

Winds of Change

the newsletter of the

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

Huntington, WV

www.ohvec.org

Citizens **FED UP** with the WV DEP

Agency Must Consider Needs of Coalfield Residents, Not Just Coal Barons

On Feb. 10, although snow blew and temperatures dropped, about 40 people converged on the West Virginia Department of (so-called) Environmental Protection. We came to air our grievances to DEP Secretary Stephanie Timmermeyer, who had recently told state legislators that she was striving to speed up the mountaintop removal permitting process.

Our action, organized by Coal River Mountain Watch and OVEC, was part of a multi-state, multigroup day of action against mountaintop removal coal mining. We were joined by French TV news, here to film a story about coal and global warming.

We kept our convergence upon DEP secret, as the last time we tried to meet en masse with



Timmermeyer (when she fired Matt Crum), she got wind beforehand and avoided us. This time, she knew that we knew she was

in the building. We milled around in the lobby, waiting for her to agree to see us and singing a song led by singer/ songwriter T. Paige Dalporto. We were soon escorted back to a meeting room, where we presented a list of demands.

Timmermeyer was angry that we didn't book a

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Coal River Mountain Watch volunteer Bo Webb gives new, true meaning to "DEP."

meeting with her via proper channels and said she would meet with us anytime we asked. (That's funny, as that is not what we found to be the case in the past – she prefers to have her underlings meet with us.) She denied she had told legislators, at a meeting about expediting mine permits, that she would speed up the permitting process, despite the Jan. 10, 2005, *Beckley Register-Herald* article, "Environmental Chief Predicts Faster Permits." Nine days after this meeting, in "Timmermeyer Touts Faster Mine Permitting," the *Charleston Gazette* reported:

> "Coal companies are getting new strip mining permits faster and will continue to see the regulatory process streamlined under the Manchin administration, Environmental Protection Secretary Stephanie Timmermeyer told industry officials Friday...

Big Coal is Back, and Not For The Better

by Dianne Bady

In Raleigh, Boone, Kanawha and other southern counties, Big Coal is back. The first time they mined these areas, they left some coal behind in the mountains. Now they're back, blowing up mountains and burying the hollows...for the good of the country, of course. Bush's policies dictate that West Virginia people's homes have to be blown up for Homeland Security reasons.

We're sad to see that newly-retired Marshall University football coach Bobby Pruett is starting a new job. Now he's a paid spokesman for Friends of Coal, that down-home group run by a top public relations firm and funded by Big Coal. We sure wish the good coach would switch teams. Trouble is, our team can't pay.

Mr. Pruett's father died of black lung and his father-in-law was killed in a mine slate fall. If coal mining had done that to my family, I'd be seriously peeved. Large portions of Raleigh County, Pruett's home county, are being blown up or buried with what-used-to-be-mountains. If big swaths of my childhood county were now being obliterated, I'd be downright livid.

It's discouraging that Big Coal not only has the best politicians money can buy, they also can hire well-loved people to shill for them. People who can help Big Coal legitimize things like driving American citizens out of their ancestral homes because those homes are in the way of Homeland Security's need for more, More, MORE coal. While Bush smiles and says he's protecting America's regular citizens, he's also lying about how he's encouraging renewable energy. Renewable energy companies didn't pay for Bush's election campaign. Fossil fuel guys did.

West Virginia is the top state in annual pounds of explosives used within its borders.

We're also Number One in FEMA disaster aid. There is a connection here. Many coalfields folks realize that all those mountaintop removal mines on top of them aren't doing them any good at all. In fact, the collapsing valley fills, the breaks in toxic sludge impoundments and the floods that wash away homes and kill people have all become a pretty big nuisance.

How sad that "our" governor, and "our" legislative leaders are so busy pledging allegiance to Big Coal that they can't be bothered to notice. After all, if they had to publicly notice that large portions of their state really are being blown up by outside elements, it could put a major dent in their next elections' campaign coffers. *Dianne is OVEC's co-director.*

Michael Morrison: Super Volunteer!

by Scott Straight

Michael Morrison has been an OVEC member since 2001. He first learned of OVEC through newspapers and our work with the people living near the Ashland Refinery (now Marathon/Ashland). As with most members, Michael's initial role was that of a donor – giving money, but not being able to do much more. However, he got more involved in the last general election – he helped OVEC register over 1,000 people to vote! We offered both an hourly wage and stipend per registration, but Mike refused both, volunteering his services as he always has. Mike said that he decided to get more involved because he was fedup with the corruption that he saw all around him.

Since the election Michael has really increased the number of hours he volunteers. He hosted a house party, attended by about 12 people, which was both an outreach and fund-raising success! Party goers viewed *Appalachian*



Michael Morrison, left, shows what he thinks about MTR. OVEC staffer Abe Mwaura is at right.

Treasures, and then discussed their thoughts, hopes and fears regarding mountaintop removal in West Virginia. Mike *continued on page 5*



Citizens Fed Up-

continued from page 1

"Timmermeyer told coal representatives that she is eager to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on a new, streamlined permit process approved by the Bush administration."

Coal River Mountain Watch told Timmermeyer they had asked the DEP for quite some time for citizen trainings on how to read permits, as well as for earlier citizen input into the permitting process. Many citizens feel that by the time we are allowed to comment on mountaintop removal permits, the permits are already a done deal. Someone asked Timmermeyer if she had *ever* denied a permit.

After a pause, she said she was unprepared for the meeting and couldn't answer. Someone did remind her that she had denied one in a northern trout stream. She noted that the company changed its application, and the permit was granted. (That permit is under appeal.)

One disabled former mineworker (sick from coal prep plant chemical poisoning) described the dangers of coal sludge impoundments. He knows – he helped construct them. Timmermeyer promised to meet with him and a DEP engineer for further discussions.

Timmermeyer agreed to hold citizen trainings, perhaps see about getting citizens involved in the permit process and to look into the matter of a coal silo at a coal prep plant very close to Marsh Fork Elementary, where several students and teachers have died from cancer.

As we left, we thought that before sleeping that night,

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perhaps Timmermeyer considered the anger, frustration and extensive problems her agency causes coalfield residents and water drinkers and air breathers across the state.

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Grievances and Demands to DEP

(Thanks in large part to Coal River Mountain Watch volunteer Bo Webb.)

Coalfield residents, members of Coal River Mountain Watch and the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition gather today, Feb. 10, as part of a multi-state, multi-group day of action against mountaintop removal coal mining.

We decry the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection's increased permitting for mountaintop removal mines and we demand real input in the mountaintop removal permitting process. A list of citizen grievances and demands:

r We are disenfranchised by DEP, left out of the permitting process.

 Γ We decry the DEP Secretary's promise to legislators that she will increase and speed up the processing of mountaintop removal permits.

▶ We demand that DEP not just rubber stamp mountaintop removal permits.

 We demand that impacts on human health and human rights be considered before mountaintop removal permits are issued.

 Γ We note that DEP is not promoting a healthy environment in the coalfields.

We note that DEP has a duty to protect *all* citizens of West Virginia, including mountain people living in the coalfields.

r We note that TMDLs target reduction at inactive or abandoned mine sites and do not significantly reduce discharges from active mine sites. Why?

 We question whether DEP's Notices of Violations to mining operations are being followed through on and collected without negotiated deductions.

 Γ We deplore the fact coalfield communities cannot rely on the so-called Department of Environmental Protection to protect our environment. We do not have the same protection as other Americans. We are forced to defend our homes ourselves.

