



Winds of Change

the newsletter of the

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

Huntington, WV

www.ohvec.org

MAJOR VICTORY Corps Must Halt New Valley Fills!

(Excerpted and adapted from news reports by Ken Ward Jr. of the Charleston Gazette, the Associated Press and other sources.)

In March, a federal judge blocked permits for four mountaintop removal mines, in a major ruling that could force much tougher regulation of West Virginia’s coal industry.

Citing the “alarming cumulative stream loss” to valley

“The families whose homes, communities, day-to-day life and general well-being are at risk from mountaintop removal are right in speaking out. These permits should have not been issued in the first place. Judge Chambers has ruled that the massive destruction of mountaintop removal is improperly permitted. It is the same practice that continues to take jobs from underground miners in the first place.”
– Chuck Nelson, former deep miner

fills, U.S. District Judge Robert C. Chambers ruled that more thorough reviews of the mines’ potential impacts must be done before permits can be approved.

Chambers rescinded four permits issued to subsidiaries of Massey Energy,

and sent the mine proposals back to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a more detailed study.

His ruling has been expected for months, following



A valley fill with the Corps’ idea of “streams” on either side. Hurry along folks, no significant impacts to be seen here. photo by Giles Ashford, www.ashford7.com. a six-day trial in Huntington in October 2006.

“Judge Chambers is the third federal judge to find that the corps’ actions permitting mountaintop removal violate the Clean Water Act,” said Joe Lovett, of the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment. “It’s clear that the Corps has been permitting the destruction of southern West Virginia without complying with the most fundamental federal environmental laws.”

The case was filed by OVEC, WV Highlands

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Quantum Leadership:

The Power of Community in Motion

This just-released book by Jennifer Milewski reports on findings from New York University's six-year study of the leadership practices of awardees of the Ford Foundation's Leadership for a Changing World program, which recognized organizations with impressive real-world successes in fighting some of the toughest social justice battles in the U.S. In 2001, OVEC's Janet Keating, Laura Forman, and Dianne Bady were selected, out of over three thousand nominees, in the first group of 20 awardees. Excerpts from the book follow:

The seven drivers of quantum leadership

1. Build strong community relationships.
2. Open the space for community initiative.
3. Find the deep sources of strength.
4. Face the wind and bend without breaking.
5. Stretch and build the relationships outward.
6. Encourage purposeful learning.
7. Bring the future into the present.

FACE THE WIND AND BEND WITHOUT BREAKING

Being the Change You Wish to See – To change the world is, in some sense, to begin to address the differences between the world as it is and the world as it could be. Confronting this difference can be stark and overwhelming; how does one begin?

Respecting the Chaos and Allowing Order to Emerge – When the need for change seems urgent and the case for action is agonizingly clear and pressing, any setback, any piece of doubt or uncertainty, can seem unbearable. A human response in the face of such confusion is to try to sweep away uncertainly, to try to control or otherwise

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Walking through the fog ... to Kayford Mountain.

photo by Giles Ashford



MAJOR VICTORY

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Conservancy and Coal River Mountain Watch. Along with Lovett, attorneys from the Washington, D.C.-based group Earthjustice represented the groups. Although the judge's decision involves just four mines, the groups believe it will **affect more than 30 pending permits for surface mines in West Virginia, as well as permits in other states.**

The four permits at issue would strip about 3,800 acres of hills and hollows, and bury more than 12 miles of streams, according to court records and West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection data.

Between 1985 and 2001, **more than 1,200 miles of Appalachian streams were buried or otherwise damaged by mountaintop removal**, according to a federal government study. Without additional restrictions, the May 2003 study projected, a total of 2,200 square miles of

OVEC Members Mourn with Virginia Tech

So many there are working to end mountaintop removal. One of the fallen in the incomprehensible massacre was Julia Pryde, who had been involved with Mountain Justice Summer, among many other things.



Julia stood out as a natural-born teacher/scholar. Her love of science and deep respect for nature spoke loud and clear. Passionate, organized, and a real people-person, Julia was a beacon of hope for the future among her peers.



Appalachian forests would be eliminated.

The case before Chambers is a follow-up lawsuit to Judge Joseph Goodwin's earlier ruling, which blocked the Corps from reviewing valley fill proposals through a streamlined "general permit" process.

With their new case, the groups argue that the Corps was wrong to approve mining operations through more detailed "individual permit" reviews.

The judge said the Corps must conduct "a full assessment of the streams' ecological functions" before concluding that damage would be minimal or that damage can be offset with various "mitigation" techniques.

He blasted the Corps' consistent finding that sediment ditches built on mine sites can be turned into man-made streams that adequately replace the headwaters creeks that are buried by mining.

Chambers also found that the Corps did not properly consider the cumulative impacts of the proposed permits, along with existing and previous mining in the area. He said the agency might decide that an environmental impact statement is needed for each permit.


"Moreover," the judge wrote, "while surface mining is heavily regulated by federal and state agencies, Congress mandated that the corps 'maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation's waters,' which may require the corps ultimately to deny the permits if the adverse impacts to the waters are significant."

In April, the judge suspended parts of his ruling so that Massey can continue to dump waste rock and dirt into valley fills already started at three of the four operations. But Massey's new, planned valley fills cannot be started.

The judge essentially said the streams at stake were already irreversibly harmed.

Over the past seven years, two federal judges in West Virginia have issued rulings to more tightly regulate mountaintop removal, in response to lawsuits by OVEC and others.

Both of those rulings were overturned by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va.

Massey, based in Richmond, had intervened in the case and will appeal the ruling, but, according to Mulhern with Earthjustice, "A successful appeal will be difficult this time. There's no evidence in the trial record to support the Corps' claims." 

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Winds of Change Editor	Vivian Stockman
Winds of Change Badger Handler	Monty Fowler

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

P.O. Box 6753, Huntington, WV 25773

phone: (304) 522-0246 fax: (304) 522-4079

e-mail: ohvec@ohvec.org web page: www.ohvec.org

OVEC is a founding member of Community Shares of West Virginia and a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Quantum Leadership

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eradicate the chaos.

Quantum leadership holds fast in the face of uncertainty by acknowledging that the mess is part of the process.

Sometimes the needed response is not to stand rigidly but to **bend with the wind** – to acknowledge the uncertainty and to move, not against it, but through and beyond it.

The Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition's Dianne Bady, Janet Keating and Laura Forman (who died suddenly in 2001) fight mining-related environmental depredations such as mountaintop removal in West Virginia.

Often pitted against overwhelmingly powerful opponents and very steep odds, Dianne speaks about embracing the inherent chaos of some of OVEC's work:

"We are often thrown into totally unexpected circumstances that we don't know how to deal with. Our carefully developed plans can become suddenly irrelevant by a new development on the part of the coal industry or the local, state or federal government's capitulation to coal's demands. This not knowing is very difficult to deal with.

"Over the years, Janet and Laura and I together realized that part and parcel of our work was this total disruption of our plans and our subsequent not knowing what to do next. We learned together that in these situations, we needed to rely on pure spiritual trust. We developed the idea that sometimes we just walk through a fog, and that IS the way it's supposed to be, it's not just a total disruption of our work – it IS our work."

Dianne elaborates on the very real-world gains that can result from this mystical-sounding embracing of chaos.

"Our basic style of leadership is to provide the spaces for concerned people to get together, share their anger, and work through the darkness to come up with plans. Often this means dealing with chaos. Everybody may have a different idea. Six people may talk at once. Some may disagree with others. But if we keep talking through the chaos, treating each other with care and

respect, sooner or later a plan emerges.

"Sometimes magical things happen. We see shy and unlikely people speaking with an eloquence that makes our skin tingle, or successfully taking a leadership role that seems beyond their past experiences. And often, we somehow attract the right people and resources, just when we need them.

"I trust that the chaos will eventually turn into some workable plans. I trust that sometimes we'll get help in totally unexpected ways. I trust that when we screw something up, we'll learn from it. When I fall, I trust that there will be others there to help pick me up."

"And I even trust that if we fail completely at getting a specific win or gain, that the very act of our cooperative resistance sends positive ripples through our corner of the cosmos."

Feeling the Pain and Anger Inherent in Organizing – Working for social change can be heartbreaking. To maintain the strong community ties that give quantum leadership its strength, leaders have to be at peace with the work's demands and periodic grief. When disappointments arise, leaders must hold fast in the face of pain and discomfort by recognizing that the disappointments and disagreements are unavoidable, and taking the necessary care of themselves and their community.

Dianne Bady of OVEC addresses the forces that can act on community activists to heighten tension and exacerbate interpersonal conflict, and the need to deal with such inherent realities head-on by institutionalizing ways that participants can take care of themselves and one another in the face of conflict.

"Our members are often in the trenches getting bombs thrown at them. These situations make interpersonal relationships a huge potential problem, as highly stressed people are usually not at their best in constructively dealing with inevitable disagreements... I can't overemphasize the importance to OVEC of our focus on dealing with conflicts as they arise, before they explode into big problems – conflicts within our group, within the community, with coalition partners."



Recycle your INK JET PRINTER CARTRIDGES and now old CELL PHONES and help OVEC raise \$\$\$. Call or e-mail Maryanne, (304) 522-0246, or maryanne@ohvec.org, to get your supply of *postage-paid* bags. It's simple, easy, and good for the environment.





Clean Drinking Water at Long Last!

On the same day the WV legislature passed our Sludge Safety Project's resolution requiring the state to study the impacts of underground coal sludge injection on drinking water wells and human health, municipal water started flowing out of taps into homes in a couple of Mingo County communities.

Soon after, the water project was completed. It serves about 700 people living in Lick Creek, Rawl, Merrimac and Sprigg, some of whom are OVEC members who actively worked to make certain the legislature passed the coal sludge study resolution.

"We tried for 13 years on our own, but once we partnered with OVEC, people started paying attention. OVEC gave us expertise, help, and contacts to get us clean water here," said Lick Creek residents Debbie and B.I. Sammons.

