



Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

Supporting Organized Voices and Empowered Communities Since 1987

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Mr. Thomas E. Wood, Permit Supervisor
WV Department of Environmental Protection
601 57th St SE
Charleston, WV 25304

Re: Permit # S300115 Long Ridge #1 Mountaintop removal permit

Dear Mr. Woods:

The Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition strongly objects to the issuance of the proposed Long Ridge #1 mountaintop removal permit by Republic Energy (a subsidiary of Alpha Natural Resources) and asks that you deny it for the following reasons:

1) For the past several years, numerous peer-reviewed and published health studies show a strong correlation that people living near mountaintop removal sites have much greater incidence of cancer, birth defects, cardiovascular disease, heart disease, respiratory illnesses, depression, higher mortality rates and decreased life spans. We are concerned about not only the health of people living near this proposed mine site, but also the miners who breathe the dust.

Links to these studies can be found on our website here:

http://ohvec.org/issues/mountaintop_removal/articles/health/. One alarming, recent study shows a causal relationship between the dust from mountaintop removal sites and the promotion of tumors in the lungs. An abstract of that study can be found here: <http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es504263u> published in Environmental Science and Technology.

2) Mining through streams or burying and polluting water (via the 9 proposed valley fills, 23 sediment ditches and 35 pollution discharge points) when fresh, potable water is decreasing in our country and globally, shows a tremendous lack of vision for all life and future economic development in West Virginia. Just 3% of all water on earth is fresh water (<http://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/freshwater-systems>).

In summary of a 2011 study by Bernhard and Palmer, they concluded:

"...the environmental impacts of MTVFs in the Central Appalachians are severe, large scale, and long lasting. In addition to the permanent burial and loss of headwater streams directly impacted by mining, many additional river miles are being degraded by the cumulative impacts of altered flows and increased pollutant from both past and present mining activities in the region. Whether or not individual component ions within mining-derived runoff reach stream-water concentrations that are individually lethal or toxic to aquatic life, the cumulative effect of elevated concentrations of multiple contaminants is clearly associated with a substantial reduction in water quality and biological integrity in

streams and rivers below mine sites." (Emily S. Bernhardt and Margaret A. Palmer, *The environmental costs of mountaintop mining valley fill operations for aquatic ecosystems of the Central Appalachians*, ANNALS OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES Issue: The Year in Ecology and Conservation Biology, 2011.)

3). OVEC is concerned not only with the degradation of streams and waterways impacted directly by mining, but also the decrease in aquatic biological diversity as a result of the mining. For example, according to U.S. Geological Survey research in 2014 regarding fish populations near mountaintop removal sites, *"Appalachian streams impacted by mountaintop mining have less than half as many fish species and about a third as many fish as non-impacted streams."*

(http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3927#.VZwdH_m6fDc) Prior research by USGS and others has demonstrated that headwater mountaintop mining affects downstream flows, water chemistry, stream insect communities, and public health in nearby communities.

OVEC is especially concerned about the impacts of high concentrations of selenium and also high conductivity which is indicative of stream impairment.

3) Mining and blasting within 100 feet of a public right-of-way seems extremely dangerous. Just as a reminder, in August 2004, three year old Jeremy Davidson was crushed in his bed as he slept, when an illegal haul road was being constructed on a mine site in Inman, VA.



4) We oppose destroying 847 acres of forests, our natural carbon sinks, as the world and West Virginia are experiencing increasing numbers of extreme weather events caused by global climate change. We think it is in our state and nation's best interest to leave the coal, especially from mountaintop removal, in the ground. While the coal industry often points to

greater reliance on coal for energy as a way to boost national security, the Pentagon says differently. In Oct.2014, the Pentagon released a report asserting decisively that climate change poses an immediate threat to national security, with increased risks from terrorism, infectious disease, global poverty and food shortages. It also predicted rising demand for military disaster responses as extreme weather creates more global humanitarian crises (http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/14/us/pentagon-says-global-warming-presents-immediate-security-threat.html?_r=0).

5) Can the state rely on the mining company to provide bonding, incremental or otherwise? We are concerned about the long-term viability of Republic Energy, Inc. as a subsidiary of Alpha Natural Resources (ANR), considering ANR's current stock prices at this moment in time is down to 27 cents per share.

I am requesting that you please keep me and OVEC informed about this permit.

Sincerely,

Janet Keating, Executive Director