Citizens Fed Up

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But, on Feb. 28, Timmermeyer wrote Coal River Mountain Watch and OVEC a letter, which proved she really didn't bother to reflect on why coalfield residents are angry. She rehashed our grievances, without really saying what she would do about them. She accused us of being unprofessional, deceitful and dishonest. She tried to shift the focus away from the issues that forced our meting, and onto the way we met.

In reply, OVEC volunteer Michael Morrison and OVEC staffer Abe Mwaura wrote, in part:

"Please understand, in our view, that if you had been acting professionally all along, we would not have felt the need to force you to meet with us on Feb. 10. In fact, it should not disappoint you, but rather shame you that citizens of West Virginia feel like they have to use the means we did in order to have a government official listen to them.

"We arrived at DEP headquarters as we did, because of the problems in your agency - people feel like your agency never listens to their concerns, is highly dishonest, and can be bought and sold by wealthy corporate interests.

"You claim that our members used dishonest means to get you to meet with us. We



In the lobby, making our voices heard!

can't change your opinion, but remember who is the public and who is the public servant here. The



French TV news cameraman and reporter, foreground, film as we crowd the DEP lobby.

very week you accuse of us of being dishonest, your agency had been dishonest with residents about the flocculent spill in Boone County.

"Your agency failed to warn residents of Boone County that they were in danger due to this spill.

"Your continued dishonesty (this being only a single example) puts people's lives at risk every day."

4

More Disturbing Facts About Coal Sludge - Really BIG Dams

Which is the *world's* fourth-highest dam? It's the Brushy Fork dam, right here in WV, which holds back BILLIONS of gallons coal sludge impounded by the Marfork Coal Company.

At 900 feet, this Massey Energy monstrosity ranks as the world's fourth highest dam, just behind the Rogun Dam (1,099



feet) and the Nurek Dam (984 feet), both in Tajikistan, and Grande Dixence in Switzerland (935 feet).

Brushy Fork is the tallest dam in North America, surpassing Oroville Dam, Feather, Calif. (770 feet) and even the Hoover Dam (723 feet)!

Interestingly, Brushy Fork does not appear in the US Army Corps of Engineers National Inventory of Dams.

Please, even in the "off season," call your state legislators to tell them you want:

1) The most dangerous impoundments shut down and reclaimed;

2) A ban on new coal sludge impoundments;

3) Coal companies to use alternative methods of coal waste disposal;

4) To know just what chemicals are in coal sludge impoundments.

Please visit www.sludgesafety.org for more information. Click on the "Contact your Legislators" tab to follow links to postcards you can print and send.

If you would like to join in the Sludge Safety Project's work toward shutting down the most dangerous coal sludge impoundments and banning new impoundments, call the OVEC office at (304) 522-0246.

Please Join Us May 20-22, 2005

The Fifth Interstate Summit For The Mountains

4-H Camp Virgil Tate, Sissonville, W.V. *Planning for a Mountaintop-Removal-Free Future!*

Space Limited. Register TODAY! Call OVEC at (304) 522-0246

Low Fee (\$10 min., more if you can afford) — Lodging and Meals Included, for Coalfield Residents and Activists Working To End Mountaintop Removal

We start at 6 Friday evening with refreshments, socializing and films. Saturday includes a strategy session, non-violence or "framing" trainings and a pizza party.

Sunday we examine ways to achieve our agreed upon goals.

Super Volunteer -

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facilitated the conversation and articulated his position well, even when tough questions were thrown his way. Everyone gained from the experience, and OVEC gained a couple hundred dollars to boot. Family and friends remarked afterwards how happy and proud they were that Mike was speaking from his heart about something that he really believes in and is committed to.

If you would like to host a house party contact Mike through the OVEC office at (304)522-0246.

Mike has logged numerous hours at the OVEC office, helping with mailings and making phone calls to our members. Recently he helped plan and attended

demonstrations at the Department of Environmental Protection and the State Capitol.

Currently, he and OVEC board member and lifelong activist Winnie Fox are maintaining an informational table at the Marshall University campus, informing students about OVEC's work.

Everyone on the OVEC staff would like to let Michael know how much his support is helping to further our work. Everyone owes Mike a pat on the back for all of the selfless hours that he donates for the good of his fellow citizens.

Thanks Mike! Volunteers like you are key to OVEC's success!

Appalachia Hopes Cultural Heritage Map Boosts Region's Tourism

by Raju Chebium

Huntington Herald-Dispatch, March 15, 2005

The Appalachian Regional Commission is promoting ... Appalachian sites to a worldwide audience ...

The agency paid the National Geographic Society \$180,000 to create the map* and a website listing 356 sites of historic, cultural or natural interest. The map is online soon was inserted in the April issue of *National Geographic Traveler* magazine.

The idea of the map is to introduce tourists to the historic, cultural and natural beauty of the 13-state region, and pump much-needed tourism dollars into one of the nation's poorest areas.

The magazine, one of the most popular in the world, gets 5 million to 7 million hits on its web site each month and is read by about 4 million people...

Janet Fout, co-director of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition in Huntington, called the partnership with National Geographic a good investment because it seeks to promote ecologically friendly businesses.

"It is unfortunate that we have invested money in extractive industries that destroy the beauty of this state," she said, referring to the coal companies. "If you look at the numbers, tourism is the number one growing industry in the state. This is long overdue."

* *Ed. Note: A* National Geographic Traveler *editor, after reading her essay in* The Appalachians, *invited OVEC's Vivian Stockman to write a word blurb for the map. Her submission:*

"This ancient landscape tells the observant traveler its myriad

We NEeD YouR HELp!

The donations OVEC gets from folks like you give us flexibility. We can use your donations, coupled with general support grants from foundations, on things that may not be covered by project-specific foundation funding.

To everyone who "gives as you are able," throughout this newsletter are examples of how even the smallest donations are important to the work that we do.

• \$1.00 pays for a 15 minute call from the office in Huntington to members in Williamson who are organizing around water quality issues from the coal sludge impoundments in their area. stories. Gurgling trout brooks and raging whitewater boast of their role in carving hollows and plateaus from the region's mountains, formed during three orogenies beginning 480 million years ago in the Paleozoic Era. Near the water, a Wood Thrush hidden in a Spicebush sings of the web of life. Densely tangled with over 1,000 different species of mosses, lichens, ferns, wildflowers, herbs, shrubs and trees, mountains once as tall as the Rockies rise away from the streams. This is the mixed mesophytic forest - the most biologically diverse temperate hardwood forest on Earth shouting its fecundity in a profusion of oaks, hickories, beech, poplar, basswood and black cherry. Above 4,000 feet, the hardwoods give way to spruce and fir, whispering of forests usually found much farther north. These peaks and valleys of Appalachia helped to create a people who speak of 'homeplaces' because, here, home encompasses the sheltering landscape."

Death of A Mountain

"Compare the two economies: The forest's and ours. The sulfur dioxide that escapes from coal-burning power plants is responsible for acid rain, smog, respiratory infections, asthma, and lung disease. Due to acid rain and mine runoff, there is so much mercury in Kentucky streams that any pregnant woman who eats fish from them risks serious, life-long harm to the fetus she carries. And this year, thanks in large part to coal burning, climatologists found record-high levels of climate-altering carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

"A forest, by contrast, can store 20 times more carbon than croplands or pasture. Its leaf litter slows erosion and adds organic matter to the soil. Its dense vegetation stops flooding. Its headwater streams purify creeks below it. A contiguous forest ensures species diversity. A forest, in short, does all of the things that mining and burning coal cannot – that is its intelligence."

