



NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:
May 18, 2004**

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FRIENDS OF THE MOUNTAINS PROTEST MASSEY ENERGY'S DESTRUCTION IN APPALACHIA

Groups Join Together to Highlight Massey Energy's Damaging Practices at Annual Meeting

CHARLESTON, W.VA. -- Armed with signs, chants, badges and handcuffs to "arrest" environmental offenders, activists converged on Massey Energy's annual stockholder meeting to draw attention to the company's egregious environmental record. Protesters from across the state gathered on the sidewalks outside the Charleston Town Center Marriot while the stockholders met inside. Three coalfield residents, all angry with Massey Energy's behavior in their communities, addressed the shareholders.

For decades, Massey Energy's mountaintop removal mining has left Appalachian communities at risk from dangerous blasting, increased flooding and faulty slurry impoundments. At the protest, one activist portrayed Earthcop, a fictional officer who steps in when governmental regulators fail to do their jobs. Earthcop issued citations and "jailed" activists who were parodying Massey Energy executives and board of directors, citing them for practicing mountaintop removal mining, the most destructive method of coal mining.

"Blast by blast and flood by flood, Massey Energy's irresponsible mining practices are destroying Appalachia," said Pauline Canterbury of Sylvester, a member of Coal River Mountain Watch, who addressed the shareholders. "Massey Energy is blasting away our peaks, burying our streams in mining waste and covering our communities with toxic slurry, and the Bush administration is letting them get away with it. Instead of making a fast buck on the backs of Appalachians, Massey Energy needs to be a good neighbor and clean up its act."

Massey Energy is responsible for the worst environmental disaster east of the Mississippi ever. In October 2000 in Martin County, KY, one of Massey Energy's coal slurry impoundments broke, spilling 306 million gallons of toxic mining waste in the Big Sandy River's Tug Fork and its tributaries, disrupting the community and poisoning the water. Both Martin County Coal Company and its parent company, Massey Energy, initially called it an "act of God" to avoid cleaning up their mess. The investigation has been controversial, as one of its lead investigators was fired for blowing the whistle on a report that failed to adequately cite Massey Energy and a regulatory agency for their negligence.

Despite the devastation in Martin County, Massey continues to build defective slurry impoundments. The company's Brushy Fork impoundment in Whitesville, W.Va., slated to stand 950 feet above the community below, has been cited by the WV Department of Environmental Protection for at least 37 permit violations. Plus, Massey Energy located a slurry impoundment and has started blasting directly above Marsh Fork Elementary School, located in Sundial, W.Va., leaving the children at risk from flying rock, coal dust, and potential flooding.

"We hope our protest today sends a message loud and clear to Massey Energy's stockholders: Massey Energy's destruction of Appalachia is not only a crime against the people and the earth, but it's also economic insanity," said Canterbury.

Friends of the Mountains is a coalition of environmental and community groups, including Appalachian Voices, Coal River Mountain Watch, Citizens Coal Council, Delbarton Environmental Community Awareness Foundation, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Sierra Club-West Virginia Chapter, Stanley Heirs Foundation, West Virginia Citizen Action Group, West Virginia Environmental Council, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and West Virginia Rivers Coalition.

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