



# Winds of Change

the newsletter of the

## Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

Huntington, WV

www.ohvec.org

In Memory of the  
17 WV & KY  
Coal Miners

## Sludged Sick: Telling Our Stories in the State Capitol

It's evident that coal industry campaign contributions can muck up certain politicians' heads. Some lawmakers seem to have forgotten about We, the People.

Rather than remain forgotten, the people of southern West Virginia are standing up and speaking out. From county commissions to the State Capitol, people are demanding that legislators hear our voices.

For instance, on Jan. 10, 26 people from Boone, Logan, Raleigh, Mingo, Cabell and Kanawha counties converged on Charleston to tell their stories to six West Virginia delegates.

A few who had never been in the State Capitol felt a bit intimidated by those grand marble columns and all those white men in suits. But, not for long. It turns out the delegates who came to meet with us are our neighbors and friends and, once they heard our stories, they really do want to help. Who could not be moved by the stories told? The delegates were truly stunned by what they heard and saw.

Several Mingo County residents showed samples of their blackened well water and told horror stories of sick children. Massey has been injecting coal sludge from its Rawl Sales Processing plant into old underground mines

### ***New Court Order Sought to Block Three More MTR Permits in WV***

*by Ken Ward Jr., Charleston Gazette, Feb. 2, 2006*

West Virginia environmentalists on Wednesday sought a new federal court order to block three mountaintop removal mining permits issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Lawyers for the three groups asked U.S. District Judge Robert C. Chambers for a preliminary injunction to stop the mining operations.

“Trying to get the Corps of Engineers to follow the law is like trying to nail Jell-O to a wall; it is awfully hard to

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***The few ... the proud ... the ENVIRONMENTALISTS.***

and the people

believe the sludge has made its way into their water supplies.

Not only do they allege their water has been contaminated, they also feel the water is ruining their health. Mothers spoke of taking their babies to the hospital with illnesses uncommon for young children – gall and kidney stones and liver trouble. One woman recounted how her doctors suspected the water had almost caused her liver to fail; she remembered lying in the hospital, thinking of what would happen to her children if she died. She still worries,

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# *Not Just Any Thursday*

by Janet Keating and Carey Lea

We are supposed to be on vacation in Buenos Aires, Argentina, but we just can't take a vacation from our values. When we learned that Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo (the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) were still protesting the disappearance of their children that occurred between 1976-1983, we wanted to see them and as it turned out, Carey and I joined them as they marched. Although many of the mothers are stooped by age and nearly 30 years of continual protests, their spirits remain strong and steadfast.

According to the *Lonely Planet* and *Rough* guidebooks, starting on April 30, 1977, 14 mothers whose children disappeared during what is known as the Dirty War, marched on the Plaza de Mayo demanding to know what happened to their children. (A military junta had taken control of the Argentine government in 1976.) The young people who opposed the military regime had banded together to form the Montañeros – considered to be a left wing guerilla group which resisted the new regime.

A mind-boggling 10,000 to 30,000 civilians died, whisked from street corners or from their beds never to be seen or heard from again. They vanished without a trace to be tortured, murdered or sedated, then dropped from a plane into the Rio del Plata.

What began with a handful of women continued to steadily grow. The mothers, still seeking answers, met weekly on the Plaza del Mayo in an effort to embarrass the military regime and to find support in each other. The government claimed that the young people had merely gone abroad. Although Las Madres never got the answers which they were seeking, they continue to protest once a week to this day, dressed in their iconic white scarves (the white headscarf adorned with a picture of their missing child emerged as a way to identify each other and is still worn today by the mothers).

In spite of not getting the answers they sought from the authorities, they played an essential role in history as the first group to openly oppose the military junta, which then opened the doors for later protests by others.

The courageous and tenacious Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, standing up to a brutal, murderous regime (which was assisted, if not created, by foreign imperialists), offer an incredible example of the repressed fighting back. Those who oppose mountain and community destruction by the coal industry *can find strength for the long haul* by remembering their honor in suffering.



***Matilde Mellibovsky, one of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires.***

## **OVEC's Annual Meeting and Spaghetti Dinner Fund-Raiser**

**5 p.m. April 22, St. Cloud Commons, 17<sup>th</sup> St. W., Huntington, WV**

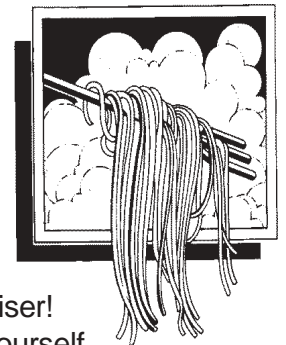
**\$5 suggested donation, but all are welcome**

Bring your appetite and join us April 22 for a family-friendly evening of great food, entertainment, and camaraderie. It's OVEC's annual meeting and spaghetti dinner fund-raiser!

Meet other OVEC members, tell us what is on your mind, nominate someone – or yourself – for the OVEC board and help us recognize our outstanding volunteers. And, enjoy some authentic Italian cuisine prepared by Eric Fout.

We'll have live music, activities for the kids and a virtual flyover of mountaintop removal sites – for those who are up for viewing the devastation on what will otherwise be a fun spring evening.

If you can, please bring a dessert to share. *Mark Your Calendar – Save the Date – Join Us!* 🍪



## Sludged Sick

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because her family of six still uses the well water to bathe and wash clothes, as they can't afford bottled water for anything but drinking. (See related story below).

The dangers of sludge injection aren't the only thing the people from Mingo, Boone, Logan and Raleigh counties came to tell the delegates about.

They also talked about what it is like to live near giant coal sludge impoundments. They wonder when the

### TAKE ACTION

**You, your family and your neighbors know best what is happening around your home. Our legislators won't know your stories unless you tell them. They won't know about the changes you need to improve your community unless you tell them. Don't hesitate to speak up for change!**

**Call your West Virginia delegates and senators and tell them to support a ban on coal sludge impoundments and coal slurry injection. Call the OVEC office at (304) 522-0246 and ask for Abe for more information.**

### OVEC Board of Directors & Staff

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

dams will break. They showed pictures of the Massey coal sludge impoundment above Marsh Fork Elementary School. The dam is only 400 yards from the school, and there's strip-mine blasting going on above the impoundment!

Just three days after that meeting, some of the same folks met with an aide to the governor, once again telling their stories. The aide was visibly moved. He took their foul well water samples and promised to show them to the governor. These folks are now waiting to hear when the governor will meet with them. As one lady put it, "I've dealt with this (contaminated water) for 20 years. The least the governor can do is deal with it for an hour."

Then, on Feb. 1, two dozen more went to visit 12 delegates and senators to request the politicians' aid in stopping the health and safety problems related to coal slurry injection and coal sludge impoundments.

All visits were facilitated by the Sludge Safety Project, [www.sludgesafety.org](http://www.sludgesafety.org). 

## Something's in the Water

*by Patricia Feeney*

"We all get red bumps on our skin, sometimes sores on our head. We won't let the kids bathe too long and I know our water isn't as bad as others around here."

Russell Elkins, a retired coal miner, lives in Rawl, WV, with his wife and two adopted girls, ages 7 and 11. He is talking about the water, and he's right; they don't have it as bad as others.

"I don't dare bathe the baby in it," said Carole Hensley of Lick Creek, "not since they told us what was in it." She takes her 6-month-old grandson to her sister's house in nearby Williamson, where they fill up water jugs to use for drinking and cooking. "We still bathe in it, and I'm pretty sure that's why our hair is falling out."

"We have three filters," said neighbor Donnetta Blankenship, "but after we shower, we itch and the red bumps get worse. My son's back stays covered."

Residents of four different Mingo County, WV communities (Rawl, Merrimac, Sprigg and Lick Creek) are suffering symptoms such as red skin bumps, sores and hair loss, as well as a variety of kidney and liver problems. Some residents cite at least 15 of their neighbors who have died from cancer in the last four years.

A 2005 study by scientists at Wheeling Jesuit University reports that the water tested in private wells exceeds federal drinking water standards for arsenic, lead,

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## Something's in the Water

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iron, aluminum, beryllium, barium, manganese and selenium (all of which are also found in coal sludge). Potential health effects of arsenic, aluminum and selenium include skin damage and rashes; arsenic and lead are known carcinogens; and excess selenium causes hair loss. Records show that

### ***The TRUE Costs of Coal***

When coal companies do not pay to mine coal and dispose of waste responsibly, the cost is “externalized” or indirectly paid by all of us. The underground injection of coal slurry is just one example of the way the coal industry externalizes its costs. The industry’s other everyday practices – such as the clear cutting, blasting and valley fills of mountaintop removal, and above-ground coal sludge impoundments – impact not only the environment, but also people’s health and quality of life.