Erik Reese, from "Death of a Mountain: Radical Strip Mining and the Leveling of Appalachia," in *Harper's Magazine*, April 2005.

Low IQs in Mercury-Exposed Children Cost Billions

The effects of mercury on fetal development are costing the U.S. economy \$8.7 billion a year, says a new study. Some 317,000 to 637,000 children born in the U.S. each year have been exposed to unsafe mercury levels in the womb, and many of them sustain diminished IQs, researchers reported in a National Institutes of Health journal.

Just What Does DEP Stand For? It Sure Doesn't Protect Anything

March 9, 2005, was DEP day at the state capitol. The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection set up booths under the capitol's golden dome to showcase its work to state delegates and senators.

We knew that the DEP would not present the whole story, so we decided to come up to the state capitol and present the truth about the destruction DEP is permitting to our communities, mountains, forests, streams – and our future.

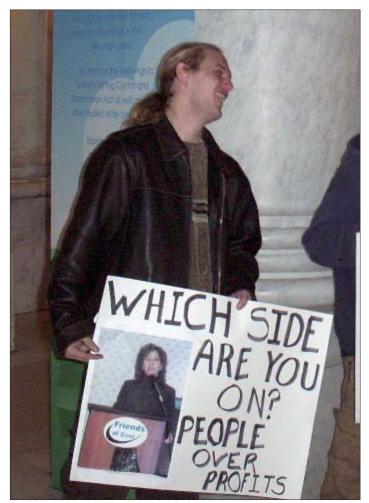
DEP Secretary Stephanie Timmermeyer, notorious for speaking at "Friends of Coal" meetings about the need to speed up coal companies' permit applications, apparently got wind of what we were up to, so she gathered her employees and told them not to answer questions about mountaintop removal.

She was also supposed to be interviewed on Hoppy Kercheval's radio program, which broadcasts from under the golden dome during the legislative session. She didn't appear for her interview! Given our last run-in with her, we reckon she just didn't want to see us. Apparently, she does not want to be held accountable for her actions.

Please note that there are many fine people working



OVEC board member Winnie Fox and West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's Julian Martin wandered around the DEP displays at the State Capitol, offering the other side of the story.

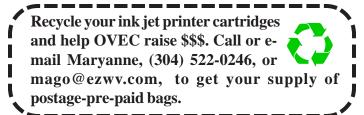


Who does she work for, anyway? Scott Straight's poster includes a picture of DEP chief Timmermeyer speaking at a Friends of Coal meeting. This photo was featured on the DEP website's home page.

Photos by Abe Mwaura

at the DEP-people who want to help protect West Virginia's people and environment. OVEC staff and volunteers had some great conversations with DEP staff about our shared concerns. Hats off to these fine folks who have to work in a badly politicized agency!

And then there are apparently some who are concerned only with advancing and safeguarding their careers. Those are the ones who run when the people they are supposed to be working for show up.



Don't Forget FAITH

"A lot of churches refuse to acknowledge the fact that the creation is important to God. You have to acknowledge that the one and only God created these things.

"We have a covenant with God, spelled out in Genesis. God gave us dominion, and a lot of people think that means He gave us the right to destroy everything and take what we want.

"God meant He made a covenant with us, and He wants us to protect and to act as good stewards on this earth.

"A lot of preachers and churches ignore that, and I don't know why. Every time I question that, somewhere in the back of my mind God says, 'Follow the money.' It's all about money.

"They think, 'If I destroy all this land and rape the earth and make a lot of money off of it and give that to the church, then I will forget about [where the money came from and] my covenant with God to protect His creation'."

- Coal River Mountain Watch's Julia Bonds, quoted in "Mountain Defender: With Fierce Faith, Julia Bonds Works to Save the Land and People of West Virginia," an article by Beth Newberry, which appeared in the March 2005 issue of *Sojourners Magazine*.

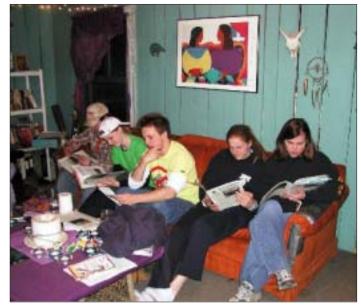
We NEeD YouR HELp!

Even the smallest donations are important to the work that OVEC does.

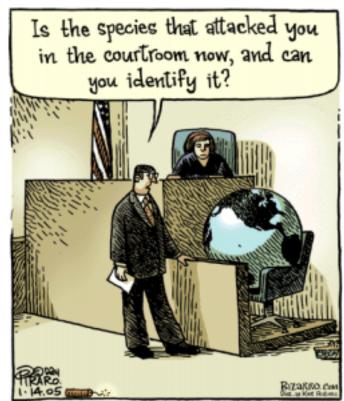
• \$2.00 pays for a single newsletter, from the printing to the mailing. Our newsletter keeps people informed, and is used in- and out-ofstate as an educational tool. We even have some libraries on our mailing list.



Seeing Coal's Bad Side Up Close



A group of Xavier University students spent their spring break doing service projects in West Virginia. The students met with union miners striking at Massey Energy's Mammoth mine in Kanawha County, formerly operating as Cannelton under the bankrupt Horizon. Here, at the Catholic Worker Gift of Tears retreat center in Roane County, some of the students pore over the Winds of Change newsletter, after an OVEC staffer presented "Appalachian Treasures," a PowerPoint presentation on mountaintop removal produced by Appalachian Voices.



** DEMOCRACY WORKS! ** Paper Trails – the Holy Grail for Voters' Basic Rights!

Working right up to the 11th hour of the session, volunteers with WV Citizens for HAVA (Help America Vote Act) won West Virginians important voter protections this year.

HB 2950 is awaiting the Governor's signature as we go to press. Manchin claimed to be behind requiring a paper trail when he was Secretary of State, so surely he will sign the law. Thanks to volunteer Hedda Haning, for explaining what this omnibus addition to WV election law includes:

1) The requirement for a voter-verified paper ballot on all touch screen vote counting machines (DREs), and an extensive description of its required characteristics;

2) A random recount requirement for all counties, including those using DREs;

3) In the case of any inconsistencies greater than 1 percent or where the outcome would change, all ballots will be counted and the paper ballot is the ballot of record;

4) Enabling legislation for a ballot marking device, a computer interface that completes an optical scan ballot for

disabled voters, thus fulfilling federal voting law requirements for persons with disabilities;

5) Enabling legislation for a precinct scanning device so that optical scan ballots can be checked before they are deposited to prevent overvotes and protect against undervotes.

Hedda notes that there are many, many people to

Money = Access and Influence

"It's all about access," said lobbyist Cheri Heflin, who represents the West Virginia Nurses Association, among others. "These people on that list have long, established relationships with individual legislators. It's all about access to legislators and to the process.

"An unfortunate part of the political process is that money can help you be more effective. It helps you speak louder and more effectively communicate your message."

– from Feb. 10, 2005, article, "Leading Lobbyists: Developing Trust, Educating Lawmakers Are Keys to Success In Capitol," by Juliet Terry in the *State Journal*. Fifty legislators, lobbyists and members of the executive branch were asked to name three lobbyists they believe to be the most effective. thank for this great victory for the democratic process. "We were definitely mightier together than apart," she says.

