of increased flooding (greater runoff production and less surface flow detention) following [mountaintop removal and valley fill] operations.”

Impacts To Public Health and Well-Being



- **Heavily strip-mined communities in Appalachia are among the unhealthiest in the United States.** In 2010, the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index ranked Kentucky and West Virginia — the two states where mountaintop removal is most prevalent — second to last and dead last in overall health. In the Index’s physical health rankings, VA-09, WV-03, and KY-05 — the congressional districts with the most pervasive mountaintop removal — ranked 433, 434, and 435 respectively among the 435 congressional districts.
- Recent epidemiological research has demonstrated that people who live near Appalachian streams that drain surface coal mining operations (Hitt and Hendryx 2010) and who live near mountaintop removal coal mining sites (Hendryx, Fedorko & Anesetti-Rothermel 2010) are **more likely to contract and die from cancer** than people living farther away.
- Recent research also found that women who live in areas with high levels of coal mining are **more likely to have low-birth-weight infants** and that poor birth outcomes are especially elevated in areas near mountaintop removal mining sites. (Hendryx and Ahern 2010).
- These studies show that chronic exposure to mountaintop removal coal mining means you are more likely to experience serious health problems. They raise a significant concern that **living downstream and downwind from a mountaintop removal site is hazardous to one’s health.**

Mountaintop Removal and Poverty in Central Appalachia



What Can Congress Do?



The Clean Water Protection Act

For 25 years, the Clean Water Act allowed for the granting of permits to place “fill material” into waters of the United States, provided that the primary purpose of the “filling” was not for waste disposal.

The intention was to prevent industries such as coal mining from using the nation’s waterways as waste disposal sites. That changed in 2002, when the Army Corps of Engineers altered its longstanding definition of “fill material” to include mining waste. This change accelerated the devastating practice of mountaintop removal coal mining and the destruction of more than 2,000 miles of Appalachian streams.

The Clean Water Protection Act is a simple piece of legislation that restores the original intent of the Clean Water Act that fill material cannot be comprised of mining waste. Supporters include Republicans and Democrats from states where mountaintop removal is currently taking place.

Passing this legislation would protect the nation’s rivers, streams, and lakes from being used as garbage dumps for mining waste. It would also help end the destruction of the Appalachian Mountains.

Please become a cosponsor of the Clean Water Protection Act

To cosponsor, please contact the office of Rep. Frank Pallone at 202-225-4671 or Rep. Dave Reichert 202-225-7761

For more information, please contact Appalachian Voices Legislative Associate J.W. Randolph, jw@appvoices.org.

THIS DOCUMENT WAS PRODUCED BY THE ALLIANCE FOR APPALACHIA, WHICH INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS: Appalachian Citizens Law Center, Appalachian Voices, Appalshop, Coal River Mountain Watch, Heartwood, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, MACED, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Sierra Club Central Appalachia Environmental Justice Program, Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards, Southwings, Statewide Organizing for Community eMPowerment, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Learn More about Mountaintop Removal

www.ilovemountains.org

A website of local, state, and regional organizations from 5 Appalachian states working together to end mountaintop removal and create a prosperous future for the region.

“Mountaintop Removal” in Google Earth

The iLoveMountains.org sponsors have teamed up with Google to feature an “Appalachian Mountaintop Removal” layer in Google Earth. This feature connects users to photos, maps, videos, and first-hand accounts from impacted people and communities. To view, activate the “Global Awareness” layer in the latest version of Google Earth from earth.google.com

What is YOUR Connection?

iLoveMountains.org offers a tool that will trace the connection between anyone living in the United States and mountaintop removal coal used by their local power utilities. Visit iLoveMountains.org/myconnection and enter your zip code to find out YOUR connection.