"The residents are tickled to death to have good, clean city water," J.B. Heflin, project manager for the Mingo Co. Public Service District told the Williamson Daily News.

Indeed. These folks had been battling for over 13 years to get city water. A nearby coal prep plant had injected billions of gallons of coal sludge underground for decades. People's once-pure well water became contaminated, sometimes running black, sometimes orange and always stinky. Many area families reported strange health problems, such as boils and rashes and kidney stones in young children.

"We had to force ourselves to bathe in the nasty water," said Rawl resident Ernie Brown.

"Things other people take for granted – we had to do different. We had to pack in water. Everything was a major task. We didn't really want to clean the tub – it didn't do any good. We were embarrassed to have people over because of the smell from the water."

Ernie still finds himself reaching for a jug instead of the tap to make the morning coffee. Carmelita, his wife,



In March 2006, two politicians vied for center stage when the promises finally turned into actual funding for the municipal water system. But the water would still run black from faucets in Rawl, Lick Creek, Merrimac and Sprigg in Mingo County without the real stars of the show – all of the community members who worked long-term to DEMAND clean water. They showed us that working together, people can demand – and get – the same public services everyone else in your area enjoys. Clean water should not be a luxury, it is a basic right in this country.

keeps opening the washing machine lid to make certain the water hasn't turned black as she washes clothes.

But, now that the cleaner city water is flowing into their house, baths are a pleasure. They can actually smell the soap and shampoo. Their skin feels different and doesn't itch after a shower. Ernie and Carm now crave water. They have more energy and aren't sleepy all the time, as the fumes from the nasty water have cleared out of their home. They have visitors over without worrying about the water.

Carm, like her husband and so many of her neighbors in all four communities, is relieved to finally have potable water. "I praise God and I thank Him every day."

Mingo County Sludge Safety Project volunteers aren't resting on their laurels; they've been out knocking on doors in other communities. They know what happened to them is not an isolated case. They're sharing their stories, their strategies for success and organizing for a better West Virginia. 🍄

"Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans."
—Jacques Cousteau

12 Ways to Give \$\$\$ to OVEC to Keep Up the Fight

by Janet Keating

People donate to OVEC for many reasons. Some give because they live day-in and day-out with the horrors of mountaintop removal. Others give because they are very involved community leaders or activists – besides giving their time and energy, they also donate their money.

Some, who may not be actively involved in OVEC's work, do so because they share OVEC's values; they care about quality of life issues like clean air, clean water, intact mountains, forests, and communities, as well as participatory democracy. They may not live with the impacts of mountaintop removal, but they see the big picture and know that their gifts make a real difference to the world at large.

Last year, 20 percent of OVEC's budget came from individual donations. This year, we would like to increase that to **30 percent** (We also receive grants from 17 charitable foundations and church groups).

Just as a diverse forest has greater resilience and stability, so it is with non-profit organizations like OVEC. Loyal individual donors help increase our general support funding – the day-to-day operating funds that keep the office doors open, the computers and phone lines humming, the award-winning website current, and many other vital functions, like grassroots organizing.

Local financial support plays a key role in OVEC victories.

People whose drinking water apparently has been polluted by underground injection of toxic coal sludge were able to travel weekly to Charleston to talk with legislators about their lack of clean, potable water. The result was a legislative victory, in spite of the "power" and money of Big Coal – a mandate for a multi-agency study of the impacts of underground coal sludge injection.

Organized citizens won the day! All of OVEC's



Just a sampling of the cool stuff at OVEC's Cafe Press webstore!

April 2: Rare Banner Day in US Supreme Court for the Environment

Ruling 5-4, the Supreme Court found that the federal government had the authority to regulate greenhouse gases that may contribute to global warming. In the most important environmental case in years, the Court rebuffed EPA's claim that regulating those gases was beyond its authority, and its claim that it would not take action even if it did have the

power to do so. The second decision, also in an environmental case, upheld EPA's view that changes in power plants that may contribute to air pollution must be done only with a permit if there is an annual increase in emissions.

donors share in this major accomplishment. To all our members and donors, we offer a big **THANK YOU** for your recent support!

If you aren't a member of OVEC yet, we hope you'll join hundreds of others who are. We need your support more now than ever.

Below are **12 DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO OVEC** – most of them tax deductible!

1. **Become a member!** (pay your annual dues). The form is on page 27 of this newsletter.
2. **Tell others about OVEC.** Help recruit new members! (who pay annual dues).
3. **Become a regular donor** (over and above membership dues). Make an annual pledge.
4. **Do your gift shopping with us!** Check out our on-line store, WWW.CAFEPRESS.COM/OHVEC, or call the office at (304) 522-0246.
5. **Host a house party** to raise funds for a specific project or event. OVEC staff can help with this.
6. **Organize a fundraising event**, like the Treehuggers' Ball, spaghetti dinner, art show, or silent auction.
7. **Donate online** through Paypal at the OVEC website, WWW.OHVEC.ORG/JOIN/INDEX.HTML#DONATE, or Network for Good.
8. **Find out if the company you work for** will match your gift to OVEC.
9. **Commit to raising \$1,000 for OVEC** (we have ideas to help you!).
 - aJ **Donate stock or real property** to OVEC.
 - aA **Donate to honor or memorialize** a loved one.
 - aB **Leave a living legacy gift**, that is, make planned giving a part of your will. 🍂

See the opinions at WWW.SCOTSUBLOG.COM. 🍂

Sludge Safety Project Update - OVEC Wins!



Thanks to all the **50 OVEC members and volunteers** who mobilized to the State Capitol this past legislative session, on March 8 (after the printing of our last newsletter) the State Senate passed SCR 15.

This legislation mandates that the state study coal sludge to find out what's in it and its impact on our drinking water and the environment.

With the support of the West Virginia Environmental Council and the WV Council of Churches, we collectively demonstrated real citizen power!

Soon after the legislation passed, OVEC members, allies and staff met to strategize next steps. We agreed that even though the state has to do the study, it's up to us to make sure they do it right.

Time and again, we've seen that government agencies can avoid carrying out a study that honestly exposes the truth about harmful industrial practices. Sometimes, agencies avoid collecting new data and simply compile existing research, and call that a "study." Sometimes, they collect data at sites that are not likely contaminated, or let the industry gather samples, or only test for a few substances

instead of a full range of pollutants.

Knowing this, Sludge Safety Project members have decided we need to have an active role in the state's study of coal sludge. We want official citizen oversight of the collection and interpretation of the data, and we want credible, independent scientists to have access to data collection and analysis.

The coal industry does all it can to protect its interests. We citizens must protect our interests—our families, our health, our future.

Join members of the Sludge Safety Project as we work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Health to ensure a credible, honest study of coal sludge.

We have a right to know what the coal industry is pumping underground and whether or not it is a threat to our health and well being.

Knowledge is power, and that's what we need if we are going to make a healthier and safer West Virginia. See WWW.SLUDGESAFETY.ORG or call Patricia at (304) 235-2618 to get involved. 🍌

What It Takes to Win the Fight: ORGANIZE!

No one person got SCR 15, the sludge study resolution, passed by themselves. It was truly a group effort by hundreds of people.

As part of the year-long actions and activities leading to the Sludge Safety Project success, OVEC:

U Organized standing-room-only crowds at the legislative interims in October, November, December and January, where coalfield residents told legislators and the media heart-wrenching stories about the health effects they and their families have suffered from exposure to water contaminated by underground sludge injection.

U Organized Lobby Tuesdays: OVEC's community leaders, assisted by our organizers, descended on the state Capitol weekly during the 60-day session to educate legislators on toxic coal sludge-related issues during the 2007 WV legislative session.

On average, 10-12 coalfield residents armed with jars of black water from their taps got up before dawn and braved icy, winding roads to speak with legislators about their concerns and to hand out literature.

U Commemorated, at the State Capitol, the 35th anniversary of the Buffalo Creek disaster, in which 125 lost their lives when coal waste dams failed in Logan County.



Arley Johnson talks about the horrors of Buffalo Creek at ceremony held at the state Capitol to honor the 35th anniversary of the disaster.

About 75 people attended the event. Disaster survivor Arley Johnson spoke, reminding us all that we must work together to hold the coal industry and government accountable so

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Griles Grilled, Convicted Over Ties to Lobbyist

Charleston Gazette editorial, March 24, 2007

Steven Griles spent much of his career making it easier for out-of-state coal corporations to blast the majestic crests off mountains in West Virginia and elsewhere.

He was deputy chief of the U.S. Office of Surface Mining during the Reagan-Bush administration in the 1980s. Then, while Republicans were out of power in the 1990s, he was a top lobbyist for the coal industry.

When the second President Bush gained the White House in 2001, Griles was named deputy secretary of the Interior Department. The lobbyist signed an agreement swearing he would abstain from coal issues - but he immediately broke the agreement. *Gazette* reporter Ken Ward Jr. revealed that he met with coal agents, and *The Washington Post* cited 32 such meetings to benefit his former clients.

Incredibly, his old lobbying firm paid Griles \$568,000 while he was No. 2 at Interior. He tried to sabotage federal studies into the damage caused by mountaintop removal mining - ordering the researchers to focus instead on "streamlining coal mine permitting," Ward reported.

Vanity Fair magazine summarized the situation in a report titled "Sale of the Wild." It detailed West Virginia cases in which Griles blocked pollution actions against coal companies. It recounted how he ordered federal inspector

No Picnic, Mo' Money

by Dave Peyton, Charleston Daily Mail, April 30, 2007

Massey Energy, which mines millions of tons of coal in West Virginia, announced that it would not have a summer picnic for its employees this year.

In recent years, the party has been held in Logan. Prior to that, it was held in Charleston before CEO Don Blankenship got miffed by Charleston folks who threatened to sue because Massey's picnic was held on public property and blocked public streets.

A Massey official said economic factors were the reason the picnic was cancelled. Then, last Thursday, Massey announced that its first-quarter earnings **increased nearly fivefold to \$32.6 million.**

Add to that the fact that **Blankenship made nearly \$27 million in 2006** and the canceling of the picnic becomes somewhat puzzling.

