

# Mountaintop removal coal mining has destroyed over 500 mountains



Mountaintop removal coal mining is the most destructive form of surface mining. Coal companies start by clearing the mountain of all vegetation, pushing it into valleys and covering streams. Next the company detonates millions of pounds of explosives to blast away the top of the mountain, at times removing over 500 feet. This waste, or overburden, is also dumped into the valleys (creating valley fill), destroying headwaters and contaminating drinking water supplies. The coal is then extracted using heavy machinery instead of human power.

The coal is washed, creating coal sludge, which contains toxins and heavy metals such as mercury, arsenic, and lead. This slurry is injected into underground mines and valleys. The slurry is in direct contact with surface and ground water. Mining sites, valley fills, and coal slurry contaminate the waterways and air of Central Appalachian communities. The headwaters that are contaminated are the headwaters of the Ohio River, from which millions of Ohioans get their drinking water.

Before a company can start mountaintop removal coal mining, they are supposed to undergo a thorough permitting process which ensures the company will operate within the law and not harm waterways and surrounding communities. About one-third of mountaintop removal mining sites are approved under nationwide permits, which are issued by the Army Corps of Engineers.

According to the Army Corps of Engineers, “the purpose of the Nationwide Permit Program is to streamline the evaluation and approval process throughout the nation for certain types of activities that have only minimal impacts to the aquatic environment.” Blowing off the tops of mountains and burying rivers and streams with the waste is not minimal environmental damage—it causes significant damage to the environment and to human quality of life. During the Bush Administration, these nationwide permits for valley fills were regularly granted, even after being ruled illegal by federal judges. All permits which allow this practice must be banned.

## Army Corps proposes changes to permitting system

The Army Corps of Engineers is holding a series of hearings for public comments on nationwide permits to help them decide whether or not the nationwide permitting process needs to be modified or abolished altogether. By ending nationwide permits, citizens will have a stronger say in mountaintop removal permits in their communities. It will also require governmental

agencies to follow the law and ensure that they permits that are issued really do have minimal impact on waterways and communities. While stopping these permits will not completely stop mountaintop removal mining, it will slow it down, and will show the Army Corps of Engineers that the public wants this practice to stop.

**Tell the Army Corps of Engineers in person:**

# **No more mountaintop removal coal mining**

The Army Corps of Engineers is holding hearings on proposed changes to its system for permitting mountaintop removal coal mining. They have scheduled one hearing in each of the six Appalachian states: Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

**Thursday, October 15**  
**7pm (registration begins at 6pm)**  
**Pritchard Laughlin Civic Center**  
**7033 Glenn Highway**  
**Cambridge, Ohio 43725**

Everyone attending the hearing will have an opportunity to ask questions or make comments to the Army Corps of Engineers. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- Mountaintop removal coal mining is an atrocity and it must stop now.
- Mountaintop removal coal mining and valley fills cause significant damage to aquatic ecosystems. Therefore all permits, nationwide and individual permits, must be banned.



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