The total costs that the communities in Mingo County have accrued due to the apparent poisoning of their water from coal sludge are untold. The per capita income of Mingo County ranks 2,999th out of 3,086 counties in the U.S., making it one of the poorest counties in the country. Here, many people must rely on bottled water for drinking and cooking. Those fortunate enough to have family and friends to provide tap water from nearby Williamson have the extra costs of gasoline and time to transport it. As people must rely on the contaminated groundwater for bathing and washing clothes, they pay the price of frequently replacing corroded plumbing and fixtures. Carole Hensley of Lick Creek just replaced her hot water heater for the second time in five years. Russell Elkins of Rawl has replaced his family’s water heater three times in 12 years.

And then there are the health care costs. Gas and time away from work to make weekly visits to the doctor weigh heavily on families, as do the fees of those visits and the costs of needed drugs. The worry and grieving over life-threatening diseases is incalculable. How must it feel to think that your once sweet well water is harming your children?

Some of the chemicals found in their groundwater are known to cause developmental and attention deficit problems in children. What is the price of a child’s developmental years?

What is the price of your skin? Your kidney? If we could only begin to answer these questions, then we would begin to understand the priceless value of clean, fresh groundwater, which is one of many things we’re giving up in exchange for “cheap” electricity. 🍌

millions of gallons of coal sludge (waste from a coal preparation plant) were pumped underground in the 1980s – up to 28 million gallons **a month**. Residents believe the sludge has reached their private wells and they allege the contaminated well water is harming their health. Over 300 families have initiated a lawsuit against a Massey Energy subsidiary, the coal company that admits injecting the sludge underground.

“But no amount of money can give us our health back,” said Hensley.

### **Clean Water Doesn’t Come Easy**

Residents claim their water started going bad ten years ago, when blasting from a local mountaintop removal operation shattered windows in their homes and in the local church. They suspect it was also responsible for cracking the rock that separated the underground sludge from the water aquifer.

Researchers have told residents not to drink or bathe in the water, but what are low-income communities to do? They have both agitated and organized. Thanks to long-term citizen participation in pressuring local officials, politicians secured some Abandoned Mine Lands Fund to provide a portion of the money to pipe water in from nearby city of Williamson.

But having been promised city water many times before, residents remain doubtful.

When asked what the community is doing while they wait for water lines, Billy Sammons of Lick Creek gave an all-too-common response. “We’re dying,” he said.

“I’m over the hill, and I know it,” said Elkins. “I know it’s too late for me, so I do it for these kids. It’s not too late for them... and if we don’t do something, nobody’s going to do it for us.”

It will be at least a year before the lawsuit goes to trial and before residents get city water. Some wonder how good the city water will be. Since so many coal industry messes end up in the water, the Tug River could hardly be unscathed.

Meanwhile, people are suffering without clean water. The Church of God Jesus Christ’s Name in Rawl, WV, is accepting donations of bottled water to distribute to the community. To make a donation, please contact the pastor, Larry Brown Sr., at (304) 235-2571.

To support the residents of coal field communities and learn more about the true costs of coal, please contact the Sludge Safety Project ([www.sludgesafety.org](http://www.sludgesafety.org)) and write a letter to your representatives encouraging them to ban mountaintop removal and support the Sludge Safety bill. 🍌

# Buffalo Creek: It Should Never Have Happened

by Patty Adkins

The tragedy on Buffalo Creek was years in the making. Pittston Coal Co. began dumping coal waste on the middle fork of Buffalo Creek in 1957. By 1968, the coal company was dumping more waste another 600 feet upstream. By 1972, a third dam was built that ranged from 45-60 feet in height.

The people of Buffalo Creek were aware that these dams existed, and were afraid that they might break. In 1967, the U.S. Department of the Interior warned state officials that the Buffalo Creek dams and 29 others throughout West Virginia were unsafe.

Furthermore, Pittston had a record of mining and safety violations. Still, neither the state nor mining officials made any effort to deal with the problem of the slurry impoundment on Buffalo Creek.

I was 11 years old when the Buffalo Creek disaster occurred. My family lived on Braeholm Hill and we stood there that morning and watched the devastation unfold. Everything seemed to be happening in slow motion as I watched people in houses and vehicles float by. I remember the sound of the blackwater breaking the houses apart, and seeing animals trying to stay afloat in the raging waters.

And after the water went down, I remember seeing two men pull the dead body of a woman from a house that had been lodged against the train trestle. At the time, I thought

## Copies of Book, Documentary Available

If you would like to own your own copy of *Buffalo Creek Flood: An Act of Man*, Frog Creek Books inside the Capitol Market in Charleston, carries the book. You can also purchase the documentary through the Appalshop website, [www.appalshop.org](http://www.appalshop.org). 🌰



it was a terrible natural disaster. It was only as an adult that I realized all those deaths were caused by the negligence of the coal industry.

The survivors of the Buffalo Creek disaster have to live with the memories of that day. If state officials had taken heed in 1967 when they were warned of the dangers of these impoundment dams, there wouldn't be an anniversary of this tragedy on February 26. State officials today should not let history repeat itself. 🌰

## Remember Buffalo Creek

# Monday, Feb. 27

## 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

### Room 252 State Capitol

Tell the Governor and Legislature to Support  
Sludge Safety!



As every West Virginian knows, on February 26, 1972 a coal waste dam in Logan County failed, killing 125 people, and leaving 4,000 homeless.

We must make every effort to protect our citizens from another coal waste impoundment disaster.

At 10 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 27, please come to Room 252, House side, at the State Capitol. Join members of the Sludge Safety Project in asking the governor and legislators to advance safety legislation that will protect people dealing with coal slurry injections and living in the shadow of coal sludge impoundments. We will show clips of two films on Buffalo Creek, meet residents whose health and safety is compromised by coal sludge, talk with legislators and discuss ways we can make our mining communities safer.

For more info or to carpool, call OVEC at (304) 522-0246, or see [www.sludgesafety.org](http://www.sludgesafety.org).

## Court Order Sought

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make it stick,” said Vivian Stockman, project coordinator for the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

“The corps gives coal companies permits that are little more than a wink and a nod, and the coal companies waste little time before ripping out trees, choking off streams and filling in valleys with mining waste.”

The coalition sought the injunction along with the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and Coal River Mountain Watch. Wednesday’s legal motions were made as part of a suit originally filed in September 2005 to force the corps to conduct more detailed environmental studies before it approves valley fill permits for new mining operations.

The case was a follow-up to a ruling by U.S. District Judge Joseph R. Goodwin to block the corps from

reviewing valley fill proposals through a streamlined “general permit” process.

Goodwin’s ruling has since been overturned by a three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, but environmental groups have asked the full appeals court to reconsider that decision.

In the new case, the environmentalists argue that the corps was wrong to approve mining operations through more detailed “individual permit” reviews because those reviews did not include a study called an Environmental Impact Statement.

