

Barbara Kingsolver and Kathy Mattea, Together at Last

January 30, 2012

We know, we know -- all of you have simply been dying to know when author Barbara Kingsolver would go on tour with Kathy Mattea. Well, good news! It's happening here in March -- and it's happening here and only here, one time only.

Tickets go on sale Friday, so if you're a fan of either (or both) women, or you support the Scenic Vistas Protection Act, now's the time to get excited. Full press release follows:

Barbara Kingsolver and Kathy Mattea present "A View from the Mountaintop" at the Bijou Theatre on March 11

KNOXVILLE, TN: On March 11, 2012, renowned author, Barbara Kingsolver, and Grammy-award winning singer, Kathy Mattea, will combine their talents to present "A View from the Mountaintop," an evening of spoken word and song at the Bijou Theatre that celebrates their shared Appalachian heritage and casts a spotlight on mountaintop removal mining, a controversial practice that has destroyed over 500 mountains across Appalachia and presents a looming threat to Tennessee's mountains on the Cumberland Plateau. Tickets will go on sale Friday, February 3 at 10:00 AM through knoxtix.com, KnoxBijou.com, the Tennessee Theatre box office, and by calling (865) 684-1200.

Kentucky native, Barbara Kingsolver, has been named one of the most important writers of the 20th Century by *Writer's Digest*. Her novel, *The Poisonwood Bible*, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Other works include: *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, and *The Lacuna*. In 2000, Kingsolver was awarded the National Humanities Medal, our country's highest honor for service through the arts.

Kathy Mattea, a native of West Virginia, has won two Grammys and has twice been named Female Vocalist of the Year by the Country Music Association. Her recordings intertwine Celtic, gospel, and bluegrass influences with the folk and acoustic music that have always served as her artistic anchor. Her most recent CD, the Grammy-nominated, *Coal*, celebrates the culture of Appalachia.

The evening is sponsored by LEAF (Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship) a non-profit, non-denominational fellowship of Tennesseans whose faith leads them to take action for Tennessee's environment. LEAF seeks to protect Tennessee's highest ridgelines by working for the passage of the Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act that is currently under consideration by the Tennessee Legislature. For more information on mountaintop removal and its impact in Tennessee: www.tleaf.org



January 30, 2012

Tickets for this event go on sale Friday, Feb. 3. Here are the details, from the Tennessee-based environmentalist nonprofit LEAF (not affiliated with the Black Mountain-based LEAF arts and music organization):

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Save mountains in Tennessee, Virginia

Published: January 29, 2012 Updated: January 29, 2012 - 6:17 AM

Our Tennessee legislature will reconvene soon and legislation to allow continued Mountaintop Removal Mining (MTR) will be reintroduced, unless the citizens of this state make their opposition to this practice clear to our representatives, senators and Gov. Haslam. We need to tell them in no uncertain terms: "Not one more mountain!" Only coal companies benefit from MTR as the cheapest approach to coal, designed for explosives and huge machines, not providing jobs for miners. Any jobs created by MTR are few and usually temporary. Opposing MTR is not the same as opposing coal mining as it has been practiced for many years in this area, and coal miners who risk their lives mining coal need our complete support for safer regulations both on the state and federal levels.

Supporters of MTR argue the sites are cleaned up and made 'whole' again after the mountain top is gone. They claim that water and soil in these areas are not negatively impacted in the long run. One has only to visit some 'reclaimed' sites in West Virginia, for example, to know that pro MTR arguments are frequently only propaganda arguments made for the benefit of local coal companies.

God created these beautiful Appalachian Mountains. There will be no more once these are gone. Please contact your state representative and Governor Haslam to express your opposition to MTR. For further information, contact LEAF (Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship) at 2911 Tazewell Place, No. 159, Knoxville, TN 37923. ATT: Pat Hudson and Dawn Coppock. This organization seeks to protect Tennessee's ridgelines above 2,000 feet from MTR. Web sites available include: LEAF (tleaf.org), Appalachian Voices (www.appalachianvoices.org), Mountaintop Removal Stops Here (MTRstopshere.org), and GINI, Green Interfaith Network, Inc. (www.greeninterfaith.org/) A compelling video, "Mountain Mourning," released by Christians for the Mountains is available at www.PatchworkFilms.com.


