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Mountain Top Removal

What it is:

The Environmental Protection Agency explains Mountaintop Removal (MTR) as "... a surface mining practice involving the removal of mountaintops to expose coal seams, and disposing of the associated mining overburden in adjacent valleys – 'valley fills'".

Mountaintops are demolished to reach coal sources that lie close to the surface, a cheaper alternative than traditional mining. As the peaks of mountains are blown open to uncover the coal, the leftover debris must be placed elsewhere. As the EPA states, the disposal sites of choice are valleys.

The Clean Water Act and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act are supposed to protect us as well as our habitats. However, aspects of these laws are abused. For example, the misconstrued fill rule and the stream buffer zone, both allow coal ash to be deposited into water sources.

How it depletes our resources:

The EPA has said that MTR can lead to covered streams, development of new wetlands, and fragmented forests. In addition, it states that overall environment costs have not been assessed. The agency admits that "there may be social, economic, and heritage issues". Yet, MTR still continues.

Some of the social, economic and heritage issues include loss of jobs due the mechanization of MTR, flash floods due to changed landscapes and valleys filled with debris from MTR, acquisition of property, or forced selling in order for mining companies to continue to operate, destruction of water sources, and loss of biodiversity due to those organisms that cannot adapt to the changes.

MTR occurs most often in Appalachia, an area that for decades has been plagued with poverty. This technique makes it even harder for citizens to subsist. The coal that provides electricity for millions, is preceding the right to live for thousands.

Moving Forward: Slowly

The new Administration has said they will tighten regulations, but it has not stated that it would ban the practice. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced on April 27, 2009 that the stream buffer zone rule, permitted during the Bush Administration, was legally flawed. However, its' reversal has yet to come.

Socially Responsible Investors work to save the region:

ICCR Members have dialogued with coal mining companies who are active in Mountain Top Removal, but there are other players as well. Banks that finance such projects have been engaged. Socially Responsible Investors have called on these institutions to curtail financing for dirty, unsustainable, and environmentally damaging energy projects.

Resources: Learn More and Take Action

Top Ten Reasons Clean Coal is Dirty

<http://www.coal-is-dirty.com/the-coal-hard-facts>

Diane Sawyer's *Hidden America*:

<http://abcnews.go.com/2020/Story?id=6845770&page=1>

RFK Jr.'s Op-Ed

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/07/02/AR2009070203022.html>

Take action:

Pledge to stay aware:

http://www.ilovemountains.org/take_action/

Write to you

Representatives:

1. http://www.nrdconline.org/campaign/nrdcaction_042109

2. <http://www.ilovemountains.org/write-your-officials/#form>



Tri-State Coalition for

Responsible Investment

973-509-8800 www.tricri.org