Originally, the suit targeted just one new Massey Energy surface mine in Logan County. It later added another Massey mine in Boone County, and on Wednesday lawyers targeted a third Massey operation near the intersection of Kanawha, Fayette and Raleigh counties. 🍂

## THANKS

**Thank You! to:**

☆ **To Boy Scout Troop 50 of Chesapeake, Ohio.**

☆ **The Lost Communities of Mingo County for demanding that state government find them. Lost No More!**

☆ **Rt. 85 and Rt. 17 residents who have shared their concerns about mountaintop removal, who are making their voices heard.**

☆ **To the folks in McDowell County for moving their legislator to support Sludge Safety.**

☆ **Joan Linville, Steve White, Jim and Jean Foster, C. B. and Cynthia Huffman for caring and doing.**

☆ **Michael Morrison and Jesse Mwaura for their help so far with the Sludge Safety Project mailing.**

☆ **Terry & Wilma Steele, Carol & Walter Young, RB and Nannette & Paul Nelson for use of your homes for staying overnight and meetings.**

☆ **Ernie Brown, Debbie Sammons, Billy Sammons, Maude Rice, Donetta Blankenship, Lisa Blankenship, Terry Steele, Walter Young, Joan Linville, Vernon Haltom, Mary Miller, Pauline Canterbury, Kathryn Stone, Ron Wilkerson, Julian Martin, Regina Hendrix, Bill Price, Denver Mitchell, Dennis Sparks, Jeff Allen, Patricia Lynn Feeney, and Tracy Adkins for a great and moving meeting with legislators about Sludge Safety.**

☆ **Michael Morrison, Larry Gibson, Joan Linville and Bill Price for help with a literature drop.**

☆ **Carmelitta Brown, Ernie Brown and Billy Sammons for meeting with the governor’s legislative aide Jim Pettrillo.**

☆ **Walter & Carol Young, Leroy Runyon and RS for your work on Sludge Safety Project.**

☆ **Adam Brown for your help with the *Mountain Defender*.**

☆ **Joan Linville, Mary Miller, Pauline Canterbury, Mike Morrison and Regina Hendrix for help with outreach on the Buffalo Creek Flood films.**

☆ **And to Gracie, for her wise counsel and excellent layout skills.**

***Congratulations to all our volunteers. Y’all have put in over 300 person hours in the first three weeks of this year. Way to go!***

***Congratulations to all the hard working Mingo County folks, for your recent victory in getting the emergency alert system for sludge impoundments. Keep up the good work!***



# Living With Sludge, Living With Fear

## Walter's Comments

*Living near a coal waste impoundment not only depreciates the value of the property for the home owner, or puts ground water supply into question, or anxiety during heavy rain periods, thinking this may break, but it devaluates life itself. To anyone not living in the coal fields... we are giving up our environment so you may light yours. Please think of us hillbillies, when flipping your light switch.*

Walter Young, Delbarton



## Carol's Comments

*Having a coal waste impoundment within a quarter mile upstream is a very anxious situation, not to mention the dust and coal truck traffic every day which is a very unhealthy environment to any one. Just wonder what it is doing to our underground water supply, just to put in words, its like living in exile, it has destroyed our way of life.*

Carol Young, Delbarton



## Leroy's Comments

*First you wonder what the coal companies are releasing into the water. If it will make you sick or cause death before your time. If it don't kill you, the next thing you worry about is if this thing bursts will you be alive or if everything you work for will be destroyed. You live in a "panic" from one minute to the next and if it rains for two or three days you get very anxious. I don't think this is any way to live! Next you wonder what these coal companies are hiding.*

Leroy Runyon, Delbarton



## Geneva's Comments

*Fear, anxious, panicky, afraid – these are a few words I use to say how I feel about coal waste impoundments. When the TV or radio gives a flash flood warning you wonder if you are going to be alive the next minute or not. If it is going to be another Buffalo Creek or Martin County. You wonder what the coal companies are releasing from the coal impoundment in the water tables that you are drinking and why are they so secret about these coal impoundments.*

Geneva Runyon, Delbarton



# Redefining Mine Safety - Inside *and* Outside the Mines

by Norm Steenstra

I worked in a small underground coal mine for a couple of years. Roof falls were common and electrical fires were a constant threat. We had a "bad air" episode and I still marvel that we made it out. The Sago and Logan mine tragedies stirred up emotions placed in storage for over 25 years. In a small way I could visualize what the trapped miners went through.

I commend the quick action taken by the governor and the Legislature in addressing the causes of these recent tragedies but the safety issue is far more comprehensive. We need to declare that mine safety does not stop at the mine portal.

Hundreds of West Virginians live, worship and educate their children down the hollow from some of the

state's 150 coal impoundments. Thirty-four years ago the world learned at Buffalo Creek that these dams could fail, erase communities and kill entire families. More recent episodes in Kentucky and in our own state indicate that the coal dams are still not safe. Miners have the United Mine Workers to advocate for miner safety but who lobbies for the potential victims of dam failure? Why don't the people downstream merit the same disaster communication systems and new regulatory scrutiny?

Coal impoundments are a disaster waiting to happen, and the Marsh Fork Elementary School is a poster child for a potential calamity. It is located four football fields away from a huge Massey Energy coal sludge impoundment; this is the same company that had the massive dam failure

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## Mine Safety

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in Martin County, Ky., several years ago. Both dams have received numerous construction violations from federal inspectors. Common sense says that sooner or later, either by negligent coal companies or by an act of God, people will die as a result of a West Virginia dam failure.

I said I could somewhat relate to the miners' terror but I cannot relate nor have I ever experienced the terror of living downstream from a coal impoundment. People living with this omnipresent risk need leadership from both the governor and the legislature now.

\*Ed. Note: The affected residents and the Sludge Safety Project (led by folks in Mingo County, OVEC and Coal River Mountain Watch) are working for changes that will improve mining community safety. Please strengthen our efforts by supporting and working with us. See [www.sludgesafety.org](http://www.sludgesafety.org). 🍌

## Book on MTR's Horrors Reviewed

Lost Mountain, by Erik Reece

Excerpt from a book review on [MonstersandCritics.com](http://MonstersandCritics.com): A portrait of coal country as stark and galvanizing as Harry Caudill's classic *Night Comes to the Cumberland*s (1962).

In the old days of contour mining, excavations were carried out along ridgelines. Now the name of the game is mountaintop removal: Blast the high ground to smithereens, scavenge the detritus and plow the waste into the valley below, like so much toxic dust swept under the rug. Reece chronicles these ecological scalplings in anxious chapters written with an eye for abiding, catastrophic imagery. He does not lack material. Once a superb mesophytic forest habitat with an abundant diversity of species, the region now resembles the buttes of the American West. 🍌



Join us

**7 p.m. Saturday, March 11**

at the LaBelle Theatre

311 D Street, South Charleston,

WV

for the

**West Virginia Premiere**

of a work-in-progress by the

Pancake Sisters

### **Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal and the Fight for Coalfield Justice**

**Black Diamonds** charts the escalating drama in Appalachia over the alarming increase in large mountaintop removal coal

mines. Citizen testimony and visual documentation interwoven with the perspectives of government officials, activists and scientists create a riveting portrait of an American region fighting for its life - caught between the grinding wheels of the national appetite for "cheap"

energy and an enduring sense of Appalachian culture, pride and natural beauty.

**This is our story! Bring your friends and family to this event!**

**\$2 donation at the door goes to support the South Charleston Museum.**

[www.blackdiamondsmovie.com](http://www.blackdiamondsmovie.com)



Recycle your ink jet printer cartridges and help OVEC raise \$\$\$ . Call or e-mail Maryanne, (304) 522-0246, or [mago@ezwv.com](mailto:mago@ezwv.com), to get your postage-paid bags and help us out!



## Proposed Campaign Financing Act Would Mean Clean Elections in WV

by Julie Archer

The WV Public Campaign Financing Act (S.B. 124) would create an alternative public financing option for candidates seeking election to the state Senate and House of Delegates. The system is voluntary and candidates who participate agree to abide by contribution and spending limits. Public funds would be made available to candidates in single-member districts beginning with the elections to be held in 2010, and to candidates in the remaining House districts beginning in 2012.

Public financing is an important step to reduce candidate reliance on special interest money and enable candidates who lack personal wealth or access to wealthy contributors to run a competitive campaign – paving the way for ordinary citizens to have a voice in the political process.

At least six other states have already adopted full public financing programs for some or all state offices, and several others are considering similar legislation. In Maine and Arizona, the nation’s two pioneering “clean elections” states, it is now the political norm to run for office free from direct dependence on private campaign contributions.

If West Virginia’s legislature passes S.B. 124, candidates for the statehouse could spend more time talking

about issues instead of fund-raising. They could run on the merit of their ideas.

Incumbent legislators who opt to run under this “voter-owned” system would be free to vote their conscience – instead of feeling beholden to special interest contributors.

Public financing of elections is a sensible approach to changing the status quo and moving toward a government that is more honest, open and accountable to the needs of all its citizens, not just a select few who can afford to make big donations to candidates. 🍂

### TAKE ACTION

**We need you to contact your legislators to ask them to please support the WV Public Campaign Financing Act (S.B. 124).**

**For the very latest on where the bill stands at the Statehouse and how you can help get this bill passed, visit the Citizens for Clean Elections website, [www.wvoter-owned.org](http://www.wvoter-owned.org), or call Janet at the OVEC office, (304) 522-0246.**

### *Voter Beware*

## Watching the Paper Trail Vital to Make Sure YOUR Vote Counts

by Hedda Hanning

In 2005, the Legislature passed a law requiring that all touch screen voting machines (DRE) used in West Virginia provide a voter verifiable paper ballot. The intent is to assure the voter that her vote is recorded accurately and to allow for a canvass or challenge recount of the vote if needed.