She singles out many people, including many volunteers; several members of the legislature; the highly supportive Secretary of State, Betty Ireland; WV Citizen Action Group's Julie Archer, who did daily legwork and phone calls to move the bill along; and Robert Kibrick, a volunteer with www.verifiedvoting.org, who presented a scholarly and convincing discussion of the issue of computerized voting to a legislative committee. Hedda suggests a donation to the non-profit group could help them with their efforts in other states.

This incredible work by grassroots volunteers illustrates that civic participation is where the rubber meets the road: Sustained, positive social and environmental change only comes about through active community involvement.

ELECTION DAY VOTE ecked before they are ** DEMOCRACY WORKS! **

Real Campaign Finance Reform - To End Fascism

"The Republicans are 95 percent corrupt and the Democrats are 75 percent corrupt," Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said. "They are accepting money from the same corporations. And of course, that is going to corrupt you."

Speaking about his book, *Crimes Against Nature: How George W. Bush and his Corporate Pals Are Plundering the Country and Hijacking Our Democracy,* Kennedy said, "There is no difference between the reaction I get from Republicans and Democrats, because Americans share the same values. If you talk about these issues in terms of our national values, everybody understands it."

In the book, Kennedy implies that we live in a fascist country and that the Bush White House has learned key lessons from other historically repressive regimes.

continued on page 10

We care, We Count, WE VOTE!

★★ DEMOCRACY WORKS! ★★

March Mineral Madness

by Norm Steenstra

Yes, West Virginia is open for bidness! And guess who doesn't want to pay taxes? Hint: Disturbing things are happening in Charleston concerning OUR natural resources.

You may recall that in the January Special Session, coal, oil and gas and timber agreed to pay a temporary higher severance tax to pay down the Workers' Compensation deficit. Mighty neighborly of them, considering they largely created it.

A bill passed $-SB\,684$ – that lowers the severance tax on natural gas from 5 percent to 2 percent on newlydrilled wells. The industry pushed this bill at a time when natural gas prices are at an all-time high and new exploration in West Virginia is booming.

Not to be outdone by their partners in crime, timber followed. Senator Plymale (D-Wayne), a former employee of coal and timber baron Buck Harless, introduced a bill, which passed, that would lower the already pathetically low timber tax from 3.2 percent to 1.2 percent. They cite increased taxes on workers comp as the reason for the raise. Timber is the most dangerous industry in the state and is largely responsible for the fund's deficit.

Some of West Virginia's largest coal producers have appealed to the State Supreme Court, arguing that they should not have to pay severance taxes on coal that they export. They are also asking for a refund that could be as

We NEeD YouR HELp!

•\$2.00 pays for six letters to the Corps

of Engineers and other government agencies to submit comments on various proposed mountaintop removal (MTR) sites, sludge impoundments, buffer zone rule changes, proposed floating coal synfuel plants (gasp!)... and to just generally chew them out.

nt Jeen much as \$500 million on taxes already paid.

These same coal companies bought themselves a judge for a mere \$3.5 million. Not a bad return on investment. Maybe the best fix for Social Security is for Big Coal to handle the private accounts.

Coal, oil and gas, and timber companies contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Joe Manchin's campaign and tens of thousands more to state senators and delegates. Add the more than \$5 million to defeat pro-consumer Judge Warren McGraw and we see the magnitude

of the problem.

There is no limit to the greed of the extractive industries, greed that adversely affects not only our environment but also many aspects of our daily lives.

Steenstra is executive director of WV Citizens Action Group. This article is updated from the March 25, 2005, edition of Capital Eye.

Kennedy —

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"While communism is the control of business by government, fascism is the control of government by business," he writes. "My *American Heritage Dictionary* defines fascism as 'a system of government that exercises a dictatorship of the extreme right, typically through the merging of state and business leadership together with belligerent nationalism.' Sound familiar?"

He quotes Hitler's propaganda chief, Joseph Goebbels: "It is always simply a matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

Kennedy then adds: "The White House has clearly grasped the lesson." *continued on page 12*

** DEMOCRACY WORKS! ** This Year's Legislative Session Underlines Need for Fair and Clean Elections in West Virginia

by Janet Fout

Is it just me or have the rest of you noticed that special interests "ruled" during the 2005 legislative session? Where were the bills that would have improved the quality of life for average West Virginians? When we can't even get lawmakers to approve a bill that allows nursing mothers to feed their babies in public (note: this is the primary function of mammary glands), how much do they really care about the needs of people?

When rule-making authority for water quality issues is transferred out of the hands of an objective body of experts (the Environmental Quality Board) and into the hands of the Department of Environmental Protection, a political agency that bows to the demands of polluters, what does that say about how well our legislators look out for the public interest?

One has to wonder how much our politicians are listening to the people when the biggest environmental "victory" was defeating a resolution meant to halt the possibilities of new wilderness designations in West Virginia. When we examine the special interests issues that

"Why should we pay attention to YOU? You're just the public."



passed this session, there's little room for doubt who was calling the shots under the dome. Julie Archer, lobbyist for WV Citizen Action Group, had this to say about the session:

"I really think this legislative session is indicative of why comprehensive campaign finance reform is needed – from third party bad faith and other tort reform measures, to tax breaks (severance tax reductions) for industries (coal, oil & gas and timber) that profit from OUR natural resources. Industry also successfully gutted the EQB by taking away its rule making authority and succeeding in getting legislation passed to stack the DEP advisory

panel with its cronies and hacks. Oh, I almost forgot that the pharmaceutical companies successfully gutted the bill to give the new Prescription Drug Advocate the power to negotiate drug prices. Need I go on?"

If ever a legislative session underscores the need for "voter-owned," Fair and Clean Elections in West Virginia, it was this one.

Although the Clean Elections pilot project bill (which would have provided a test run in the 2006 elections) was on the House leadership's "fast track" for passage, in the end, it stalled in Senate Finance. The good news is that we made more progress than ever, shepherding the bill through both the House and Senate Judiciary Committees.

We can't thank members of Citizens for Clean Elections enough for phone calls, letters, postcards, and emails from their members. The West Virginia Council of Churches, which chose Clean Elections as their number one legislative priority, can take much credit for garnering the support of legislative leadership.

While many of our coalition partners had other frontburner issues, they made certain that legislators knew of their interest and involvement in Fair and Clean Elections.

Who can remember a time in West Virginia when the faith community, environmentalists, educators, organized labor, senior citizens, social workers, advocates for children *continued on page 12*

★★ DEMOCRACY WORKS! ★★

Clean Elections Needed -

continued from page 11

and others were working together? It truly is inspiring and more than that -it's powerful.

Rather than be discouraged, Citizens for Clean Elections will continue to meet on a monthly basis and begin planning a new campaign to raise awareness that regular West Virginians deserve better treatment from the legislators.

"Voter-owned," Fair and Clean elections is the much-needed first step to breaking the stranglehold of big special interests on our politicians.

For more information about Fair and Clean, "voterowned" elections, check out our website at www.wvoterowned.org.

Much More Work To Be Done



For the past several years, OVEC board, staff and members have joined with the Huntington-Cabell Branch of the NAACP for the march in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On Jan. 17, 2005, despite temperatures of 18 degrees F., about 100 people marched through the streets of Huntington, WV, to honor King's work and to acknowledge that much remains to be done. Pictured are an OVEC board member, Marshall professors, and OVEC staffers.

photo by Viv Stockman

We NEeD YouR HELp!

