Rally against toxic coal sludge and mountaintop removal

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
02 February 2009

Note: This is how "clean coal" must be obtained. Spread the word not only about coal, but about the lie that society needs energy this badly. West Virginia must not be depopulated by the corporate state as a national sacrifice zone. - Culture Change

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Media Advisory re Massey Energy

Citizens rally at Massey Energy toxic coal sludge dam

Interviews Available - Photo Opportunity: Banners, signs

Contact: Charles Suggs 304-854-7372, alternate: 304-854-1937

When: Tuesday, Feb. 3, 2009, at 1:00 p.m.

Where: Marfork Coal Company gate, Pettus, W.Va., approximately one hour from Charleston, W.Va., one hour from Beckley, W.Va. Directions below.

Who/What: Local residents of the Coal River Valley, accompanied by friends and allies from across Appalachia, will demonstrate against Massey Energy's preparation for blasting on Coal River Mountain. The proposed mountaintop removal site sits beside a nine-billion-gallon toxic coal waste sludge dam, which is constructed over underground mines. Massey is clearing trees to begin work on the proposed mountaintop removal operation, the same site where residents are advocating for a wind farm as a safe alternative for cleaner energy and long-term jobs (coalriverwind.org).

Citizens will attempt to deliver a letter demanding Massey halt surface mining operations at the site. They are also calling on the WV Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) to suspend Massey's surface mining permit due to the recent coal disasters in Tennessee and revelations that the DEP has failed to properly regulate sludge dams.

Why: Residents worry that blasting above underground mines next to a sludge lake may cause the sludge to break through and kill thousands in the communities downstream. A 2008 report by the federal Office of Surface Mining revealed serious deficiencies in the WV DEP's regulation of coal waste dams (wvgazette.com).

Massey also operated the Martin County, Ky., sludge dam, which released approximately 300 million gallons of coal waste that broke through into underground mines in 2000. The EPA called that the worst environmental disaster in the Southeast. Then, in December 2008, a coal ash sludge impoundment operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) failed near Harriman, Tenn. That disaster released over one billion gallons that destroyed three homes, damaged twelve more and covered 300 acres.

In November, DEP approved a revision allowing Massey to begin the mountaintop removal operation on Coal River Mountain. Despite citizens' objections, DEP denied public participation in its decision making process. Massey has begun clearing land for blasting and residents say time is short to save the mountain.

For updates, photos and video footage, go to climategroundzero.org.

Directions:

From Charleston, take I-77 South/I-64 East toward Beckley. Take Exit 89 (Marmet); turn right onto Rt. 94 South to Racine. Turn left onto Rt. 3 East through several towns and through Whitesville and Pettus. Shortly past the Dairy Queen is a brick building on the right housing the State Police and a head start. The coal company guard shack is across the road (Rt. 3), beside the baseball field. Participants will assemble along Rt. 3.

From Beckley, take Rt. 3 West (Harper Rd.) toward Whitesville. In Glen Daniel, turn right at the traffic light, staying on Rt. 3. Pettus is just past Eunice. A brick building on the left houses the State Police and a head start. The coal company guard shack is across the road (Rt. 3), beside the baseball field. Participants will assemble along Rt. 3.

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(Thanks to Celia Alario and Green Media Toolshed for the above release.)

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Further reading:

"Targeting coal: protest mounts" by Jan Lundberg, 13 July 2006 (syndicated by Truthout.org too):

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