This is excellent, but of course there are potential glitches. For instance:

- ❑ The voter might not check the paper ballot for accuracy;
- ❑ The printer may malfunction as technical things often do – it is all very new and untested;
- ❑ The counties may not prepare adequately for the event of a malfunction, such as having enough back-up machines if malfunctions are widespread;
- ❑ For some county officials, the immediate fall-back position may be “well, we don’t need to count those paper ballots

anyway.”

If your county uses the new DREs, always remember to check your paper ballot. It is the ballot of record for canvass or recounts.

Get active! Contact your county election officials to ask the following:

- ☒ What provisions have you made to alert the voters that they should check the paper ballot for accuracy? Will there be signs at every voting station? Will the poll-workers encourage voters to do so as they hand out the “keys” or “smart cards” for the voting computers?
- ☒ Given testing of machines here and elsewhere, how often do you expect equipment malfunction?
- ☒ What provisions have you made besides voter awareness to pick up a printer malfunction as soon as it happens? Will

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**We care, We Count, WE VOTE!**

**Voter Beware**

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poll workers look at the printer for obvious malfunction such as torn paper after each use?

☐ What provisions have you made to replace malfunctioning machines?

☐ Do you have enough equipment so that long lines will not develop at the remaining functioning machines?

☐ Can you envision a circumstance when you would not be able to use the voter verified paper ballot to canvass or audit the election?

**They Say Nuke Like It's a Good Thing**

According to the *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*, the Bush administration plans to announce a \$250 million initiative to reprocess spent nuclear fuel, a first step toward reversing a 1970s policy that rejected reprocessing as too dangerous to pursue.

That's part of Bush's effort to jump-start the nuclear-power industry. Under the plan, the US would take spent radioactive fuel from foreign countries and use a new process to reprocess it here.

The Bush proposal, tentatively called the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, would give U.S. vendors, such as General Electric Co., opportunities to sell nuclear-power reactors and nuclear fuel to developing nations.

Thomas B. Cochran, a nuclear physicist at the Natural Resources Defense Council, called the new reprocessing technology "uneconomical, unreliable, unsafe and unworkable." 🍌



☐ What do you plan to do if you feel that the DRE attached voter verified paper ballot cannot be used to audit the election?

☐ Do you plan to have extra paper ballots available as back-up for each election until it is obvious that elections will run smoothly with the new machines? 🍌

**WV Senator Pushes Publicly Funded Campaigns Starting With 2008 Election**

Excerpted from Associated Press, Dec. 28, 2005

Senate Judiciary Chairman Jeff Kessler believes West Virginia voters have had it with excessive special interest spending on elections and it's time to try publicly financed campaigns.

A voluntary system, he said, would free candidates from raising money so they could focus on getting their message out to voters.

"I find it a bit distasteful and nearly obscene that people are spending \$100,000 to get elected to a job that pays \$15,000," said Kessler, D-Marshall.

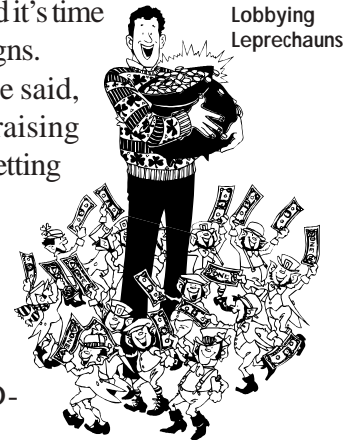
During the legislative session, Kessler's committee will consider a pilot project that would allow candidates to use public money to run their 2008 political campaigns if they agree to abide by certain rules.

Kessler said he isn't sure if the pilot would be used for judicial or legislative candidates.

The Legislature has been considering variations on such a plan since 2002, but Kessler said it may have a better chance this session because of publicity surrounding political corruption scandals...

"It's been successful in many other states," Kessler said. "It is not mandatory. Those folks that choose to do it actually had a very high success rate getting elected."

"I really think the American public is sick and tired of elections being about donors and not voters, and they do want clean elections," said (Rick) Bielke, (communications director for Public Campaign). 🍌



**We care, We Count, WE VOTE!**

## Coal Has Given Millions to Candidates, Report Says

by Paul Nyden, *Charleston Sunday Gazette-Mail*, Nov. 27, 2005

Since 1996, coal operators and industry leaders have given more than \$4 million to candidates running for governor, the Supreme Court and legislative positions in the Mountain State (according to the WV People's Election Reform Coalition of WV).

PERC-WV is jointly supported and funded by the West Virginia Citizen Action Group in Charleston, the Mountain State Education and Research Foundation in Charleston and the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition in Huntington.

During the election cycles studied, coal company interests gave more than \$2 million to gubernatorial campaigns, \$1.5 million to state legislative races and \$529,332 to Supreme Court candidates, the report states.

Gov. Joe Manchin received \$571,214 of the \$673,251 in coal contributions made to last year's gubernatorial candidates, or nearly 85 percent of the total.

That was the most any political candidate received from coal donations in any election since 1996, accounting for 12 percent of all money that Manchin raised during his successful 2004 campaign...

Coal operators also gave \$354,321 to Supreme Court candidates in 2004, including \$248,200 to Republican Brent Benjamin of Charleston, who won the election...

The largest coal donor in 2004 was RAG Coal Holdings and two of its subsidiaries - Riverton Coal and Kingston Resources. Together, they gave \$92,877 to West Virginia candidates.

West Virginians for Coal, the political action committee of the West Virginia Coal Association, made 143 donations to 81 candidates, totaling \$46,450.

Other frequent coal industry contributors included: Arch Coal, based in St. Louis, Mo.; William R. Bright, owner of Bright Enterprises in Summersville; Bruce, Larry and Robert Addington, former owners of Horizon Natural Resources; Consol Energy; and James "Buck" Harless, a Mingo County coal operator and timber owner...

Coal industry leaders routinely make donations to help pay expenses at gubernatorial inaugural balls, including: \$253,464 to Underwood in 1997, \$120,340 to Wise in 2001 and \$174,500 to Manchin in 2005.

House of Delegates Speaker Bob Kiss, D-Raleigh, was the top recipient of coal contributions to legislators. Between 1996 and 2004, Kiss received \$76,425 during his five election campaigns.

Delegate Steve Kominar, D-Mingo, received \$64,125... Kominar, who works for Sartin Trucking, was a lead sponsor of 2002 legislation that raised the legal weight limit for coal trucks traveling state roads.

Top Senate recipients of coal donations included Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, who received \$62,425, and Sen. Vic Sprouse, R-Kanawha, who received \$60,854 since he first ran for the Senate in 1996...

Before Republican Brent Benjamin defeated incumbent Warren McGraw in last year's Supreme Court race, Justice Elliott "Spike" Maynard, raised more coal money than any other Supreme Court candidate. More than 25 percent of the \$408,843 Maynard raised in 1996 came from coal interests, PERC found... 🍂

### ***Injecting Coal Wastes Underground Harmful, Not Well Regulated in WV***

Underground injections of coal sludge into old mines have been recorded since the 1980s. It is a permitted process for storage of coal sludge. There are 428 issued permits for underground injection of waste from coal mining operations in West Virginia alone, with similar numbers plaguing eastern Kentucky. 338 of those permits are for coal slurry (others are for acid mine drainage (AMD) sludge, usually the semi-solid material that settles out in AMD settlement ponds; for untreated AMD; for surface runoff from an impoundment; or for seepage from an underdrain). We have no idea how many injection points there are that are illegal or that pre-date the DEP's Underground Injection Control program. DEP employs only one person to permit and document all coal-related underground injections in the state.

Coal companies continue to inject sludge underground, bury streams, fill in headwaters, and discharge blackwater or coal sludge into our waterways. The United Nations reports that over 1 billion people in the world do not have access to clean drinking water. A representative of the World Bank declared that the wars of the next century will be fought over water. 🍂

**We care, We Count, WE VOTE!**



## *On the Scene at Sago*

by Denny Hodges

The Sago mine is about 30 miles from where we live, and Cecelia (Hart-Hodges) and I were there from a few hours after the explosion until days later, when the last of the families identified the bodies of their loved ones. Cece was there as the public affairs officer for the Red Cross and I was there as a mental health supervisor. The following is my opinion, and should not be taken to represent the opinion of the American Red Cross.