• \$2.50 pays for mailing foundations our grant proposals, which allow OVEC to continue our outreach to coalfield communities on the issues of mountaintop removal and sludge impoundments, and the legislative work of passing Clean Elections in West Virginia.



Kennedy —

continued from page 9

Kennedy also quotes Benito Mussolini's insight that "fascism should more appropriately be called corporatism because it is the merger of state and corporate power."

"The biggest threat to American democracy is corporate power," Kennedy said. "There is vogue in the White House to talk about the threat of big government. But since the beginning of our national history, our most visionary political leaders have warned the American public against the domination of government by corporate power. That warning is missing in the national debate right now. Because so much corporate money is going into politics, the Democratic Party itself has dropped the ball. They just quash discussion about the corrosive impact of excessive corporate power on American democracy."

(Excerpted from *Kennedy: Fascist America* by Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman.)

China Bites the Coal Bullet

The Chinese government is to introduce reforms intended to increase mine safety, and reduce environmental damage (as) part of a (possible) campaign to move away from a reliance on coal-based energy...

Last year, 1.8 billion tons of coal was mined in China, which is now the second biggest greenhouse gas emitter after the U.S. in overall terms.

Get ACtION ALeRtS!

Stay Informed by E-mail: Join OVEC's Action Alert! e-mail list by sending an e-mail with "join list" in the subject line to vivian@ohvec.org. This is not a discussion list, so you won't be swamped with e-mails.

Stay Informed by Phone: If you don't have or don't like e-mail, call the OVEC office at (304) 522-0246 and ask to be put on our Call List. We'll need your name and phone number. Don't worry - we will only call to let you know about major events or actions.

Stay Informed by WWW: Visit www.ohvec.org frequently for news and action updates. Check out our extensive background information in the Issues section. Look for your friends in the People in Action section.

Kick-Off Rally & Concert Mountain Justice Summer Underway

by Vivian Stockman

On March 31, pro-mountain folks from Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and, of course, West Virginia gathered at the State Capitol in Charleston, WV, as Coal River Mountain Watch hosted a rally and free concert to announce the Mountain Justice Summer campaign.

"Mountain Justice Summer is a campaign to bring regional, national, and international attention to the human rights abuses and environmental devastation caused by this most destructive form of mining," said Coal River Mountain Watch volunteer Bo Webb.

He and other Coal River members, as well as several folks from other Appalachian states, worked extra-hard to organize the rally, which featured fiery

speakers and talented singer-songwriters, including former Secretary of State Ken Hechler, and whistleblower and coal



A massive American flag, put up across the Statehouse steps especially for the Friends of Coal rally. At the Mountain Justice Summer rally, speaker Matt Sherman pointed out this tried and true marketing technique: If something isn't selling, wrap it in the flag.

sludge impoundment expert Jack Spadaro.

Mountain Justice Summer is a loose coalition of individuals and groups from across Appalachia and beyond, all of whom share the common goal of ending mountaintop removal coal mining.

Katúah Earth First! didn't want to just watch as mountaintop removal encroaches into Tennessee, so the group conceived Mountain Justice Summer (MJS). The campaign is meant to be something that any



The MJS rally begins and the many signs get the point across.

group or individual can support in whatever way they feel comfortable, as long as there is no violence or property destruction.

OVEC is 100 percent committed to non-violence. Like other groups working to end mountaintop removal, we respect the right of individuals to carry on in the grand tradition of the civil rights movement. This summer, OVEC *continued on page 14*

Outsiders??? Yeah, Right!

In response to a *State Journal* editorial, "Don't We Have Problems of Our Own?", OVEC's co-director Janet Fout wrote:

Chris Stirewalt's recent commentary trivializes the concerns of people organizing Mountain Justice Summer with its goal to raise awareness to mountaintop removal coal mining.

He resorts to personal attacks referring to the activists and their "traveling eco-circus," their "Birkenstocks, and patchouli oil" – cheap shots meant to deflect from truly serious issues.

People organizing the events this summer are seeing mountaintop removal in their home state of Tennessee. Unlike the silent masses, they are not content to stick their heads in the sand, while mine companies have their way; *continued on page 14*

Mountain Justice -

continued from page 13

will continue all our usual roles, one of which is disseminating information on mountaintop removal, so we will certainly be sharing information on MJS rallies and protests.

OVEC sees and understands people's building outrage over the destruction of home and homeland that is mountaintop removal. Coalfield residents are under assault. They (we), and their (our) supporters, have tried to work within the system, but mountains continue to fall, streams and forests continue to die, regulators continue to turn a blind eye, and politicians continue to bow to the bucks of King Coal.

OVEC, WV Highlands Conservancy, Coal River Mountain Watch, Kentuckians For The

Commonwealth and other groups have brought mountaintop removal into the regional, national and even international spotlight. This attention was bound to rouse others to action.

Already, some pundits are labeling the Earth First!ers as "outsiders." Now, more than ever, there simply is no such thing as an outsider. All life is connected and all struggles for justice are connected.



Ms. Mountaintop Removal and Ms. Blasting appeared at the event and were winners at the first-ever Ms. Mountaintop Removal Beauty Contest.

Outsiders? —

continued from page 13

instead, they are moved to defend that which they love – not just the mountains, but the people who have lived among them for generations.

If the writer's concern is about "outsiders" coming into West Virginia to save us from ourselves, he's about a hundred years too late, given that coal and timber barons stole our resources and land and are now leaving us with their legacy of blasted mountains, repeated flooding, contaminated or dried up water wells, annihilated communities, deforestation, and loss of culture to name a few impacts – costs seldom counted in the economic equation.

Recently, 3-year-old Jeremy Davidson was crushed to death in his bed in Appalachia, Va., when a boulder rolled off a

mountaintop removal site. The coal company was illegally expanding a road.

Although Stirewalt refers to the "need for cheap, abundant electricity," the true cost of coal is anything but cheap.

Just ask Jeremy Davidson's parents or others who continue to pay the price, every single day.

Mountain Justice Summer Follows Friends of Coal Rally at Capitol

The MJS event started less than an hour after the Astroturf group "Friends of Coal" (aka FOC - FIENDS of Coal) held a rally on the Statehouse steps.

Miners were given the day off and bussed in to hear about the joys of coal, extolled upon by the likes of Gov. Manchin and Rep. Shelly Moore Capito (aka Shelly MORE DeCAPITATE) as they stood beneath a giant

We NEeD YouR HELp!

• \$3.00 pays for a week of newspaper subscriptions, which allows the OVEC staff to stay on top of local and worldwide events that affect our work, and to track the global *E* publicity that mountaintop removal mining is getting.



American flag. The *Charleston Gazette* article on the FOCers rally reported:

"Secretary of State Betty Ireland also spoke at the FOC rally, as did former Marshall football coach Bob Pruett.

"Pruett, a Raleigh County native and paid FOC spokesman, said coal mining played a big role in his life. He said his father died of black lung; his father-inlaw died in a slate fall...

"I truly do understand what coal has done for us in the past," Pruett said."

Those FOCers sure know how to buy some swift spokespeople! (Remember ex-WVU coach Don Nehlen saying that West Virginia needs to mine coal more like China does? About 6,000 die in China's mines *every year*.)

Mountaintop Removal in Mingo County - Without a Permit!

by Barbara Chafin

"The King Coal highway is a planned four-lane, partially controlled access highway that extends from Williamson, WV, to Bluefield, WV. This approximately 94 mile long roadway is intended to improve the transportation system in Southern WV while enhancing opportunities for economic development." (Environmental Reevaluation, Red Jacket Project, May 2004).