All that's left to say is Don Blankenship giveth and Don Blankenship taketh away.

This is OVEC saying, Don has an awfully funny way of calculating these "economic factors"!



J. STEVEN GRILES

Jack Spadaro to reverse his charges against a mining firm, and suspended Spadaro when he refused. The inspector said he met with Griles about the charges "and explained why I could not vacate them. He became enraged, his face got red, he was almost spitting. I knew then that this was a different kind of animal." Spadaro appealed his suspension and won.

Now the different kind of animal has pleaded guilty to corruption in the scummy Abramoff mess - becoming the highest-ranking Bush administration official caught in the Washington lobbying scandal.

In a federal court Friday, Griles admitted that he lied to Senate investigators about his personal links to GOP lobbyist Jack Abramoff, who fleeced millions from Indian tribes wanting government favors.

Griles is part of a long, disgusting parade (in the Bush administration). Sentencing is set for July.

Christians for the Mountains Night

April 14 was Christians for the Mountains Night at the South Charleston Museum. Before a showing of the group's latest film by B. J. Gudmundsson – *God's Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land* – the audience was treated to gospel music from OVEC's Tonya Adkins and John Kuhn.

OVEC board member Larry Gibson and OVEC organizer Maria Gunnoe both spoke before a showing of the group's other film, *Mountain Mourning*. The *Mountain Mourning* DVD includes two documentary-tours of Maria and Larry's homeplaces.

Maria expressed her deep appreciation to B.J. and the Christians for the Mountains for helping to spread the word about the destruction of God's Creation caused by mountaintop removal/valley fills.

Larry spoke straight from his heart. His passion to save what is left of the ancient Appalachian Mountains was clearly evident. His story on the *Mountain Mourning* collection is likely to bring tears to your eyes.

Thanks so much to Steve Fesenmaier for organizing the event.

You can go to www.GOODSEARCH.COM/ and raise money for OVEC every time your search the web!

Sludge Safety Project Leaders Reflect on Our Big Win



"I think this study is important for the children and for everybody. I'd go back to lobby again if it will do good. Now we just have to stay on them to get these sludge injections stopped." - **Robert Clark, Merrimac.**

"We really appreciated the ones that stood up for us and helped to push this study through. We're not against coal mining, like everyone thinks we are, because coal mining around here is really important to everyone. We just want it to be safer for the environment and for the public." - **Brenda Brown, Rawl.**

"It's about time our health department and DEP knows what is in the slurry that is being injected. The study should lead to a ban on slurry injection." - **Regina Hendrix, Charleston.**

"We thank the senators for hearing our words and taking into consideration the health of everyone in Mingo County and all the people in West Virginia. We need to know if this slurry is getting into the water." - **Elaine Roberts, Merrimac.**

"I'm thankful that they want to do something for us people that live in the areas with the slurry injection and find out what's killing everybody in the communities like mine. They've needed to do this for a long time and coalfield residents really fought the good fight to make this happen." - **Donetta Blankenship, Rawl.** 🍌

Organize!

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such a preventable tragedy never happens again.

U Hosted an organizing house in Mingo County from May through mid-August. A local church donated office space, which we continue to use. Six college interns worked with leaders to create and carry out community action plans. Using data gathered at offices of the West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection (DEP), they worked with other volunteers to develop an underground coal slurry injection

site map, the first of its kind for the state.

U Continued organizing, coalition-building and educational efforts with other constituencies which made coal sludge issues one of their state-level lobbying priorities, including the League of Women Voters, WV Council of Churches, WV Catholic Conference, Interfaith Center on Public Policy, West Virginia Environmental Council and Community Lutheran Partners. 🍌

Voices from the Coalfields ... and Beyond

Letter to the Editor, *Washington Post*, April 26

Why don't Congress and the media focus on the real problem with coal?

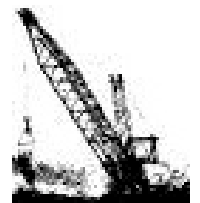
How "cleanly" it is burned is not the issue. The problem is how it is extracted. Sens. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) and Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) are being hypocritical at best when they influence their poverty-stricken constituents to fear the loss of their coal-mining jobs. The loss they're experiencing now as a result of coal mining is far more devastating.

Huge swaths of West Virginia and Kentucky are being systematically and irretrievably destroyed by mountaintop-removal mining. Now and then someone will write an article about it in *The Post* or elsewhere, seemingly as a way to assuage our consciences, but this travesty should be at the center of every argument against the use of coal.

"As we break the chains of foreign oil," to use the words of Jenny Thalheimer, a spokeswoman for Mr. Byrd, we may find ourselves in new chains, put there by the powerful representatives of domestic coal.

Gloria Simmons

Auburn, WV 🍌



More Say No to Mine

Lenore Residents Appeal Mingo County Permit

The following letter is taken from an appeal to the West Virginia Surface Mine Board:

I live 6 miles up the right fork of Laurel Creek, at the mouth of Ash Camp. We are appealing this permit to the Surface Mine Board because of the danger the mine poses to the environment and the threat of damage it could cause to my home.

At the informal meeting, no one could tell me what kind of discharge will be released into Ashcamp Branch... is the stream going to be polluted? Harmed? Damaged? Changed? Are the fish and other habitants of the stream going to be harmed or killed? Is this going to de-value the homes and property of people living in the community? I am concerned about the pollution of the land, the air, the noise pollution and the damage to wildlife, native plants and the risk factors this could pose on the community's health and well being.

According to the men from the mines, they will be disturbing the mountaintop in order to deep mine the seam of coal. There will be a pond on each side of the mountain approximately 50' wide x 500' long x 150' deep... I have seen this happen over and over again, in our county, communities and state, the adverse effects this has had on persons, properties, water, natural habitats and the environment. The mine company said this would have minimal effect regarding pollution, minimal dust, minimal

noise, minimal threat to persons and property. When asked what does minimal amount to? THE MINE COMPANY COULD NOT CLARIFY, MEASURE, OR DEFINE.

We fear for the effects this will have on the environment and on our quality of life. The creek that runs out of Ash Camp is crystal clear at the present time. The community wishes to keep it that way.

Both my husband and I have health problems... The hazards this could pose on our health alone are great, much less the worry this permit could pose on our environment and peaceful natural way of life.

The Right Fork of Laurel Creek is a well-populated community; much of the residents feel the way we do. Given the history of the coal mining companies in this area and around the state, they are not environmental caring, and they do have the reputation for damaging person's property, communities as a whole, and disrupting the general way of life for the people in these communities.

Sincerely,

Charles and Donna Branham

The Branhams and their neighbors opposed the permit, but it was approved. They have appealed and so far collected 80 signatures from their fellow community members to submit with the appeal. A large strip mine is also planned for this area. 🍂

Time For an SOS – Save Our Flying Squirrels!

Letter to the Editor, *Logan Banner*, April 24

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service will soon make a final decision on whether or not to remove the West Virginia northern flying squirrel from protection under the Endangered Species Act. The squirrel continues to be rare just as it was in 1985. It will be robbed of protection without convincing statistics on population trends.

Many West Virginians may consider this “much ado about nothing.” However, the squirrel is a “signature” species of the boreal forests in our higher mountain, a unique ecological community that has been called “a bit of Canada gone astray.” The boreal community in the Alleghenies will doubtless be changed and perhaps disappear in the future from global warming. An even more uncertain future may await the squirrel without (endangered species) protection

Long ago humankind was instructed by our Creator to treat the earth gently and care for our fellow creatures. Tragically, the dark side of humanity – greed, arrogance, selfishness – are still much with us. Let us demand full protection in order that one of God's wild creatures not be sacrificed!

J. Lawrence Smith

Hurricane, WV

Editor's note: OVEC is part of the Save Our Squirrel coalition led by the Save Blackwater Canyon campaign. Thanks to all our efforts, SOS generated over 5,000 comments on saving the squirrel. As Erik Reece points out in *Lost Mountain*, the flying squirrel is under threat from mountaintop removal. See WWW.SAVEOURSQUIRREL.ORG. 🍂



Activists Form Coalition to Fight MTR Abuses

On May 1, as we prepared *Winds of Change*, members of the Mountain Community Preservation Coalition met with the Boone Co. Commission and Office of Emergency Services (OES). The meeting was to remind the agencies of their commitment to implement an emergency warning system in the county.

We have been asking for an emergency monitor for each home in Boone County, to be controlled by the OES.

Greg Lay with the OES has done a terrific job finding the system best suited to our terrain. The Code Red plan is a battery and solar powered system that will be controlled by satellite so we don't have to depend on phones and electricity. This could save many lives in the event of a sludge dam breach or failure.

We were due to meet with county commission and OES in June, but the date was moved up because of the recent floods, and a scare about a possible coal sludge dam break in Bob White, which DEP later said was a "controlled

release" of underground mine water.

In May, several MCPC members will go to Meigs Co., Ohio, to speak with folks there about Jupiter Coal Company's action in the Bob White area. They'll warn

people working with activist Elisa Young about what to expect if the coal company locates there, and they'll strategize with local folks on ways to preserve their rights.

Next meeting will be, as always, the third Thursday of the month.

The May meeting, on the 17th, is at the Wharton Community Center, 178 Benton Road, Wharton. Please feel free to attend and bring others. We'll have light

refreshments, view maps and local aerial photography, and continue our strategizing.

New attendees will receive copies of documentaries about mountaintop removal. In order to have more time for planning, we will no longer show movies at the MCPC meetings.

Rise Up Route 85-ers!

Mountain community citizen activists living near Rt. 85 in Boone County formed Mountain Community Preservation Coalition. MCPC works to fight the abuses of communities caused by coal companies practicing mountaintop removal coal mining. We are fighting for the protection of all Appalachian mountain communities and the preservation of our cherished way of life. We are proudly sponsored and funded by OVEC.

Contact OVEC's Boone Co. organizer Maria Gunnoe at (304) 245-8481 or wvhollowgirl@aol.com.