Cece did an outstanding job (forgive me for bragging on my wife) dealing with the press. You may have seen her on CNN. But beyond that she was loving and compassionate with these humble mountain people she grew up with and knows so well. I am very proud of her.

We spent most of the past three days with the tiny community near the mine in the Sago Baptist Church. The people's courage was inspiring. When they sang "Amazing Grace" while crying and hugging each other, we joined in and couldn't help crying as well.

I talked to a lot of the people since Monday and each of them reaffirmed why I love these people and the hills of West Virginia so much. It also angered me to see, once again, how the Appalachian people are exploited by powerful outside interests. I thought our governor was outstanding, spending the entire ordeal, not surrounded by security but holding the hands of the people and mingling amongst them. If only his compassion would translate into the political will to stand up to the coal barons who have no regard for the miners but only for the wealth they bring.

I'm sorry about that. What I wanted to communicate here was a reminder that life is short, tragedy comes quickly and unexpectedly. We are never prepared for the worst. Tell the people you are close to that you love them. Tell them several times a day.

And tonight when you turn on your electric lights, think about these miners and their families, for it is through their efforts and their sacrifices that modern society functions. Use electric power sparingly and treat it as the precious gift that it is. Someone's life is on the other end of that switch.

I believe we are on this Earth to learn how to love and honor each other and to care for the beautiful garden in which we live. May the year 2006 bring each of us the ability to do just that. 

## *The Toll from Coal*

...When the fate of the West Virginia miners was still unknown, a commentator on national TV lamented that technology has yet to transform coal mining into something less primitive than men burrowing underground.

He apparently didn't realize that technology has transformed coal mining. While this change may save lives, it has come at a high cost to the environment. The new mining technology finds its ultimate expression in mountaintop removal.

The pollution produced by burning coal for electricity also takes a toll on the environment and human life.

The nation's heart went out to the families of the trapped miners; we all mourn their loss.

But life has always been cheap in the coalfields. As long as coal's main asset is its cheapness, the industry will cut safety corners to save a buck.

And life will remain cheap in the coalfields as long as our nation's main energy policy is to consume

nonrenewable fossil fuels as wastefully and quickly as we possibly can.

-*Lexington Herald-Leader*, Jan. 6, 2006

### **Donations for the Miners**

**The West Virginia Council of Churches is collecting donations for the families of miners who perished in the Sago and Melville (Aracoma) mines. Send checks to the West Virginia Council of Churches, 2207 Washington St. East, Charleston, WV, 25311. Checks for the Sago miner families should be made out to the Sago Mine Assistance Fund. Checks for the Melville families should be sent to the Melville Mine Assistance Fund at the same address.**

## A Discredited Regime

Louisville Courier-Journal editorial, Jan. 25, 2006

Enough.

The arrogance with which the Bush administration waves off questions about the protection of America’s coal miners has exceeded all bounds of decency.

The man chosen by President Bush and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao to succeed Dave Lauriski as acting head of the Mine Safety and Health Administration – David Dye – simply walked out on Sen. Arlen Specter’s inquiry into the back-to-back accidents that have taken 14 lives in West Virginia...

This typifies the administration’s supercilious and dangerous approach to protecting the nation’s miners...

For 15 years, the industry had pushed MSHA to ignore those risks and ease the rules. The head of MSHA under President Bill Clinton, long-time safety advocate Davitt McAteer, refused.

But in 2004, the Bush-Chao regime gave its coal industry friends and contributors what they wanted, just as the administration made it easier to savage Appalachia with mountaintop removal mines...

Ms. Chao’s husband, U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, who represents some 15,000 Kentucky miners and the largest number of coal operations in the nation, has raised not a public peep about the administration’s dismal approach to mine safety.

This is not surprising, since he has welcomed hundreds of thousands of dollars in industry contributions to (political) campaigns over the past 15 years...

(Congress must look into) why the Bush-Chao team also has:

- ☛ Appointed industry insiders to oversee the regulation of a largely outlaw industry, which has proven time and again that it is resistant to safety controls. Mr. Lauriski, although arriving from a firm with a good safety record, even favored allowing higher coal dust levels in mines. He eventually left amid concerns about the awarding of questionable contracts. He will be remembered in Kentucky for his efforts to rig the probe of the great Martin

County blackwater spill.

- ☛ Revived industry’s favorite dodge: The idea that voluntary “cooperation” between companies and regulators will do what tough enforcement can’t – a fantasy for which miners pay a price in blood.

- ☛ Squelched the public’s opportunity to monitor how federal

*continued on page 14*

**“Coal mines are not inherently unsafe. They are, however, often operated unsafely, an important distinction. We know how to operate coal mines safely in this country, we just need to do much better what we already know how to do.**

**“What I think should be done, first and foremost, is to require operators to adhere strictly to existing rules and regulations for ventilation, roof support, dust and litter control and preventive maintenance.**

**“These things are not flashy but they are the best way to avoid accidents, rather than letting them happen and then react.”**

**- Author Homer Hickam, speaking to the Huntington Herald-Dispatch**



# The Worst Environmental President in US History

by Rep. Bernie Sanders, excerpts of a column

If we continue degrading our environment at our current pace, the planet we leave our children and our grandchildren will be dangerously inhospitable and unhealthy...

That is why we need leadership in Washington that moves us away from polluting energy resources, like coal and oil, and toward clean and renewable energy, like wind, solar, bio-mass and hydrogen. That is why we need strict enforcement of environmental laws that put the health and safety of our children above the bottom line of unscrupulous, polluting corporations.

Unfortunately, instead of responsible leadership, we are saddled with the worst environmental President in United States history. Since George W. Bush took office, his administration has proposed or implemented over 400

## Discredited Regime

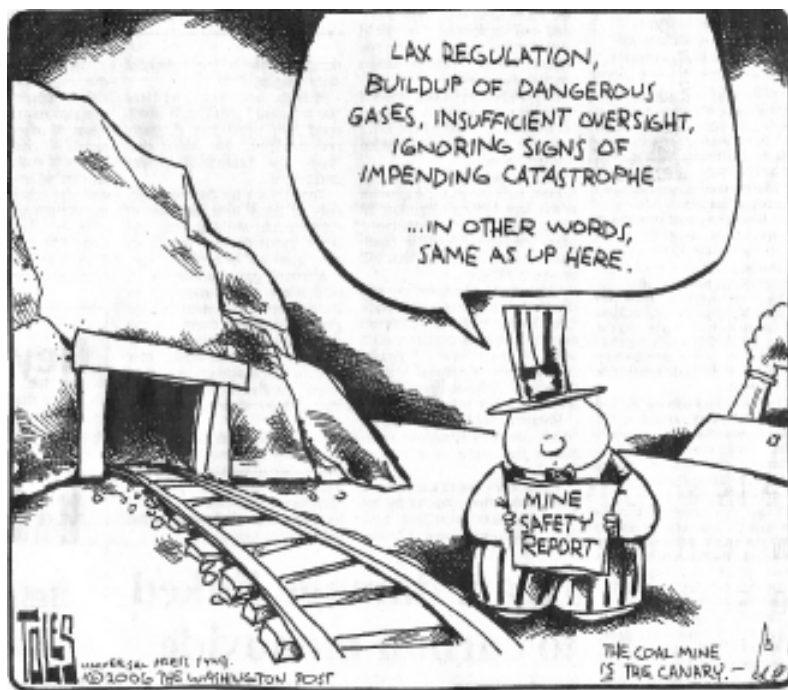
*continued from page 13*

mine safety laws and regulations are being applied...

✦ Withdrawn a Clinton administration plan to protect strip mine workers from the mayhem of haulage accidents.

✦ Overseen a dramatic decline in large fines for mine safety violations...

There's more, but this is enough to explain why David Dye preferred to duck out. 🍌



rollbacks in environmental protections, from permitting untreated sewage into our waterways to curbing restrictions on toxic mercury in our air and water.

These rollbacks are not accidental. President Bush has given new meaning to the old tactic of putting the wolves in charge of the henhouse. Nearly every agency of our government with jurisdiction over the environment is now run by the polluters it is supposed to regulate.