At the last public meeting for the King Coal Highway, in fall 2000, residents of Red Jacket and other Mingo County towns were told the mountaintop highway would change the area's elevation by 80 feet. Full funding for the highway wouldn't be available for 20-25 years, area residents were told.

In Dec. 2003, Nicewonder Contracting filed a legal notice in the Williamson newspaper, stating that the company would be preparing the road bed for the highway. This ad said the road would create 14 valley fills with associated sediment ponds. Seeing Nicewonder raised my eyebrows, because they're the ones who own White Flame Energy.

In 1989, that company stripped 400 feet off a mountain above my hollow, Straight Fork Hollow, and one

"Nicewonder Contracting is working under a Dept. of Highways contract. They do not fall under any WVDEP/MR or OEB guidelines. They are however following some of the mining guide lines for their own protection. This is on their own behalf and we have no say so or control of their construction practices. Nicewonder Contracting is responsible for their work and liabilities until the DOH takes over the project." (WV DEP, Blasting Complaint Investigation)

of their ponds broke, causing flooding. Now this same company would be putting in 14 more valley fills, under the guise of road bed preparation, without even the small protection that a mining permit offers! That's right – this is going on not under the

permitting process of the so-called Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), but instead under the state Department of Highways (DOH).

Through research and phone calls (by now, I've probably spoken with 70 different people at the DOH) I found out there were two fills proposed to go into the hollow above my home. I obtained a copy of the highway's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) from the DOH. The EIS said there were no known subsurface mines in the build



Even before all the new valley fills are in, Barb's hollow suffered another round of flooding last May. Here, her husband Robey examines the damage.

area. This floored me. This is the heart of the "Billion Dollar Coal Fields;" do they not know why? Though Ben Hark at the engineering department denied it, there *are* underground mines in the area.

DOH maps showed that there were going to be two valley fills in the hollow, the largest one of the 14 about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile away from my home, and another about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles away. Though not identified on the maps, there are abandoned mines on each side of these proposed valley fills and there are abandoned mines underneath them as well. This is the makings of a major disaster!

For our protection, before a flood washes away our homes, and maybe our lives, I want to get bought out. I wish our neighbors would listen and speak up.

Mike Whit, who is in charge of the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority, told DOH the community is in no danger. Whit is not in any position to make such a judgment on the safety of the hollow!

DOH officials are talking to me like I'm a complete lunatic. Since Mike Whit has said that we are not in any danger, they are taking it as gospel truth.

After I called them over and over, the DEP finally gathered all the maps together, and should assemble a report on the underground, abandoned mines. I am going to turn that report over to the DOH so those mines get on their maps. "Should previously unidentified subsurface mines be found during construction, mitigation measures could include bridging, sealing, subsurface reinforcement, backfilling, or capping the deep mine area." (King Coal Highway Final

continued on page 16

Mining With No Permit

continued from page 15

EIS). Before they could seal and stabilize all of these mines they could probably build a road from here to China. Just in this area behind us, there are at least 10 underground mine openings.

A new consolidated high school, proposed as part of this project, would be built on a site where several seams of coal have been mined. The Kanawha County Circuit Court ordered a cease to the school building until a public hearing this May. Nicewonder is offering to pass the deed on to the school board in October if the remaining coal is mined. But Nicewonder doesn't even own the land; the company is leasing the land from the Thompson heirs.

I do not understand how the DOH entered into an agreement with a coal company where state and federal money can be used to mine coal without a permit.

This is not just incidental extraction of coal. They are going down 200 feet and removing four seams of coal and then they will backfill 120 feet so that the elevation change will only be 80 feet! There is anywhere from 1.5 million to 5 million tons of coal. This corrupt agreement has now provoked a lawsuit from a construction union because the DOH did not put the job up for bid!

In apparent retaliation for my husband and myself raising cane about this corrupt and dangerous deal, Pocahontas Land Company has now locked us out of our family cemetery.

I feel that, in order to distract us, Pocahontas is also trying to force us to give up a piece of property that my husband Roby inherited from his grandfather. Two weeks after I started calling to find out what was going on with the highway they showed up saying that they had rights to the property which had been in the family since 1945!

I've got a problem with a company coming in and doing something illegal and taking away millions of dollars out of state. In the process we are going to lose our home.

We NEeD YouR HELp!

• \$4.00 pays for a ream of paper on which we can print everything from letters to legislators, to informational fliers, to handouts for events, to the newsletter you are reading right now.



We are going to lose everything that we have worked for.

They claim that they are going to build developments and hotels, but it's going to be all on top of valley fills that are above underground mines. If the road falls in and there is a major accident and people are killed, who is going to be responsible for that? Who is responsible now? The DOH will not even say who actually signed the dotted line to allow Nicewonder Contracting to strip mine four seams of coal and build 14 valley fills without a permit.

Nobody is willing to take responsibility for this. 🍵

A Commitment to Dismantle Racism

Over the next two years, OVEC's new Anti-Racism Transformation Team will be trained to lead Dismantling Racism workshops. The team is part of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia's commitment to dismantling racism within itself, the groups it funds in the region, and ultimately all of Appalachia.

Understanding racism and privilege as institutions of oppressive and prejudicial power which infect our society at every level is integral to understanding and beginning to overcome social and economic injustice. The team will help OVEC understand and address these issues in depth, which will make our work more effective and sustainable.

It's Official, She's a Bird Brain



For the second year running, a Tufted titmouse living near her home has been alighting on Janet Fout's head and "harvesting" strands of her hair for its nest. Janet, OVEC's co-director, is an avid birder, but this takes the term "bird-brain" to a whole new level!

When you're finished with this newsletter, please pass it on!

Island Creek - A Growing List of Serious Environmental Issues

by Moss Burgess

Logan County citizen activist

We, citizens on Island Creek on Rte. 44 in Logan County, have been actively involved in flood prevention and stream restoration. We were devastated by floods in May, 1996 and Memorial Day, 2004. These two floods have been the highest, we believe, due to strip mining and clearcutting – many of us have lived here over 50 years. We know that flooding is due to various factors but the clearcutting and strip mining are definitely major factors in the height of the flood.

FLOODS

The DEP asked for a meeting with us and we met on April 11 at the agency's Logan office. Present were DEP Officials, representatives from Massey Coal, Arch Coal and our representatives. Discussion centered around using mitigation credits whereby the coal companies would help restore the creek.

We are anxious to see something done. Also legal means are being studied, to be used if necessary, to recoup some of the damage done to us. Our flood insurance is so high, in some cases over \$1,000 a year, that many of us on fixed incomes had to drop it. Our property values have decreased and we are left holding the bag!

by Moss Burgess

PCBs

Logan County citizen activist

Sarah Ann is a community of Island Creek, which is a watershed about 20 miles long. Above that community, adjacent to the highway, there is an abandoned mine site. Here, we came across vandalized electric transformers, with their chemical-laden oil dumped on the ground. There are over 24 of these large transformers, which I assume were vandalized for the wire.

Sarah Ann gets its drinking water from private wells, which are down slope and downstream from this contaminated site. The creek in this area flows into the Guyandotte River, which flows all the way to the Ohio. All downstream communities are in line for this known contamination. We were told the mine site was abandoned around 1992. I have e-mailed the *Charleston Gazette* and others, but I can't seem to get the news out.

Why wasn't the bond used immediately to clean up this mess? Will the DEP do a better job with their policing of the Water Quality Board than they did with this bond?