Be a part of the Mountain Community Preservation Coalition! Attend the meeting and participate in OVEC's work to preserve our mountain culture and heritage.

We need to mobilize people often so please stay informed about what you can do to help stop the destruction of our homes, lives and health in our almost-heaven ancestral homelands.

Sign up for OVEC Action Alerts if you have e-mail. Go to www.OHVEC.ORG and click on Action Alerts.

Sign up for an OVEC membership [call (304) 245-8481] and get our newsletters to help you stay informed. 🍌

OVEC Works! Thanks!

Congratulations to Catherine Pancake! Her documentary, *Black Diamonds: The Fight for Coalfield Justice*, won the 2007 Jack Spadaro Award at the 2007 Appalachian Studies Association conference.

There are too many of you to thank individually, but here are examples of the people power that makes OVEC effective.

Donations and memberships: Thanks so much to everyone who renewed their membership or recently joined OVEC. Your financial support helps keep us in action.

Sludge Safety Project and WV Clean Elections: Dozens of amazingly dedicated volunteers across the state who contacted their legislators and came to the State Capitol during the 2007 Legislative Session. Special shout out to West Virginia Environmental Council.

House Parties and Solidarity Network Groups: Beth Raps, Daniel Chiotos, Chuck Nelson, Rod Snyder, Jen Willett, Jesse Mills, John Taylor.

Writing a wonderful membership letter: Donetta Blankenship.

Mailings: Tom Jones, Michael Morrison; Ronda Harper, Celia Callahan, Barbara Ladner.

Mountain Justice Spring Breakers: College students who came to West Virginia from all over the United States - thanks to Coal River Mountain Watch.

Hooking us up with students in for Service Spring Break: Jeannie Kirkhope.

Friends of the Mountains banner: John Doyle, Julian Martin.

Global warming watchdog: Mel Tyree, who had six opinion pieces printed in West Virginia newspapers over the past few months.

Blair Mountain work: Dr. Harvard Ayers, Dr. Barbara Rasmussen, Wess Harris, Bill Blizzard, Kenny King, Regina Hendrix, Bill Price, Steve Fesenmaier.

Attending Hearings: Cindy Ellis, Sheila McOwen, Winnie Fox, Mel Tyree, Michael Morrison, John Taylor, Vickie Wolfe, Robin Blakeman, Kathryn Stone, Regina Hendrix, and many others.

Volunteer organizers: Michael Morrison, Chuck Nelson, Larry Gibson.

OVEC volunteers at two-day MTR working group meeting: Donetta Blankenship and Chuck Nelson.

Christians for the Mountains Night: Christians for the Mountains members, filmmaker B.J. Gudmundsson, John Kuhn; special thanks to Allen Johnson, Bob Marshall, Carol Warren and Mary Ellen O'Farrell for their work on the steering committee of Christians for the Mountains.

Clean Elections leadership: Kathy Stoltz, Larry Matheney, Kenny Perdue, Susan Sobkoviak, Perry Bryant, Steve White, Richie Robb, Kathryn Stone, Rev. Dennis Sparks, Gary Zuckett, Norm Steenstra, Linda Frame, John Welbourn and Carol Warren.

Helping with OVEC's board meeting in Boone County: Jim Foster, Joan Linville and Chuck Nelson.

Organizing a "Step It Up" event at West Virginia State: Sally Shepherd and others who highlighted the

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Thirteen Arrested in Struggle for New Marsh Fork Elementary School

Marsh Fork Elementary School has been described by West Virginia Public Radio as *a touchstone in the fight against mountaintop removal*. It's an egregious example of several ways that Coal's greed endangers health and threatens lives, with the support of our state government.

Coal River Mountain Watch has researched the specific funding mechanisms the Governor could use to get the new school built. They are leading the effort to establish a new, safe school for Marsh Fork Elementary students in their community.

Fed up with the Governor's inaction on this issue, they decided to pay him a visit. Other coalfield residents, college students attending Mountain Justice Spring Break, OVEC members and other concerned citizens came out to express their support.

After police officers told everyone to move away from the Governor's office, 13 people were arrested, including four from OVEC: board members Larry Gibson and Michael Morrison, volunteer organizer Chuck Nelson and staff organizer Abraham Mwaura. Board member Winnie Fox, 87, was not arrested despite her participation in the non-violent civil disobedience.

Since the arrests, an OVEC organizer and a volunteer have been working cooperatively with Coal River Mountain Watch to develop and implement a stepped-up community organizing plan on the school issue.

OVEC's Mwaura, Morrison and Fox wrote an opinion piece regarding the arrests, a version of which ran in the *Huntington Herald-Dispatch* on April 21:

Fighting for New Marsh Fork Elementary

Thirteen people were arrested at Gov. Joe Manchin's office in the Capitol on March 13. Concerned citizens had gathered to ask for an audience with the governor on the issue of Marsh Fork Elementary School in Raleigh County. They had attended countless other hearings, without results. They wanted the governor to address constituents' request for another elementary school to be built in the community.

The attendees waited patiently for hours to see him, singing traditional songs and hymns. The governor on numerous occasions has avoided addressing the issue. This time, the people were determined to meet with him, no matter how long they had to wait, and it was this determination that



led to the 13 arrests. The 70 people who were at the governor's office were not a threat to any person or property. Yet the governor chose to expose the attendees to an unacceptable level of brutality and disrespect.

Why are these people so desperate to replace Marsh Fork Elementary School? A poisonous binding agent is sprayed on the coal while loading it onto coal trains. Coal dust is everywhere and it may be affecting the children's health. Geologist Scott Simonton, who has investigated this issue, has found high levels of coal dust inside the school. In his report he stated, "I believe that the occupants of Marsh Fork Elementary School are at risk from the exposure to the dust emitted from the (Massey coal) facility."

And a Massey coal slurry impoundment looms a mere 400 feet above the school. Directly behind the slurry dam is an 1849 acre mountaintop removal mine. Residents fear that the repeated blasting may be destabilizing the earthen dam.

Gov. Manchin is shirking his duty to protect the children of West Virginia. He continues to shift his responsibility onto lower levels of government that are less able to bear the fiscal expense. Manchin continues to lose credibility as an effective public servant, as his lack of action on the situation at Marsh Fork Elementary becomes more and more a test of his integrity and leadership.

One of the great lessons from Martin Luther King Jr. is to use non-violent civil disobedience when other tactics are not working in order to get justice. It is time for us to all pick up the torch of justice here in West Virginia and get a new Marsh Fork Elementary School in the community. 🍌

Organizing Cabin Creek:

On April 18, OVEC board member **Larry Gibson** and OVEC organizer Abe Mwaura met with **Lois Armstrong**, a longtime resident of Cabin Creek. Lois, along with others in the community of Coalville, managed to stop the construction of a coal loading dock, which would have been illegally close to folks' homes in the area.

The following is part of the rich conversation that took place when Larry and Lois met. It begins abruptly when Abe realized that he should probably be recording the conversation – with their permission, of course:

Larry: It's got to be a human

rights story, linked to mountaintop removal.

Lois: But you don't have any rights.

Larry: That's it. That's the whole point...

Lois: We don't have any rights.

Larry: And you and I both remember the time... if somebody in our area worked for a non-union outfit, they wouldn't tell anybody back then. Now, if a man works for a union, he doesn't tell anybody.

Lois: He's afraid of being ostracized too.

Larry: Sure. I don't have the wisdom of time like you have. So I'm looking to you to kind of guide me and my friend here. What we're trying to do is really trying to save some lives. We're not trying to punish the workers. If these people had the choice, they wouldn't be destroying their own back yard...

I can't back up from this. When I was a kid people used to tell me I was crazy. But I still gotta stay with this. This is not a jobs issue. This is not simply an energy issue. It's a human rights issue. You know that it is. Until we can strike a nerve in people, whatever the discomfort is in their lives at this point will still be there in the future.

Abe: How do we do that?

Lois: I don't know.

Abe: How did they do it in the past?



Kayford Mountain, Larry's homeplace, lies wrapped in morning mists, as a drill waits for its human operators to return and continue their mindless destruction of southern West Virginia.
photo by Giles Ashford

Lois: [pause] I don't think people used to be as intimidated as they are now.

Larry: No they weren't.

Abe: Hmm. What's changed?

Lois: [very deliberately] The feeling of powerlessness.

Abe: You think it's more now than it used to be?

Lois: Oh yes.

Abe: Well what's caused that? Why now, and compared to when? Ten years ago, 20 years ago?

Lois: Compared to when I was a kid. Yes. My grandfather was a very strong man. Very quiet – but very powerful. He didn't shout or make a big noise. What he did, he did very quietly. And he would talk to different people there in Chelyan, when people would come in and try to change things. And he would do it one on one - you know go in and talk to the old-timers. But, I think people now feel hopeless. They feel overwhelmed with the power that others have – that they don't feel they have.

Abe: And now I'm trying to figure out what is it that caused that. What changed in that amount of time that made them feel so powerless, so that we can figure out what it would take to make them feel powerful again. And it's not just feel... really, we all have some sense of power – sometimes we just don't use it. What is it that changed? They've lost

A conversation about power, grit and why we're gonna win

their power – but why?

Larry: Could it be that the fact that the different leaders of not only the government, but even the union itself...

Lois: Even the courts...

Larry: ...even the courts have caved in to the industries. That's my opinion. That they have caved in to the industries. The people that you and I count on to oversee our rights are the ones who've given up our rights - as far as fighting for us.

Lois: But not only on the local level, but the state level, the national level – the whole thing.

Larry: Right. But it starts here. We have more power than we realize because we all have a voice – if we can get it together, and start getting people back together again, and start focusing on what they've lost. If we can do that, we can encourage them to take another look at themselves. Otherwise, like I said the miseries that they have now will only get worse.

Abe: And your father did that one on one?

Lois: My grandfather. Ya. Chelyan is still unincorporated, and it was those old timers who decided that they did not want to be incorporated. He was one of those old timers and he would say "if you give them a little bit of power they'll take it all. As long as you don't give them any power, they can't take it."