He appointed a rapacious timber industry lobbyist as head of the Forest Service... He put a utility lobbyist who has represented some of the worst air polluters in America in charge of the air division of the EPA. His choice to head up Superfund is a person whose last job was teaching corporate polluters how to evade Superfund law.

And those appointments make a difference.

... The EPA recently announced that in 19 states it is now unsafe to eat any freshwater fish because of mercury contamination, which is coming largely from coal-burning power plants. In 48 states, at least some of the fish are unsafe to eat.

A recent study from the Centers for Disease Control found that as many as 637,233 American children are born each year with mercury levels...associated with brain damage and loss of IQ. Much of this mercury is produced by 1,100 coal burning power plants that refuse to use readily available technology for reducing emissions.

Not coincidentally, one of the first things that Bush did when he came into office was to order the Justice Department and EPA to drop a series of 75 lawsuits against the nation's worst-polluting coal burning power plants. These large companies were allowed to continue poisoning our children with impunity.

Why? During the 2000 campaign they had contributed \$48 million to Bush's presidential bid and have given \$58 million since. They provide campaign contributions, and Bush allows them to pollute...

The United States used to be an international leader on environmental protection. Now, embarrassingly, on such issues as global warming we're an outcast.

Our environmental laws, which were once the envy of countries around the world, are now being hacked to pieces from within for short-term profits and political gain. 🍌

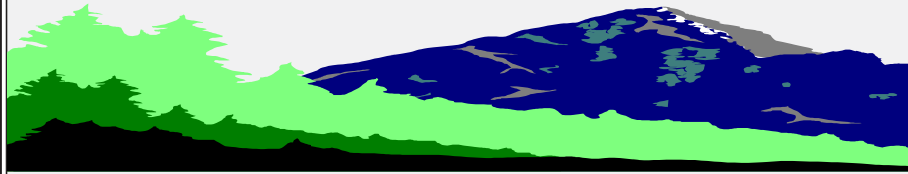
When you're finished with this newsletter, please pass it on!



~JOIN US FOR~

## **Healing Mountains**

**The 16th annual Heartwood Forest Council and the 6th annual Summit for the Mountains**



**Memorial Day Weekend  
May 26-29, 2006  
Cedar Lakes Conference Center,  
Ripley, WV  
(38 miles north of Charleston)**

With programs on Forests, Mountains and Coal: The connections between them; their impact on air, water, and climate; their role in our history, economy, and culture; with a special focus on ending the devastation of mountaintop removal coal mining. Invited and confirmed speakers include: Granny D\*, Cynthia McKinney, David Orr\*, Jack Spadaro\*, Woody Harrelson, Judy Bonds, Maria Gunnoe\*, Larry Gibson\*, Willie Nelson, Bobbie Ann Mason, Erik Reece, Ed Wiley and more. \*confirmed

### **What is the Heartwood Forest Council?**

Every Memorial Day weekend for the past 16 years, Heartwood has invited those who care about the health and well-being of our nation's forests to gather together to learn, to organize and to make plans.

The Forest Council is an energizing gathering in a beautiful setting, featuring inspiring speakers, workshops, field trips and strategy sessions. But that's not all! The Heartwood Forest Council is also a time of joyful celebration, with great music, amazing food, bonfires, hikes, dancing and rejuvenation!

To learn more about Heartwood, visit [www.heartwood.org](http://www.heartwood.org).

### **What is the Summit for the Mountains?**

For the past six years, coal field residents, activists and organizations working to stop the devastation of mountaintop removal coal mining have gathered to share stories, find inspiration and empowerment and develop coordinated strategies for protecting their homes, their communities and the mountains of Appalachia, and to challenge the entrenched power of "King Coal."

This year the organizers welcome activists from other regions and organizations working on other issues to join them in this epic undertaking to preserve our heritage, protect our air, forests and rivers and to heal the mountains that sustain us. To learn more about the Forest Council/Summit, or to help with planning, please contact: Janet or Tonya at (304) 522-0246.

## ***Our Voices Are Being Heard Nationally and Internationally!***

In January, news about the destruction of our communities, forested mountains and headwater streams traveled to people far beyond the "Billion Dollar Coalfields."

Three national magazines, *E Magazine*, *Orion*, and *Waterkeeper*, and one international newspaper carried in-depth articles about mountaintop removal coal mining in their January issues. The newspaper, *Christian Science Monitor*, interviewed several people from Boone County:

*"I'm bitterly opposed to mountaintop removal, because it takes jobs away from coal miners," says Jim Foster, a Bob White resident who has retired from a union job in an underground mine, who volunteered for the local fire department for decades...*

The reason the rest of the world is learning more and more about what is happening to our mountains and our hollows is because we are banding together, speaking

out and demanding our rights.

*Orion* magazine promoted its issue with Erik Reece's story on the massacre of our mountains with mentions on many National Public Radio affiliates. WV Public Radio apparently would not run the promos because it only mentions the words "mountaintop removal" in news stories.

*Orion* mailed copies of the Jan./Feb. issue to every US Senator and Congressman (Senators also got a copy of Erik Reece's book, *Lost Mountain*), as well as to all the state Legislators in WV, Ky. and Tenn! If you haven't contacted your national and state representatives recently about mountaintop removal, now might be a great time. You can ask their staff if they read the *Orion* article that came in the mail. If not you can direct them to [www.oriononline.org](http://www.oriononline.org), where they can read an abridged copy of the article. 🍓

# Net Metering: Grassroots Energy Generation for Everyone

by Frank Young (excerpted)

How would you like to make your electric meter run backwards?

“Net metering” is a concept that would change West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC) rules to allow homeowners to be reimbursed for any excess electricity they may generate from alternative sources like solar, wind and other means.

Recently, on behalf of WV Environmental Council, I intervened in the WV PSC’s ongoing, although nearly stalled, investigation into implementing net metering in West Virginia.

## TAKE ACTION

Registering your comments about net metering is easy. Comments need not be either technical or lengthy. Short and concise comments are best. If you think of or learn of other net metering related comments later, you can always submit additional comments. Be sure your letters include the Case Number: **02-1495-E-GI-Net Metering**.

Send comments to:  
**Executive Secretary**  
**WV Public Service Commission**  
**201 Brooks Street, Charleston WV 25323**

Several states have implemented some form of net metering while maintaining regulated rates for electricity.

Net metering is the practice of measuring the difference between the total generation and total consumption of electricity by customers, usually home and small business owners with small generating facilities, such as solar panels. One of the goals inherent in a net metering program is the encouragement of private investment in renewable energy resources.

“In essence, net metering allows a homeowner to generate power for the home and to supply any excess electricity to the power company,” explained former PSC Chairman James D. Williams. “This power moving onto the grid has a value, but there’s also a cost for the company to maintain the lines and to safely move that power. So, we’ve asked the companies to suggest what they think would be a fair way to compensate the supplier, how that compensation for the new power could be efficiently tracked, and what other considerations they think would be prudent to make sure such a program would work.”

It’s been more than three years since the state PSC opened its “investigation” into tariff (rate) filing or rulemaking that would allow and regulate net metering in West Virginia. Almost no one has been making requests or comments to the Commission on net metering matters.

Net metering is an important piece of the renewable energy puzzle in West Virginia. With net metering there is a bigger incentive for residents to invest in solar and wind power equipment, and other renewable energy sources. 🍌



## The CARTOONS - A Common Theme Emerges

We try to run a few political cartoons in every issue of *Winds of Change*, but this one is different - the tragedy at the Sago mine, followed rapidly by five other mining deaths in WV and Kentucky, has sparked a common outpouring the likes of which we have not seen in some time.

Perhaps, if cartoons on one continent can rouse millions of people to defend their religion, then cartoons like these can rouse Americans to demand that the government do its job with regard to protecting miner's health and safety.

## Strange Questions

# When Just Listening Can Be Viewed as A Threat

by Patricia Feeney

The police officer had been tailing us for quite some time. I saw the lights flashing and pulled over by Sherry's Restaurant. A second cruiser pulled in.

The four of us, volunteering two days with OVEC to do a listening project\* along Pigeon Creek and Big and Little Muncy, were being pulled over by the Mingo County Police.

"What have you all been doing? Where are you headed?" asked the officer.

After replying to his questions, I asked the ever-so-classic, "What seems to be the problem, officer?"

"We got a call on your car," he said, "Heard you all have been out asking strange questions."

We had spent the afternoon knocking on doors and hearing stories about the flooding that hit the hollow just last year. We had listened to residents explain their concerns about the instability of the dead trees and the mountain above them.