Some of the transformers on a snowy day.

E-Day! at State Capitol - Activists and Others Honored at Annual Event

Over 30 groups and sustainable businesses participated in the West Virginia Environmental Council's 16th annual E-Day! at the State Capitol. This year, we tabled in the hallways in front of the House and Senate chambers, so we had loads of traffic. As usual, though, legislators largely steered clear of our displays – must be scary for them to contemplate the people's need for clean air, clean water and clean elections.

New exhibitors this year included the Citizens for Clean Elections and the Sludge Safety Project (SSP). Mingo County resident Walter Young, Boone County resident Maria Gunnoe and her daughter, and United Mine Worker miners Dwight Siemiaczko and Charlie Treadway staffed the SSP table, handing out brochures about coal sludge impoundments. Later that evening at the E-Day! reception, Steve Himes treated us to some smooth jazz before an emotional awards ceremony. Many thanks to the E-Council lobby team, staff and board of directors for pulling off an excellent E-Day!

2005 Environmental Council Award Winners: Laura Forman Grassroots Environmental Activist – Judith S. Rodd.

Linda Schnautz Environmental Courage – Maria Gunnoe.

Green Entrepreneur – LaPaix Herb Farm, Myra Bonhage-Hale.

Chuck Chambers Public Service – Libby Chatfield. **Mother Jones Award** – Dave Saville.

These Are Your Mountains . . .





We NEeD YouR HELp!

• **\$5.00 pays for 83 pages of printing.** This allows us to produce everything from fliers and brochures to fundraising letters, getting the word out to an ever-growing audience of concerned people.



Clockwise from top: An undisturbed vista of some of the oldest mountains in the world, rich in diversity of trees, plants and animals; A mountain homeplace in the fall, soon to be the target of a mountaintop removal mining project; Black-winged Damselflies, one of the building blocks of the mountain ecosystem, have a hard time finding food in barren, "reclaimed" mountaintop removal sites.



... These Are Your Mountains on Massey... or Arch ... or ...





Clockwise from top left: More explosives are used to decapitate mountains in Appalachia then have been used fighting the "war" on terror; Illegal drainage from a coal sludge impoundment in Mingo County. When tested, this so-called water proved to be very high in nickel; "Reclamation" underway at a mountaintop removal/ valley fill mining site. The patchy areas above the building are where the coal companies are attempting to get grass to grow on churned-over subsoils and bare rock.



ANY QUESTIONS?

THANKS - To all our members and supporters!

To each of you who has written a letter to the editor recently.

To all of you who called, e-mailed and visited legislators during the session.

To Pat Barker for helping with data entry and data collection.

To Mary Wildfire and Greg Wood for editing.

To Winnie Fox, Julian Martin, John Gancs for a special action at the legislature.

To R.B. for continually offering crash space and generally pampering OVEC staff when they have to stay in Charleston.

To Larry Gibson for his patience and hard work in figuring out details for this summer. To John Moorhead for help with the Sludge Safety Project (SSP) mailing.

To Michael Morrison for all of his work on SSP and for hosting a wonderful house party. To Morgan and Graham Oberly for their help with the Summit for Mountains mailing.

To Carol Young and Denver Mitchell for help on E-Day!

To Brandi Jacobs, Mike Morrison and Chris Worth for joining the Dismantling Racism team.

To Maria Gunnoe, Walter Young, Dwight Siemiaczko and Charlie Treadway at the Sludge Safety Project table on E-Day!

To the WV Environmental Council and WV Citizen Action Group lobby teams!

Thanks to the Unitarian Universalist Church in Charleston for providing monthly meeting space to the Friends of the Mountains Coalition meeting.

Thanks to the Peytona Church of Christ for providing monthly meeting space to the Sludge Safety Project.

For perseverance on Clean Elections: Elinore and Nancy Taylor, Michael Morrison, Rev. Dennis Sparks, Susan Sobkoviak, Steve White, Julie Archer, Si Galperin, Laura Phillips, Sarah Kidd, John Welbourn, Helaine Rotkin, Mayor Richie Robb, Sue Price, Perry Bryant, Kathryn Stone, Mary Wildfire, Carol Warren, Don Garvin, Allan Tweddle, and

We NEeD YouR HELp!

• **\$10.00 pays for 1 day of rent for our office space in Huntington.** The view isn't too great, but it does give

us enough room to work and store materials. And at least we do have windows now!

Kitty Lozier.

Thanks to everyone who sent postcards, letters, e-mails or called their legislators asking them to support the Clean Elections pilot ζ





Council of Churches, the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation and the West Virginia Education Association for the use of their facilities for Clean Elections meetings.

Thanks – and *sorry!* – to all the people we inadvertently left off this list!

Evangelical Leaders Join Global Warming Battle, Cite Stewardship

by Laurie Goodstein New York Times, March 16, 2005

A core group of influential evangelical leaders has put its considerable political power behind a cause that has barely registered on the evangelical agenda, fighting global warming.

These church leaders, scientists, writers and heads of international aid agencies argue that global warming is an urgent threat, a cause of poverty and a Christian issue because the Bible mandates stewardship of God's creation.

The Rev. Rich Cizik, vice president of governmental affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, said, "I don't think God is going to ask us how He created the Earth, but He will ask us what we did with what he created."

...People on all sides of the debate say that if evangelical leaders take a stand, they could change the political dynamics on global warming.

The (Bush) administration has refused to join the international Kyoto Treaty and opposes mandatory emission controls. The issue has failed to gain much traction in the Republican-controlled Congress. An overwhelming majority of evangelicals are Republicans, and about four out of five evangelicals voted for Bush last year ...

... In October, the association paved the way for broad-based advocacy on the environment when it adopted "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility," a platform that included a plank on "creation care" that many evangelical leaders say was unprecedented. *****

Voices of the Coalfields, Voices of Mountain Lovers Heard Near and Far!

The coal industry is spending millions trying to "brand" mountaintop removal and coal in general as "cleaner" and "greener." Maybe the industry thinks all the mercury it is spewing into the air and water and eventually into our bodies will addle our brains to the point we believe their tripe!

Letters to the editor, one of the most heavily-read sections of newspapers, are a great free way to counter the lies. Show our power and make your voice heard by writing letters to the editors. No matter where you live, we are asking that you regularly write to your local newspaper, as well as other papers across the state and nation.

Try to keep your letters short, about 200 words (this varies depending on the paper). Be sure to include your name, town and phone number (it won't be published; it's only used to verify with you that the letter is yours). You can get contact information for almost any paper in the nation at www.newslink.org/.

Here are some recent letters to the editors. For the Sake of the Mountains – Write!

Mining coal only darkens our future

Huntington Herald-Dispatch, April 14, 2005

Our sons and daughters are in Iraq because George W. Bush started an unprovoked war with Iraq.

What the Iraq mess has to do with coal production in West Virginia is known only to the Logan Coal Vendors Association and the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce. It has nothing whatever to do with freedom in the U.S.

It is very difficult for me to believe the Logan Coal Vendors Association would stoop so low as to even try to equate coal production with patriotism and the 'future of our children and grandchildren."

Why not just come right out and say, "raping West Virginia of her natural resources is the patriotic and Christian thing to do. The more mountains we destroy, the greater will be our reward in Heaven."

In fact, the more coal we rip from our scenic and wondrous mountains the more bleak the future of our children and grandchildren will be. Only the Don Blankenships of the world would think otherwise.

Bill Morefield Princeton, W.Va.