Larry: Hmm. Well that's the whole point. That's what we're saying. It's time, with whatever power we've got left... we have to organize and direct it in a positive direction instead of letting it sit dormant. We can have all the power we've got now, and if its not

being used, then what's the use of having it... We used to have some choice in the direction we were going in, and now they've taken that away.

When I went to New York last week I called for the rebirth of resistance, and I never thought I'd hear such a roar of people saying "Yeah, we need the rebirth of resistance." Well yeah, we need a rebirth of resistance here to get back what the people have lost!

Abe: What does that mean? What does it look like?

Larry: Well right now there is not enough resistance. You know that...

We are natural organizers. We live in the area called the coalfields - where the union was strong. If we hadn't organized in the beginning we would never have had anything.

We can't back up... We gotta get that grit back. That's what we've got to find in people today. They've got it; they've just forgotten that they have it. 🍷

The sheer size and scope of mountaintop removal mining is one reason people feel powerless to stop it. But we can stop it, we must stop it, before there is nothing in southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky left to save.



OVEC Works! Thanks!

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need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to promote clean, renewable energy to help slow global warming.

Editing: Mary Wildfire and Greg Wood.

For work together with our Boone

County organizer: Boone County Commission and Office of Emergency Services, Chuck and Linda Nelson, Jim and Jean Foster, CB, Denver Pinson, Delano Gibson, Thomas Nichols, Gary Workman, Richard Linville, Chrystal Gunnoe, Jessie Gunnoe, Richard Pitzer, Jean Nelson, Paul Workman, Antrim Caskey, Mary Miller, Pauline Canterbury, Ronald Nelson, Steven Burns, Versie Simms, Robin Blakeman, Bob and Brenda Farris, Cindy Rank, Margaret Janes, Sue and Lester Cook, Mark Schmerling, Rick Stevens, Joan Linville, Tom Jarrell, Coal River Mountain Watch, Sam Cook at VT, Larry Gibson, Audrey Fisher, Shannon Roth-Gormley, BJ Guddmundsson, SouthWings, Allan Kuhn, Verlin Burgess, David Price, Bobby Mitchell, Sandy Brady, Fannie Mason, Lynn Keyough, Clara Carol, Willie Huddieston, David Dingess, Deloris Gibson, Chelsea Browder, Lisa Smith, Marvin and Ann Sanders. **And all the other groups, small and big,** working to end mountaintop removal. 🍌



Larry Gibson, left, and Julian Martin hold the Friends of the Mountains banner made by John Doyle.

Army, DEP: Let's Make a Deal (with Coalfield Residents' Health!)

Just in case mountaintop removal / valley fill coal mining wasn't destructive enough to our homes, communities, forests and streams, our state and federal government came up with a plan ...

In February, the *Charleston Gazette* reported that state inspectors issued an imminent danger closure order for parts of Magnum Coal's Samples Mine on Kayford Mountain when they found toxic residue associated with blasting. The mine had been using old munitions as part of a U.S. Army plan to "dispose" of the explosive compound tetryl.

"The plan came to light only after an employee of the mine's blasting contractor, Nelson Brothers, was injured in a detonation accident on Feb. 10," *Gazette* reporter Ken Ward Jr. wrote.

The WV Department of Environmental Protection knew about the army's plan and the deal included at least three strip mines, though the public was not permitted to know which mines after the secret deal became public knowledge.

Dave Vande Linde, acting director of the DEPOffice of Explosives and Blasting, told the *Gazette* that mine operators were using the tetryl in place of or in combination

with the ammonium nitrate and fuel oil explosives they typically use to loosen mine overburden.

"We perceived this to be the way this would be disposed of, but we didn't know for sure," Vande Linde said. "That may change now."

In March, news reports said the mine operator and blasting contractor face more than \$100,000 apiece in fines because they failed to report the blasting accident to the state within 15 minutes, as mandated under a post-Sago mining safety law.

Other alleged violations include allowing unregistered contractors to work on mine property, improperly transporting explosives, and exposing employees to the explosive tetryl, which can cause eye irritation and respiratory problems, among other things.

News reports quoted state officials saying that once the public learned about the use of toxic tetryl at MTR sites, that its use was prohibited. Makes you wonder what else is happening to folks living downwind of mountaintop removal blasting.

In April, news outlets reported that the Army was moving the tetryl to Oklahoma for "disposal." Wonder what wonderful "secret plan" is in store for the Sooner State? 🍌

Fight Renewed Over Streamlined Mine Permits

by Ken Ward Jr., *Charleston Gazette*, April 26, 2007

While one mountaintop removal court ruling is appealed, lawyers for citizen groups and the industry set the stage on Wednesday for a renewed battle over streamlined permitting of mining valley fills.

Lawyers for the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (Ed: and WV Highlands Conservancy and Coal River Mountain Watch) allege that federal regulators have wrongly returned to the use of “nationwide” or “general” permit approvals for valley fills.

During a morning hearing, Apogee Coal Co. agreed to temporarily stop burying streams at a Logan County mine until U.S. District Judge Joseph R. Goodwin can consider the matter. Goodwin scheduled a full preliminary injunction hearing to start May 31.

Citizen group lawyer Joe Lovett had asked Goodwin to block the Apogee permit, which the federal Army Corps of Engineers approved in early March through its streamlined permit process.

Goodwin was reluctant to do so, after hearing from a company engineer that the streams involved were already buried by a 3- to 6-foot deep rock drainage system.

“The only thing that injunctive relief would accomplish at this point would be to keep it from being buried deeper,” the judge said.

The case before Goodwin is part of a broader and more complicated legal battle over the way the corps approves the burial of streams by mountaintop removal mines.

Under the federal Clean Water Act, the corps can issue two types of fill permits.

One is called a nationwide or general permit. The corps writes a permit containing a set of general conditions meant to protect the environment.

If companies submit an application that shows they will meet those conditions, they receive an “authorization” under the general permit, with little additional review by corps officials. Corps officials are supposed to use general permits only for small activities that cause little environmental damage.

The other corps permit is called an individual permit. These involve a somewhat more detailed review by the corps, and are meant for larger activities that can do more damage.

Over the last few years, environmental groups have challenged the corps’ approval of valley fills through both of these permit processes.

In one case, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition lawyers argued that the corps could not approve valley fills

through general permits. They argued that fills have greater than minimal impacts, the legal test for being covered by general permits.

Three years ago, Goodwin agreed. In a July 2004 ruling, the judge said the corps had never shown fills caused only minimal damage, and blocked further use of Nationwide Permit 21, which the corps used for mining fills.

In February 2006, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Goodwin’s decision.

Since March 2006, environmental groups have been trying to get Goodwin to issue another ruling on issues he didn’t previously decide and that weren’t overturned by the 4th Circuit.

At the same time, U.S. District Judge Robert C. Chambers was hearing a challenge to corps’ approvals of individual permits for mining valley fills.

In a March 23 decision, Chambers blocked four corps’ permits for Massey Energy, ruling that the corps had not fully evaluated the potential environmental damage before approving the operations.

Massey has said that it will appeal Chambers’ ruling to the 4th Circuit.


This week, the court battle shifted back to the case pending before Goodwin.

Originally, Apogee Coal, an affiliate of Magnum Coal, had sought approval for its North Rum Surface Mine in Logan County through a corps individual permit.

Michael Day, director of surface operations for Magnum Coal, said the company went that route because of the litigation over nationwide permits pending before Goodwin.

But, as Chambers neared a ruling in the individual permit case, the company went back to the corps and asked for approval through the nationwide permit, court records show.

In court briefs, Lovett and citizen group lawyer Jim Hecker argued that the corps was wrong to consider and approve the proposal through a nationwide permit. They noted that the North Rum operation would bury a longer section of streams than one of the individual permits that Chambers blocked.

“The corps found that the cumulative effects are the loss of nearly half of the Upper Spruce Fork watershed and more than a third of its headwater streams,” Lovett and Hecker wrote. “The corps has no reasoned explanation or scientific analysis to support its conclusion that this amount of damage is minimal.” 



GLOBAL WARMING / CLIMATE INSTABILITY in the Mountain State



West Virginians Trained By Al Gore To Present on Climate Change

Charleston resident and WV Environmental Council member Allan Tweddle is now a certified presenter for Al Gore's Climate Project.

Allan spent three days training in Nashville in "an awesome and life altering experience." Allan was invited by Al Gore and his staff to take the training, along with 170 others, including a high school physics teacher from Harpers Ferry.

"The materials and over 300 slides go way beyond his movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*," Allan said. "And those who dismiss the Climate Project's sound scientific basis and action concepts really aren't listening to the message, but are instead trying to shoot the messenger. The presentation

is scientifically correct and executed with very professional graphics."

A couple of the people who have received this training have contacted OVEC, asking to use some of our mountaintop removal photos in their presentations.

Our photos help illustrate the full cycle and heavy toll of our continued over-reliance on burning coal for electricity.

Allan's dynamic, educational and inspiring presentation awaits your invitation.

You are strongly encouraged to contact Allan to set up speaking engagements in your community. Call him at (304) 925-9184 or e-mail allantweddle@msn.com. 🍂

New Book: How Many Lightbulbs Does It Take to Change a Christian?

Ekklesia, April 23, 2007

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, has endorsed a booklet that encourages Christians to play their part in helping to stop climate change.

Aiming to counter the idea that stark warnings on the state of the environment seem too colossal for individuals to make any real difference, the book – called *How many lightbulbs does it take to change a Christian?* – argues that Christians not only can have an impact by adapting their lifestyle, but actually have a moral duty to do so.

The Archbishop comments: "There are many small steps that each of us can take to lighten the load on our

planet and this guide gives some practical examples of where each of us can start. I commend it to all Christians looking for ideas and inspiration on what they can do to make a positive difference for the environment."

The pocket-sized guide suggests a range of practical actions to help churches and their members "go green," including organizing a car-sharing scheme for traveling to and from Sunday worship, cutting transport emissions by holidaying locally and helping a churchyard become a "green lung" for the community.