Many people surveyed were concerned about the logging and strip mining going on around their homes. Many expressed fear of another heavy rain and dissatisfaction with the response of government agencies.

The strange questions we were asking included,

## Chilling Dissent

# FBI Collecting 'Research' Reports on Enviro Groups

by Bill Berkowitz (excerpted), [mediatransparency.org](http://mediatransparency.org)

From spying on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil right activists, to the Cointelpro program that targeted the Black Panther Party, the American Indian Movement and scores of anti-Vietnam War groups...spying on Americans by assorted government agencies is as American as...cronies getting jobs in the Bush Administration (and) unsafe coal mines...

The story of government agencies spying on the American people has many layers. Through an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, it was discovered that the FBI has been collecting information from partisan, ideologically-driven



**Yep, FBI, we got those nature lovin' freaks right where we want 'em!**

"What do you feel are the biggest issues facing your community?" Interestingly, one grandmother was concerned about the lack of police response to theft and drug use in Big Muncy. "I've called the cops several times about my neighbors using drugs or about people speeding up and down the street like crazy – it's dangerous – and no one ever comes to do anything."

But start asking "Who or what is responsible for the flooding?" and you hear folks talk about Whiteflame Energy; you hear how people feel endangered by logging and strip mining. Mention the King Coal Highway and how it is all but an excuse to strip mine for coal without a permit, and the cops are on the scene.

Thank goodness someone is keeping an eye out for the greatest threat to the status quo – troublemakers of the worst kind – OVEC volunteers asking questions and listening to the communities' answers.

\* A listening project is an organizing tool by which volunteers from an organization go door-to-door in a community. This is done to gauge community issues and individuals' concerns, strengths and ideas in a way that fosters relationships between community members and organizers. Note that listening projects do not usually result in the cops pulling you over for asking strange questions. 🍌

right wing think tanks that have long had environmental activists in their cross hairs.

Recently National Public Radio's show Living on Earth broadcast a segment called "Big Brother," that explored the FBI's program that spies on environmental activists. (Former WV Public Broadcasting reporter Jeff Young hosted the segment.)

Young and his guest, Ann Beeson, the associate legal director of the ACLU, talked about how right wing think tanks are providing grist for FBI investigations:

YOUNG: ...the FBI seemed to rely pretty heavily on research done by a couple of think tanks that are very

*continued on page 23*



# Intact Forests Worth TRILLIONS

Canada's boreal forests store 67 billion tons of carbon, a "bank account" for the future preservation of Earth worth an estimated \$3.7 trillion, says the first report to assign a dollar value to those ancient groves.

Counting Canada's Natural Capital: Assessing the Real Value of Canada's Boreal Ecosystems argues the unquantified benefits of boreal "ecosystem services," such as water filtration, carbon storage, flood and pest control, are 2.5 times greater than the net market value of any forestry, mining or hydroelectric extraction allowed in the region.

If the untapped worth of the ecosystems was taken into account, they would have made a 10.5 percent contribution to Canada's gross domestic product in 2002 - more than double the 4.2 percent input to the GDP of traditional activities like timber harvesting and mining.

The findings echo those of a United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment published last spring,



which warned the failure to factor "natural capital" into land-use decisions is a key factor responsible for declining ecosystems around the globe.

*This is OVEC saying, we need the same study done on Appalachia's mixed mesophytic forests*, one of the most biologically diverse temperate forests in the world. Mountaintop removal destroys these forests forever, robbing future generations of the huge wealth of ecosystem services, and saddling future generations with the untold and unknown costs of ecosystems destruction. 🌰

## 'We Can't Wait' on Warming, Bush's Do-Nothing Policy Unacceptable

Louisville Courier-Journal editorial, Jan. 24, 2006

The utter irresponsibility of the Bush administration's policy of deny, delay and do nothing regarding global warming has become as obvious as the utter irresponsibility of its shoot first, plan later rush into Iraq.

It's become so obvious and so irresponsible, in fact, that the top environmental officials of three previous Republican administrations are speaking out....



"To sit back and push this away and deal with it sometime down the road is dishonest and self-destructive," said Russell Train, EPA administrator under Richard Nixon.

"We've got to start on this action. We can't wait," said Lee M. Thomas, who served under Ronald Reagan.

"There are all kinds of things we can do right now, and we ought to be taking those steps," said William Ruckelshaus, who served both Nixon and Reagan.

"This is a debate we should not be having," said William K. Reilly, who served President Bush's father, arguing for an end to the claims that the science of global warming is bad and the evidence inconclusive.

Global warming is real. The effects are already being felt. The consequences could be dire.

And allowing humankind's emissions of greenhouse gases to continue growing is courting almost certain disaster.

With environmentally conscious Republicans and major business leaders now calling insistently for controls, the President's willful refusal to lead is unconscionable. 🌰

Get Active! Join us in our civic participation work. Help us register voters and get out the vote. Call OVEC at (304) 522-0246 for info.

# Global Warming: Seven Hard Realities for Americans

by David Merrill,  
GlobalWarmingSolution.org.

As American citizens, we should feel nothing but shame and horror as the U.S., the world's largest greenhouse gas polluter, continues its reckless refusal to commit to binding emissions reductions. It's time we took stock of our central role in the deepening global warming crisis, because what Americans do from this point forward will in all likelihood decide the fate of the earth.

1 75 percent of the gases destabilizing the atmosphere came from wealthy countries, like the United States, over the last two centuries.

2 Each year, climate change is already killing an estimated 150,000 and sickening 5 million people. Until global warming is adequately addressed this tremendous suffering will increase.

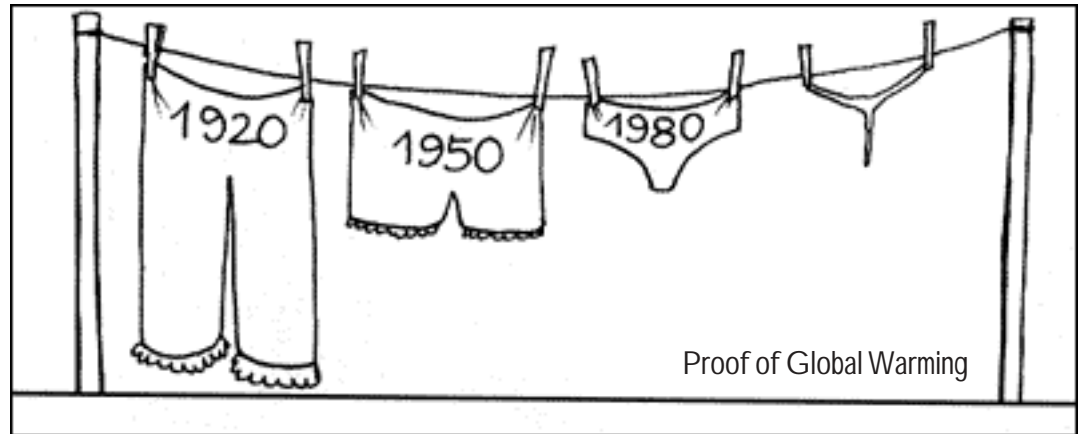
3 No rational person can dismiss the possibility that the survival of humanity is now at risk.

4 The scale of the threat is so great, that addressing global warming should be the number one political priority of the world community.

5 The most prudent action humanity can take is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly and sharply as possible. The main cause of global warming is the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas. There is no question that the entire global economy can run on 100 percent renewable energy with existing technologies. We need to transform the global energy infrastructure as swiftly as possible.

6 The key obstacle to addressing the global warming threat is the refusal of the world's number one producer of greenhouse gases, the United States, to commit to reducing its own emissions.

Unless U.S. policy changes, the global warming threat will not be addressed, indeed can not be addressed, and we can expect humanity's future to be a continual descent into chaos. Rising emissions from developing countries, particularly China and India, will need to be considered. How will we ever be in a position to work with them to control their emissions if we refuse to do so ourselves?



7 The only conceivable way that U.S. policy will change is through massive, organized pressure from millions of American citizens.

The world's top climate scientists have been issuing urgent proclamations on global warming since 1990. Yet, the U.S. government refuses to craft a responsible policy right up to the present day. At this point, it's safe to conclude that federal officeholders will continue their intransigence until they are politically forced to do otherwise.