Mountaintop mining is illegal under law

Huntington Herald-Dispatch, April 14, 2005

Mountaintop removal is against the law. There are ample laws to protect people that are being ignored by state and federal government, like the Clean Water Act, which makes valley fills illegal. This means that government agencies are conspiring with the coal companies in criminal activities.

Without enforcement of these laws, the health and well-being of all West Virginians is endangered by outside companies like Massey who care nothing for the beauty of our state and the well-being of our residents.

We as West Virginians should come together to demand that these laws are enforced to their fullest extent and call for the prosecution of any violators. We should demand that Stephanie Timmermeyer of the Department of Environmental Protection stop permits for mountaintop removal, a criminal practice that causes floods, damages people's wells and homes, and produces millions of gallons of toxic sludge.

This is not coal mining. This is simply raping and destroying of our land. Deep mining creates more jobs.

There are some Christians who say that Jesus is coming anyway, and we don't have to worry about this destruction. This cannot be an excuse for us to allow something that God would really dislike. Do people quit their jobs because Jesus is coming? Then neither should we stop working to end this madness of mountaintop removal.

Michael Morrison Barboursville

Hills not filled with the sound of music

Charleston Gazette, March 3, 2005

The hills of West Virginia are not filled with the sounds of music. They are filled to the horrific screams of Walker



continued on page 23



CALENDAR

This Summer: Mountain Justice Summer. Visit www.mountainjusticesummer.org to find out how you can hook up with events in your area.

May 6: 9:30 a.m. Chief Logan State Park. Logan, WV. The State Historic Preservation meets to hear the Friends of the Mountains' proposal to preserve Blair Mountain as a National Historical Site. Blair Mountain, a miners' battle ground, could be destroyed by mountaintop removal. We'll need a good showing of supporters to save this historical site. Call the OVEC office for details, (304)522-0246.

May 7: 7 p.m. Cultural Center in Charleston, WV. Free preview screening of the PBS special "The Appalachians." The evening includes a 50-minute excerpt of the three-hour documentary, live music by Gandydancer, who play in the film. Companion books and CDs will be on sale. Author Denise Giardina, Coal River's Judy Bonds and OVEC's Janet Fout were filmed for the 3-hour documentary.

May 8, May 15, May 22: WV Public Broadcasting TV will air one-hour segments of "The Appalachians." On May 18, they will air the entire 3-hour documentary. For listings in other areas, follow the links at www.sierraclub.org/ appalachia/film/.

May 14: 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free training at the WVDEP offices, 601 57th St., Charleston, WV. Lunch on your own, plenty of nearby restaurants. Coal River Mountain Watch

We NEeD YouR HELp!

• \$10.00 pays for two day's upkeep of the website. Yes, it's worth it! Have you been to our website lately? The website allows us to do outreach to hundreds of people every week. We get requests for permission to use our photos weekly, sometimes daily, from students, text book publishers, and publications as large as the New York Times, to as

small as groups' newsletters. We ask for a donation from the for-profit publications, while we ask non-profits to link to our website.

The website also allows supporters to make on-line donations through PayPal. We receive donations from all over the world this way.





has worked with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to set up a citizen training on how to read coal mining permits. To register for the training, call Pam Nixon, environmental advocate, at (800) 654-5228 or e-mail her at pnixon@wvdep.org.

Topics include the Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation Act, basic map reading, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits, 401 Section permits, coal waste impoundments, blasting and how to navigate the DEP Website.

May 14: 7 p.m. Free! West Virginia Labor History Association Presents the First WV Labor History Film Festival, with speakers Davitt McAteer and Jack Spadaro. Films: "Monongah, 1907," produced by Mr. McAteer about a mining disaster that killed 362 miners (29 mins); and "Sludge," a new film from Appalshop on the 2002 Martin County Disaster with a focus on Jack Spadaro, a leading mine safety advocate (55 mins). At the LaBelle Theatre, 311 D St., South Charleston, WV.

May 20-22: 5th Summit for the Mountains. Please plan to attend the 5th Summit for the Mountains, from Friday evening May 20 thru Sunday afternoon May 22. This year's Summit will be held at Camp Virgil Tate, Sissonville, WV. To register, call the OVEC office ASAP. At 304-522-0246.

June 17-19: Renewable Energy and Sustainable Living Fair in Wisconsin. OVEC's Dianne Bady is a keynote speaker, See www.the-mrea.org for details.

People Pollution is Wearing Out Earth

Knight-Ridder Newspapers, April 1, 2005

We humans are using the Earth to improve our lives, but our children and grandchildren will be forced to live in a deteriorating environment that endangers their existence, more than 1,300 scientists warn ... But it's not hopeless, the scientists said.

The five-year study ... arrived at a mixed prognosis for planet Earth: Its deteriorating environmental health is treatable, but only with aggressive and expensive corrective measures

Scientists looked at 24 "services" the Earth's ecosystem provided and found that 15 are in trouble. See the report at: www.millenniumassessment.org.

Letters to the Editor -

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Big Cats ripping the guts out of the mountains and roars of dynamite blowing up the hillsides and destroying our lifesustaining water. The sounds of the screeching machines sound out the death and destruction of the inevitable floods and disasters.

The sounds in the Legislature are not an orchestra of justice for the coalfield residents, but the same old anthem that is sung by the patriots of the coal corporations.

The day that Bush grabbed power was the day the music died. The parents/grandparents of the sacrificed children hear taps played out as yet another generation is brought home from the war to be buried.

The corporate-owned media are the dancing monkeys that are tied to the organ grinder as the people of West Virginia are expected to be spectators of the farcical entertainment as the cup is filled with the taxpayer's money.

Another song with different lyrics needs to be sung. We must celebrate life with songs of protest and create an organized orchestra of harmonic chords of resistance. This band needs instruments, singers and lyricists.

Winnie Fox Huntington

Manchin, Massey Not Our Kings Charleston Gazette, Jan. 27, 2005

Why does the new governor want to silence the citizens' employees? Does it have something to do with the recent commitment to speed up mining permits, including mountaintop removal permits through the DEP office?

Stephanie Timmermeyer's job was in jeopardy before the election until she made a public statement that the mining permits will be processed more quickly.

Are we now becoming a police state ruled by Massey's Don Blankenship and other coal barons through a puppet governor's office? Is our state poised for the final rape? We in the coalfields will not be silenced.

It is time for all West Virginians to stand up for their rights. The governor is not king, and neither are the coal barons. It's time to take back our rights!

Bo Webb

Naoma

Make a **DIFFERENCE**! Join a WINNING TEAM! Get ACTIVE with OVEC!

C OVEC stopped plans for a toxic waste incinerator in Ohio that would have imported waste from across the nation.	
C OVEC organizing forced an end to chronic pollution violations at the Ashland Oil refinery in Catlettsburg, Ky.	
C OVEC led the broad effort to stop plans for the nation's largest pulp mill, in Apple Grove, WV.	
C OVEC worked with other groups to stimulate passage of first-step campaign finance reform laws in West Virginia.	
OVEC is changing the face of "politics as usual" in West Virginia through our Clean Elections work.	
C OVEC is committed to bringing an end to mountaintop removal/valley fill strip mining.	
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More mountaintop removal is encroaching on OVEC board member Larry Gibson's Kayford Mountain homeplace. Creating a very dangerous situation, Massey Energy is dumping boulder-laden former mountaintop over a hillside, which meets the road up to the mountain.

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition P O Box 6753 Huntington WV 25773-6753

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