For more information, see WWW.COFE.ANGLICAN.ORG/NEWS/PR3307.HTML. 🍂

OVEC Board Meets in Boone County

On April 28, OVEC board members met with active volunteers of the Mountain Community Preservation Coalition.

It was a chance for OVEC board members to see coalfield community organizing in action and to meet with some of the newer volunteers. Members listened with deep interest as people like Chuck Nelson spoke about life in the coalfields and the impact mountaintop removal mining is having.

The meeting included a tour of communities affected by mountaintop removal and coal sludge dams. 🍂

OVEC board members cross a bridge to Maria Gunnoe's house. Flooding rendered the bridge unusable for vehicles. photo by Janet Keating





GLOBAL WARMING / CLIMATE INSTABILITY in the Mountain State



The Time for Climate Change Solutions is *NOW*

by Mel Tyree

The debate on how to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions must end quickly. Recent research has proven that climate change is now producing unacceptable impacts and we only have 10 to 20 years to head off catastrophic economic and biodiversity collapse.

The October 2006 *Stern Report* and the 2007 *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report* emphasize that humanity has less than 20 years remaining to implement and strictly enforce global greenhouse gas reduction laws.

Also, in less than 10 years, we must significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions if we are to avoid severe shifts in the world's weather patterns, according to NASA climatologist Jim Hansen. Some recent research findings:

⚙ The horrible drought in Africa's Darfur region, which precipitated genocide and civil wars, was caused by greenhouse gas-driven climate change according to a 2003 study by the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado. The *Stern Report* and the *IPCC Report* predict that other third world countries will suffer the same fate in the coming decades.

⚙ If the average atmospheric temperature increases by just another 3.6 degrees, one third of all wildlife would be forced to migrate outside normal habitat ranges or face extinction.

⚙ The IPCC scientists reported that there is a 90 percent probability that our rapid climate change is caused by human-released greenhouse gas. That number would have been 95 percent if it weren't for political pressure on scientists to dilute their findings.

⚙ According to Stern's analysis, preventing a 3.6 degree temperature increase would cost the world \$1 trillion dollars now (about the cost of 2 Iraq wars), or \$20 trillion in later damages, if we do nothing.

⚙ A business as usual path will cause more dramatic coastal storm surges, more intense hurricanes, greater destruction to transportation systems and infrastructure, even more

tornados and wildfires, as well as a 4.5 percent increase in ozone-related deaths by mid century.

⚙ The World Health Organization estimates that global warming already claims the lives of 150,000 people each year.



The level of total greenhouses gases in our atmosphere is now at 430 parts per million (ppm). That total is presently increasing by about 2 ppm/year. If that total isn't stabilized between 450 – 550 ppm within the next two decades and then rapidly reduced, the world's economic impacts will be greater than the 20th century's world wars and Great Depression combined, according to Stern.

The worst consequences to West Virginia citizens will be loss of life and property damage due to severe storm events and flooding, which will gradually increase in intensity and frequency as time goes on. We must see to it that state and federal disaster mitigation plans are fully funded and implemented. 🌳

OVEC Launches New Global Warming Action Page on its Website

OVEC's new web page, "Global Warming and West Virginia" provides a wealth of volunteer opportunities to take

action. See www.OHVEC.ORG/GLOBALWARMING/ for information on:

- 🌐 Contacting your US senators and House of Representative members about supporting the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act (S-309) and the House's Safe Climate Act of 2007 (HR-1590).
- 🌐 Contacting your local town council about signing the US Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, which mirrors the Kyoto Agreement for greenhouse gas reductions.
- 🌐 Opportunities to attend local climate change events and public presentations.
- 🌐 Links to daily news on climate change and links to sites

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Welcome to Carol Warren, OVEC's Newest Staff Member

On Feb. 22, the *State Journal* printed “Webster Couple Strives to Ease Dependence on Electric Grid.” The story by Beth Gorcezyca-Ryan, featured Carol Warren and her husband, Todd Garland, and their six-year stint at living nearly off the grid:

“The couple has spent thousands of dollars to convert their home high atop a ridge in Webster County so that most of their electricity comes from renewable sources – specifically wind and solar power – instead of from the electric power grid.

“We did it because we both were convinced it was the right thing to do,” Warren said.

Carol and Todd researched power systems and settled on a mix of small-scale wind and solar.

“The couple eventually built a 36-foot tall windmill with a 7-foot blade span and installed eight solar panels in a field near their house. The energy generated through the wind and sun then runs underground to their home, where the couple has a bank of 12 batteries that collect and store the energy. The batteries feed two 110-volt invertors which then feed electricity directly into the breaker box.

“...The couple had to pay between \$15,000 and \$16,000 for the solar panels, windmill, batteries and wiring. While half of that cost was picked up through a grant from their Franciscan community based in New York, Warren and Garland had to pay for the rest.”

Carol and Todd now have minimal electric bills, but the system has yet to pay for itself. They didn't install the renewable energy system primarily to save money, but rather to reduce their ecological footprint. (Solar and wind energy systems prices will decrease with mass production and more



Carol Warren and OVEC board member Thomas Kincaid.

widespread use).

“Warren said she can never tell when her system is shifting from alternative electricity to the electricity that comes in off of the wires. Lights don't dim. Power doesn't go down.

“...And while large-scale wind farms have come under fire for allegedly killing large numbers of bats and migratory birds, Warren said she and her husband have never found a dead bird by their windmill. In fact, she said more birds have died after flying into the home's windows.

“Other complaints are that windmills and wind farms are too loud. Warren said that's not been a problem either.

“There's a little hum from the inverters, but it's not bad,” she said. “I like to say that the sound is the sound of coal not burning.”

Carol, a Charleston, WV, native, is a 10th generation West Virginian who has spent most of her adult life working for social justice in the Appalachian mountains.

Carol has 15 years of social justice experience working for the Catholic Diocese of Lexington, Ky., and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Her work as the West Virginia diocese's director of the Office of Justice and Life has successfully built relationships between labor, environmental, community and religious groups.

She currently serves on the board of the West Virginia Environmental Council, is the chairperson of the Government Concerns Committee for the West Virginia Council of Churches, and serves on the steering committee of Christians for the Mountains. 🍌

New Economists Have Different View

by Graham Cox, U.S. Society for Ecological Economics

There's an underlying fallacy in the thinking of old-school economists who pin our future to continued economic growth. ... there is a whole new breed of economists - ecological economists. Both words come from the same Greek root - oikos, Greek for household.

Economics is the management of the household; ecology is the study of household management. Our task is to define what we mean by sustainability - i.e., keeping the household in good repair now and long into the future.

... Ecological economists are working with ecologists, conservation biologists, geographers, land use planners, and many other social and natural scientists. 🍌



GLOBAL WARMING / CLIMATE INSTABILITY in the Mountain State



Cost-Effective Carbon Footprint Reducers - Things YOU Can Do

by Mel Tyree

Big oil and coal-fed special interest lobbyists have so far successfully blocked passage of real US greenhouse gas reduction laws. However, they have absolutely no power to prevent citizens from reducing their personal carbon footprints.

Anyone can slow the rate of global warming simply through smarter shopping and being more greenhouse gas conscious in energy use. Corporations are slowly starting to catch on that if they want to increase profits, they need to provide consumers with more earth-friendly product selections.

The good news is that you don't have to live in a tent and use a solar shower to reduce personal greenhouse gas emissions.

Easy carbon footprint reducers that don't require a lot of money or effort include the following:

- ☼ Use compact fluorescent bulbs and be on the lookout for even more efficient LED bulbs. Saving energy saves money!
- ☺ Wash clothes in cold water. We burn a *lot* of coal to heat water.
- ☹ Dry your clothes on a line. Fresh air makes the clothes

Action Page

continued from page 19

that can help you reduce your personal carbon footprint.

To share ideas and explore directions for OVEC global warming work, please e-mail vivian@ohvec.org or call Vivian at (304) 522-0246 ext. 2. 🌰

West Virginia Putting Out More CO₂

According *The Carbon Boom*, an April 2007 report from US Public Interest Research Group, West Virginia increased its emissions of carbon dioxide by 7 percent since 1990.

Because our population has remained constant through that period (approx. 1.8 million), our individual carbon footprints are a likely cause (more SUVs and McMansions were purchased after 1990 than before).

The newly enacted West Virginia greenhouse gas tracking bill will help sort out which WV industries contribute how much greenhouse gas. 🌰

smell better.

- ⊕ Recycle. That saves a lot of energy which is wasted in mining and processing new aluminum and other materials.
- 🍌 Eat more locally grown vegetables and fruit to cut down on transportation emissions.
- 🐄 Eat less meat. Cows emit megatons of methane, a dangerous greenhouse gas, and forests, which absorb greenhouse gases, are cleared to graze them.
- ➔ Take public transportation or carpool if possible. Sitting in gridlock is more tolerable if you have someone to talk to.

Many hundreds of carbon footprint reducing ideas can be found in the following sources:

- H The April 9, 2007, *Time* magazine special edition, "The Global Warming Survival Guide";
- H Amy Dacyczyn's *Tightwad Gazette* books;
- H Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin's *Your Money or Your Life*;
- H Janet Luhr's *The Simple Living Guide*;
- H *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth* by The Earthworks Group;
- H The many Internet links at the OVEC website, which point the direction to a wealth of other resources. 🌰

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.

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



GLOBAL WARMING / CLIMATE INSTABILITY in the Mountain State



Country's Leading Climatologist Lists 5 Steps to Prevent Catastrophic Change

by James Hansen, *The Nation*, April 21, 2007

There's a huge gap between what is understood about global warming by the relevant scientific community and what is known about global warming by those who need to know: the public and policy-makers....

If we do follow (our current path), even for another 10 years, it guarantees that we will have dramatic climate changes that produce what I would call a different planet – one without sea ice in the Arctic; with worldwide, repeated coastal tragedies associated with storms and a continuously rising sea level; and with regional disruptions due to freshwater shortages and shifting climatic zones.