The time has come for every American citizen to ask themselves: "What am I doing to pressure the President and the U.S. Congress into adequately addressing this apocalyptic threat?" The eyes of our children and all of humanity rest upon us. 🍂

## 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](mailto: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](http://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.





*That's not a sparkling clear blue mountain lake, it's millions of gallons of coal waste and indescribable goo threatening a WV town.*



# Almost LEVEL, West Virginia ...

*As if the mountaintop removal mining process wasn't enough, smoke from trees being burned off clogs the air as Massey expands stripping above the Shumate impoundment, at top right. This is the impoundment above Marsh Fork Elementary School that has so many parents there worried (see story on page 24).*



# CALENDAR

**Feb. 18:** House party in Huntington, WV, to raise money for *sending a delegation of coalfield residents to the United Nations* to raise awareness of Appalachian issues. Juggling, magic tricks, music, wine and cheese, dinner, dancing, fun – all for a good cause. Call Abe at OVEC, (304) 522-0246, for more information. If you can't come, please donate – we need to raise \$7,000.

**Feb. 27: Buffalo Creek Day at the WV State Legislature.** Join Sludge Safety Project from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Room 252 on the House side of the State Capitol. Come lobby your representatives to pass a bill making sludge impoundments safer. Call for an end to slurry injection. See two Appalshop documentaries: Buffalo Creek and Buffalo Creek Revisited. Call Abe at OVEC, (304) 522-0246, for more information.


**March 1: Deadline for submissions of poems to The Blair Mountain Anthology**, which seeks poems on mountaintop removal coal mining and deep mining and their effects on coal miners, coal mining families, communities. Submit three to five poems (new or previously published; for previously published poems note where/when published). SASE Required. Send manuscripts to Chris Green, English Dept., 1 John Marshall Blvd., Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 25755.

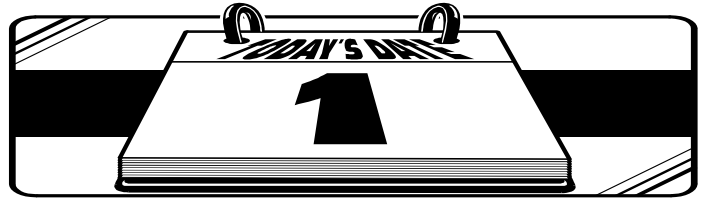
**March 11:** 7 p.m. at the LaBelle Theatre/Museum, 311 D St., South Charleston. Join us for the *West Virginia premiere of Black Diamonds - Mountaintop Removal and the Fight for Coalfield Justice*. This riveting film by the Pancake sisters features members of OVEC and Coal River Mountain Watch.

**March 22:** 7 p.m. at the Cultural Center of Sate Capitol Grounds. *Cultural Heritage Lecture Series:* William C. Blizzard discusses his book *When Miners March*. Presented by the WV Division of Culture and History.

**March**, date TBA: *Community strategy meeting* in Van, WV. Call Maria at (304) 245-8481 for details.

**You can donate to OVEC online using PayPal.**

Click on  at [www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org) today!



**April 22: OVEC's annual meeting** and spaghetti dinner fundraiser. Details on page 2.

**April 28-29: Beyond Coal – Building Healthy Communities in Appalachia**, Hindman Settlement School, Hindman, Ky. This conference will discuss the challenges facing Appalachians as economies based on coal transition in the future and what does Appalachia do after coal? Join us for an engaging lineup of speakers, workshops, and discussions. Topics will include small business development, sustainable forestry, state and federal funding programs, organic farming, lean manufacturing and more. Scholarships are available for coalfield residents. Please contact Brandon Absher, dbabsh0@uky.edu or (859) 523-3231. **Registration deadline is April 14.**

**May 26-29: Joint Heartwood Forest Council / Summit for the Mountains.** The Summit is the annual Stop Mountaintop Removal weekend event OVEC has organized for several years now. Heartwood's Forest Council is one of the most fun and productive annual gatherings of people who care about the future of life on Earth. This year, the two events merge. Look for big name speakers, loads of learning, great networking opportunities and ideas on how to really make a difference. Details on page 15. **Be sure to save the date!** 🌰

OVEC is a founding member of the newly-launched **Community Shares of West Virginia**, created to provide an alternative to United Way for state and higher education employees.

Community Shares is a partnership of progressive nonprofit organizations working to build social and economic equity, along with a healthy environment.

Donors are encouraged to designate their payroll deductions to organizations of their choice.

See [www.communityshareswv.org](http://www.communityshareswv.org) or call (304) 543-5811 to learn how you and your co-workers can help.

# *Sustainable Development: Help Send A Coalfield Delegation to the UN*

This May, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development will meet in New York to discuss international energy strategy.

Most government officials continue to ignore the atrocities of mountaintop removal, coal sludge impoundments and underground injections of sludge, so it is up to the people to let the world know the harsh realities of an economy built on “cheap” electricity.

The United Nations needs to know that we cannot have sustainable communities without the mountains on which we rely for clean water, clean air, our health and the health of our children. It is the people of Appalachian coal mining communities who are most immediately paying the true costs of coal, and so...

The first Coalfield Delegation to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, a group of inspiring coal field residents, is prepared to take the truth to

the UN, but we need your support if we are going to make it. Please help us raise the \$7,000 so we can get to New York this May and ensure that the international debate on sustainable energy development includes the voice of the people.



Please make checks payable to: The Appalachian Coalition for Just and Sustainable Communities, P.O. Box 161 Whitesburg, KY, 41858, or contact Patricia Feeney at (606) 632-0051, or [tricia@appcoalition.org](mailto:tricia@appcoalition.org). 🍄

## **FBI Collecting Info**

*continued from page 17*

conservative, pro-business, anti-regulation in their mindset and their mission. There's the Capital Research Center (and the Washington Legal Foundation, plus others)...who generated a lot of that information that the FBI apparently relied on. What do you make of that connection there?

BEESON: Well, I think that, unfortunately, it's another bit of information that might lead one to conclude that the FBI is not, in fact, just doing this to investigate crimes, but is doing it purposefully to suppress legitimate dissent and criticism of the administration's policies. There's another example, actually, in one of the Greenpeace-related documents. What the document says is that the FBI is concerned that the protest itself could harm the public image of the missile defense system. Now, to me that sounds very much like the FBI trying to assist the administration in preventing criticism of its positions and programs from getting out there in the public. And that's a very dangerous job for the FBI to be engaged in.

According to a posting at the ACLU website, the documents they obtained revealed that the FBI and local law enforcement agencies have been monitoring, infiltrating and targeting political, environmental, anti-war and progressive religious groups...

While (Deepa) Isac, (a staff attorney with Greenpeace) acknowledged that it was difficult to make an informed judgment about exactly what role these (think-tank generated) documents played in FBI decision making as to which groups to spy on, she did point out that "it is clear that FBI was using documents from conservative groups and it appears that they had no documents from counter-balancing organizations." 🍄

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# *Coalfield Residents Banding Together to Save School From Impoundment*

Interested in social and environmental justice? Would you like to put your school work to use, supporting one of the most compelling grassroots struggles of our time, working with an inspiring community organization in the Appalachian coalfields?

Coal River Mountain Watch with organizations in and beyond Appalachia is forming the **Save Marsh Fork Elementary Coalition Project**.

Marsh Fork Elementary School sits only 150 feet away from a coal silo, a few more feet away from a coal processing plant and only 400 yards away from a sludge impoundment, where a leaking dam is holding back 2.8 billion gallons of toxic coal waste.

Citizens of Coal River have dedicated their lives to



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

protecting their children and holding King Coal (in this case, Massey Energy), responsible for its impact on their community.

Children are sick; coal soot in the ventilation system is in their lungs. Residents suspect that exposure to certain chemicals in the air and water has caused cancers and other disorders. This is no environment for children.

We are looking for capable, self-motivated students with a heart for justice and a mind to make change. We need information. People interested in contributing their skills and research in any of the following areas are encouraged to apply:

- ☐ Environmental Policy
- ☐ Public Educational Materials
- ☐ Toxicology/ Public Health
- ☐ Children's Educational Programs
- ☐ Sociology
- ☐ Sustainable Energy Production
- ☐ Chemistry
- ☐ Art/Visual Production

Work may be done at the Coal River Mountain Watch office or from your college or university. Funding may be provided by your school's internship office, and research may be counted as credit.

Please Contact Patricia Feeney at (205) 617-4420 if you are interested. 🍂

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