I've arrived at five recommendations for what should be done to address the problem. If Congress were to follow these recommendations, we could solve the problem. Interestingly, this is not a gloom-and-doom story. In fact, the things we need to do have many other benefits in terms of our economy, our national security, our energy independence and preserving the environment – preserving creation.

First, there should be a moratorium on building any more coal-fired power plants until we have the technology to capture and sequester the CO₂. That technology is probably five or 10 years away. It will become clear over the next 10 years that coal-fired power plants that do not capture and sequester CO₂ are going to have to be bulldozed. That's the only way we can keep CO₂ from getting well into the dangerous level, because our consumption of oil and gas alone will take us close to the dangerous level. And oil and gas are such convenient fuels

(and located in countries where we can't tell people not to mine them) that they surely will be used. So why build old-technology power plants if you're not going to be able to operate them over their lifetime, which is 50 or 75 years? It doesn't make sense. Besides, **there's so much potential in efficiency, we don't need new power plants if we take advantage of that.**

Second, and this is the hard recommendation that no politician seems willing to stand up and say is necessary: The only way we are going to prevent having an amount of CO₂ that is far beyond the dangerous level is by putting a price on emissions

...But a price on carbon emissions is not enough, which brings us to the **third** recommendation: We need energy-efficiency standards. That's been proven time and again. The biggest use of energy is in buildings, and the engineers and architects have said that they can readily reduce the energy requirement of new buildings by 50 percent.

...The **fourth** recommendation – and this is probably the easiest one – involves the question of ice-sheet stability...Congress should ask the National Academy of Sciences to do a study on this and report its conclusions in very plain language. The National Academy of Sciences was established by Abraham Lincoln for just this sort of purpose, and there's no reason we shouldn't use it that way.

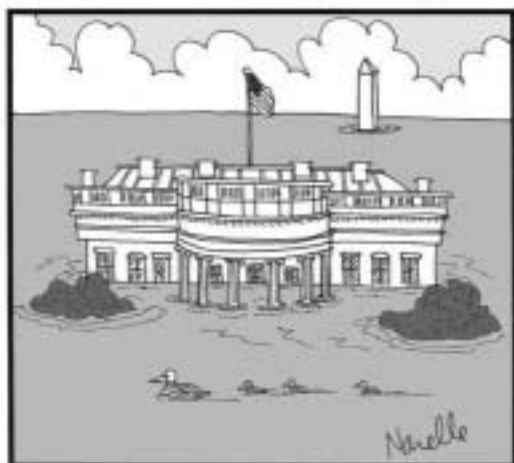
The **fifth** recommendation concerns how we have gotten into this situation in which there is a gap between what the relevant scientific community understands and what the public and policy-makers know.

A fundamental premise of democracy is that the public is informed and that they're honestly informed...I don't know anything in our Constitution that says that the executive branch should filter scientific information going to Congressional committees.

The global warming problem has brought into focus an overall problem: the pervasive influence of special interests on the functioning of our government and on communications with the public.

It seems to me that it will be difficult to solve the global warming problem until we have **effective campaign finance reform**, so that special interests no longer have such a big influence on policy makers.

Excerpted; Full article at WWW.THENATION.COM/DOC/20070507/HANSEN.



The President's indifference to global warming was starting to show.

We care, We Count, WE VOTE!

Campaign Cash

Public Financing Works in Other States

by *Richie Robb and Carol Warren*, Charleston Gazette, March 21, 2007

Déjà vu hardly describes it. For the second year in a row, the Public Campaign Financing Act (SB 118) was inexplicably killed in the Senate Finance Committee.

Despite many specific promises to coalition members and even to other legislators, **Sen. Walt Helmick has once again denied a committee vote on the bill.**

Why are a few of our top Senate leaders so reluctant to try a more democratic election process? They have run unopposed in a number of races for decades, and the amount of campaign money that gravitates to their powerful positions has rendered any opposition virtually impossible to finance.

Surely they are not afraid to run on their records against a contender who could run a viable, publicly financed campaign?

Evidence from the states of Maine and Arizona suggests they need not be wary. Incumbents have the name recognition and a record of public service that continues to attract voters in the majority of cases, even when publicly financed candidates oppose them.

And if an incumbent chooses to run as a publicly financed candidate, the public seems to acknowledge and reward that. Only incumbent legislators with whom the public has reason to be displeased should feel any apprehension.

The legislators in Maine and Arizona seem as happy with the system as the voters. Eighty-three percent of Maine's Senate and 77 percent of the House chose to run as publicly

financed candidates in the 2004 election cycle. Legislators in that state say that running with public financing has become the norm. The number of publicly financed candidates elected in Arizona climbs during each election cycle as well.

And why would our Senate leaders choose to ignore the efforts of a coalition as broad and deep as the one supporting public campaign financing?

The coalition includes the League of Women Voters, AARP, Citizen Action Group, the West Virginia Council of Churches, AFL-CIO, West Virginia Education Association and the West Virginia Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, among others. Are the special-interest funders privately suggesting that legislators oppose the bill?

The experiences of Maine and Arizona also show that public financing increases not only the number and diversity of candidates for office, but also increases citizen involvement.

Under the current proposal, West Virginia candidates could not qualify for public financing without collecting between one and 400 small, \$5 contributions from registered voters in their district. These voters become part of the process, and are more likely to become educated about the issues facing the Legislature.

Less than 1 percent of West Virginians contributed to any candidate's political campaign during the 2004 election cycle. Yet it is common knowledge that more money is spent on campaigns every election cycle.

If the money to finance those campaigns is not coming from citizen supporters, where is it coming from? Who is it coming from?

Having candidates who are out knocking on doors, seeking support, and talking with constituents about their concerns can only help the democratic process and re-engage West Virginians.

Public participation is the key to healthy democracy. We hope to encourage our legislative leaders to be more open to increasing that participation through public financing of elections in time for the 2008 legislative session.

Robb is mayor of South Charleston. Warren is with Citizens for Clean Elections. 

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must better analyze damage to mountain streams before giving coal companies permits to bury them during mountaintop removal mining, U.S. District Judge Robert Chambers has ruled. It was a sensible ruling, based on science and an understanding that the health of small creeks high in the mountains affects life downstream.”

– March 28 Charleston Gazette editorial about the historic Judge Chambers ruling

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The Seasonal Round of America's Mixed Mesophytic Community Forest - A Resource for the Entire Planet

by Mary Hufford, Center for Folklore and Ethnography, University of Pennsylvania

The Central Appalachian mountains harbor the world's oldest and biologically richest temperate zone hardwood forest. Spreading across the crumpled terrain of the Allegheny and Cumberland Plateaus, from northern Alabama to southeastern Ohio and southwestern Pennsylvania, the system that pioneering ecologist E. Lucy Braun called "mixed mesophytic" (medium moisture-loving) evolved over the course of a hundred million years.

Whereas most forest types are dominated by two or three canopy species, the mixed mesophytic system features nearly 80 woody species in its canopy and understory, including beech, tuliptree, basswood, American chestnut, sweet buckeye, birch, black cherry, white ash, butternut, black walnut, red mulberry, paw-paw, persimmon, four kinds of magnolia, and a variety of species of oaks, maples, hickories.

Never glaciated during the ice ages, the coves and hollows of central Appalachia sheltered this biodiversity from the freezing temperatures that extirpated species elsewhere. E. Lucy Braun theorized that the seed stock kept alive in the coves eventually replenished the forests of Eastern North America. Ecologists today reason that the coves could again protect biodiversity in a time of global warming. A widespread nickname for this system is the "Mother Forest."

The soils of this region were so productive that Native Americans regarded much of southern West Virginia as commons, and traditionally warring bands suspended hostilities during seasons of hunting, gardening, and gathering nuts, fruits, and medicinal herbs. Communities living in the region today continue to prize the gifts of forest diversity, not only as economic and subsistence resources, but as templates for patterning life.

The formula "plant corn when the oak leaves are as big as a squirrel's ear," illustrates in a small way the integration of community life with the life of the forest. The environment itself stores memories, issuing the prompts to which generations of community forestry have responded.

The mixed mesophytic seasonal round is the linchpin of the community forest. Synchronizing gardening, hunting, gathering, and the marketplace, the round begins each year in mid-March with a trip to the ramp patch. Ramps, wild cousins of garlic and the first of the wild foods, are featured at spring feasts and community fundraisers.

Forest bounty is always in season: hunting turkey, greens, and morel mushrooms in spring, fishing in creeks and berry picking in summer, digging ginseng, gathering walnuts, hazelnuts, chinquapins, butternuts, paw-paws, and persimmons, hunting squirrel and deer

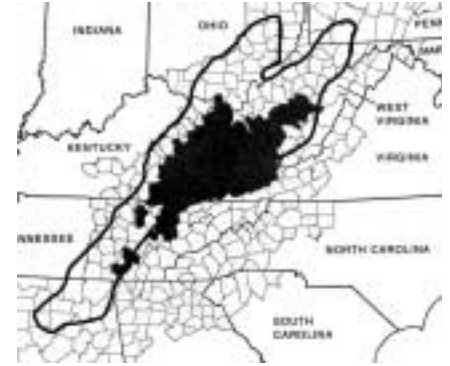
from August until December, tapping sugar trees, and preparing to drink sassafras tea in the late winter when the need for spring tonic grows acute.

Participation in this annual round integrates disjunct parts of the landscape: knowing where the old apple orchards are is vital to hunting for morels; knowing which species of bait emerge and when along particular creeks informs the practice of fishing in major tributaries; following fruits as they ripen later at higher elevations extends the berry season; following the cycle of ripening nuts is formula for success in squirrel hunting.

Resting on the knowledge of elements of a system in relation to one another, the community forest fosters ideas about healthy forests that are less and less well-known: that healthy forests need multiple aged stands, including den trees, bee trees, and nut trees; or that depleting resources too rapidly is a form of "robbing the land."

The mixed mesophytic community forest exemplifies what anthropologist Gregory Bateson called "the thinking system," that is, the organism plus its environment. You cannot take apart the thinking system without destroying it. Violent technologies used to extract timber and fossil fuels destroy thinking systems all over the world, producing social and cultural dislocation and economic hardship.

In the Central Appalachian region, mountaintop removal mining is destroying not only mountains and their communities but forest systems that could be conserved to support local economies and societies while sustaining a carbon sink that could help to heal the planet. 🍄



The outline is the mixed mesophytic community forest. The black area is the projected footprint of mountaintop removal mining and valley fill on that irreplaceable forest.

We care, We Count, WE VOTE!

Dispelling the Myths About Fair and Clean Elections

(These myths and realities are adapted/excerpted from *Breaking Free with Fair Elections: A New Declaration of Independence for Congress*, March 2007, a collaboration of Public Campaign, Common Cause, Brennan Center for Justice, Democracy Matters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG.)

If you've spoken to one of your legislators about the need for a Clean Elections system last session at the legislature (public funding for legislative races), chances are you've heard one or more of the myths about why Clean Elections is not a viable way to finance politicians campaigns. Below are some standard myths and some ways to dispel them.

Myth: Clean Elections systems violate the First Amendment.

Reality: Because the proposed public funding bill is voluntary, it is constitutional. In the landmark 1976 case, *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court ruled that a voluntary public funding system for presidential campaigns did not violate the First Amendment.

Myth: Public funding of elections amounts to "welfare" for politicians.

Reality: This argument is based on an illusion that a Clean Elections system offers political candidates a chance to receive easy money, and is tinted by the implicit assertion that candidates may use public money for

personal expenditure. This concern is unfounded.

Clean Elections, such as those enacted in Arizona, Connecticut and Maine – and proposed in West Virginia – employ safeguards that require candidates to demonstrate their seriousness and viability before they receive a penny of public money. The system also has sensible rules to prohibit spending public money for anything but legitimate campaign expense and requires candidates to account publicly for all expenditures. Clean Elections would be an investment in a more responsive and independent West Virginia legislature.

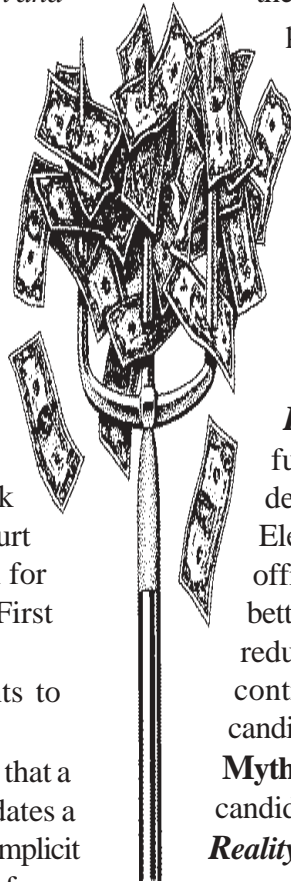
Myth: Clean Election systems (public financing) forces taxpayers to support candidates they do not like.

Reality: When taxpayers contribute to public funding systems, they are paying to support democracy, not an individual candidate. Clean Elections systems lower the barriers to running for office, increase the likelihood that voters will have better candidates to consider. Moreover, the system reduces candidates' dependence on deep-pocketed contributors, lessening the chance that winning candidates will feel indebted to donors.

Myth: Public funding of elections would give "fringe" candidates easy access to taxpayer money.

Reality: Clean Elections requires that publicly funded

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States and Localities with Clean Election Systems

State / Locality	Electoral Contest(s) for which public funding is available	Method of Approval	Year of Approval	Year of Implementation
Arizona	Statewide and Legislative races	Ballot Initiative	1998	2000
Connecticut	Statewide and Legislative races	Legislation	2005	2008
Maine	Statewide and Legislative races	Ballot Initiative	1996	2000
New Jersey	Legislative (pilot project)	Legislation	2004	2005
New Mexico	Public Regulation Commission	Legislation	2003	2005
North Carolina	Judicial elections	Legislation	2002	2004
Vermont	Governor and Lt. Governor	Legislation	1998	2000
Albuquerque, NM	Citywide races	Ballot Initiative	2005	2007
Portland, OR	Citywide races	Legislation	2005	2006

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May 5 – June 22: Photographs by OVEC’s Vivian Stockman at The Sandor Teszler Library Gallery, Wofford College, Spartanburg, SC.

May 12-16: 2nd Annual Mountaintop Removal Week in Washington, DC.

May 19: “Artists For The Environment.” A creative benefit for WV Environmental Council. WVEC office, 2206 Washington St. E., Charleston. From noon - 4:00 p.m. Featuring live music, artwork available for purchase, door prize, silent auction art pieces, refreshments. For more information: WVEC office at (304) 414-0143

May 20 - 27: Mountain Justice Summer 3 training camp. Come to a week of skill sharing, camping, and the kickoff of Mountain Justice Summer 3! Join the movement! To register, see www.MOUNTAINJUSTICESUMMER.ORG.

Right now, across Appalachia, lives, jobs, habitat, and mountain cultures are endangered by mining the coal consumed when we use electricity.

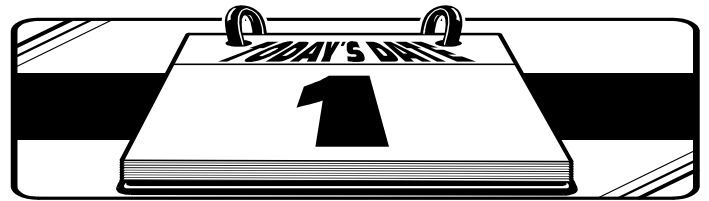
Right now, across the country, people are *taking responsibility and taking action to end mountaintop removal coal mining and find energy solutions.*

Regional Environmental Groups Organize to Stop MTR

For the past year, several organizations in Appalachia have been meeting to coordinate our work and to find ways to become stronger by working together. Four OVEC folks – Donetta Blankenship, Chuck Nelson, Dianne Body and Janet Keating – represented OVEC at the April meeting at Jenny Wiley State Park outside Prestonsburg, Ky. 🌰



Left photo, Kevin Pentz from Kentuckians For The Commonwealth looks on as OVEC member Chuck Nelson talks about being arrested at the Marsh Fork Elementary action at the West Virginia Governor’s office. **Right photo**, from right to left, listening intently are Donetta Blankenship and Dianne Body with OVEC, and Matt Wasson and Lenny Kohm with Appalachian Voices.



CALENDAR

Summer: Mountain Justice Summer 3. SEE WWW.MOUNTAINJUSTICESUMMER.ORG.

June 8-10: Just Connections Conference, Ferrum College, Ferrum, VA. WWW.JUSTCONNECTIONS.ORG. See the website for information about the organization and the conference.

July 7: Around the world. Live Earth concerts. Led by former US Vice President Al Gore.

August 11: 7 p.m. West Virginia premieres of two new Appalshop films: *The Electricity Fairy* and *Up the Ridge*. At the LaBelle Theater, 311 D St., South Charleston, WV.

Jan. 31, 2008: Focus the Nation Teach-In on Global Warming Solutions. See WWW.FOCUS THENATION.ORG/. 🌰

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Clean Election Myths

continued from page 25

candidates collect enough qualifying contributions to demonstrate that they are serious and have a broad base of support. Elections in Arizona and Maine show that Clean Elections results in fewer uncompetitive candidates. Although the number of candidates has increased in those states, the vast majority of those candidates demonstrated a strong base of public support at the polls. In Maine's 2006 primary election, for example, no candidate received less than 20 percent of the vote, and only 15 of the 409 candidates in two-candidate races received less than 40 percent of the vote.

Myth: Public funding will not decrease the amount of money in campaigns.

Reality: A Clean Elections system would set limits on what a participating candidate can spend. Therefore, if a large

percentage of candidates participated, it would likely slow the increase in campaign spending.

It warrants noting that one objective of Clean Elections is not to remove money from politics, but rather replace private money that can be viewed as corrupting with public money that supports a healthy democracy.

From: Breaking Free with Fair Elections: A New Declaration of Independence for Congress, March 2007, a collaboration of Public Campaign, Common Cause, Brennen Center for Justice, Democracy Matters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG, p. 9. 🍌

The Billion Dollar President's Club

by Devilstower on the Daily Kos Blog, (excerpted)

... If anyone thinks that the biggest problem in cleaning up congress is lobbyists, they're way off base. A free golf trip may be a nice way to put a congressman in the mood to support your Native American extortion racket, but it doesn't come close to the influence gained by stuffing campaign coffers with millions of dollars. We've stopped someone from buying congress' favor with a nice dinner, but left open the door that allows them to buy the congressional seat itself.

The cost of campaigning for congress, the Senate, and the White House has risen astronomically. Just since 1990, the cost of running for congress has grown more than three-fold, after adjusting for inflation. When even the most secure congressmen are expected to raise a million dollars every two years just to hold their seats, it's ridiculous to assume that their first concern doesn't lie with those who feed that eternal need.

At the presidential level, things are even worse. In 2000, George W. Bush was the first person to opt out of the public financing system that had lent elections a degree of sanity since Watergate. By raising the then-astounding amount of \$100 million, Bush opened up a presidential money arms race that threatens to rewrite all the rules.

In 2004, not only did Bush skip public funds, but both Kerry and Dean followed. The results were amazing. Kerry raised \$234 million for the primaries and Bush \$269 million, according to FEC records. \$100 million had revolutionized the system in 2000, but it wasn't even in the ballpark for 2004.

For 2008, some analysts are predicting the first billion dollar presidential election. 🍌

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Remember – All donations to OVEC are tax deductible!

GRANDPA'S PLACE

by
Sam L. Martin

Where will I guide my
grandson to teach him to camp,
fish and hunt? I can
only tell stories
of my childhood, the mountains
and why God made them.
"Where that mountain used
to be," I will tell him, "my
buddies and I built
a lean-to and slept
under it three nights. When a
storm came, we got wet.
But that mountain's gone
with many other mountains."
I'm glad my grandpa
isn't here. There is
no place for his memories
to sleep and touch rain. 🌰



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