Chattanooga's source for breaking local news
Scenic Vistas: Not A Jobs Issue
posted January 27, 2012

It does not look good to cut jobs; it does not look good to blow up mountains.

This session, the Tennessee Legislative Committees on Conservation and the Environment weigh the spirit and health of the people of Tennessee against a handful of jobs blasting our Tennessee Mountains.

On one side we have the tourist industry and on the other we have a hundred people benefiting from blowing up mountains and high ridges and destroying headwater streams. The State of Tennessee does not benefit economically from this practice.

So, how can it be that for four years this bill has been sitting in committee while the state is invaded by destructive mining practices coming across our borders from West Virginia and Kentucky?

The Scenic Vistas Protection Act when passed will prevent the destruction of ridges over 2000 feet. Most of our coal production is below this mark. The bill does not stop coal mining. This bill stops a few people from destroying the beautiful high ridges and mountains that are our birthright.

If you were born in Daniel Boone's backyard you might have trouble finding your birthplace: go back and sift through the rubble because they've blown up the mountains in Eagan, Tn.

People are concerned about surface mining destroying the beauty of Tennessee. It got lots of press. So, people have a feeling about it. They would like to help make it better.

The people of Tennessee want their elected Legislators on the Conservation and Environment Committees and the Environmental Sub-Committee to feel empowered to act.

So, who is balancing the Spirit of Tennessee against the interests of the Mountain Blasters? Who holds our hopes in their hands? Rep. Richard Floyd of Chattanooga; Rep. John Tidwell of New Johnsonville; Rep. Shelia Butt of Columbia; Rep. Charles Curtiss of Sparta; Rep. Andy Holt of Dresden; Rep. Pat Marsh of Nashville; Rep. Frank Niceley of Strawberry Plains; Rep. Art Swann of Maryville; Rep. Ron Lollar of Bartlett; Rep. David Hawk of Greenville; Sen. Mike Faulk of Church Hill; Sen. Kerry Roberts of Springfield; Sen. Mike Bell of Riceville, and Sen. Jim Summerville of Dickson.

If these Legislators pass this bill out of committee, Mountain Top Removal would be over! That's O.V.E.R! Ended! Done. A victory for Tennessee!

Jobs? Revenue? Yesterday I was emailed a copy of the report "Coal and Renewables in Central Appalachia, The Impact of Coal on the Tennessee State Budget". Among its conclusions, it states the following: "Although coal has played an important historical role, the Tennessee coal industry now provides few jobs to state residents, and does not provide significant revenues to the state budget. In fact, as estimated in this report, the industry itself—together with its direct and indirect employees—actually cost Tennessee state taxpayers more than they provide."

Still think it's an economic issue? This report explains why there is no economic benefit to Tennessee:
(http://www.downstreamstrategies.com/documents/reports_publication/DownstreamStrategies-coalTN.pdf)

Meanwhile, Tennessee, keep your eyes on your Legislators as they weigh in on this one. Many are in support of this Act. Pray that these few who feel uncertain will answer the call of their constituents.

In trust,
Jeannie Hacker, UTC Professor of Speech

ELIZABETHTON STAR

City church will host benefit concert to fight mountaintop removal mining

By Staff Reports

The First Presbyterian Church of Elizabethton will host a benefit concert featuring regional Americana artists Andrew McKnight and Dana and Susan Robinson on Saturday at 7 p.m.

The concert will raise funds for the church's Peacemaking Team's "Not 1 More Mountain" campaign. "Not 1 More Mountain" was launched in late 2011 in an effort to increase awareness of the very real and imminent threat from mountaintop removal mining, a particularly devastating and unrecoverable process of extracting low-quality coal. "Not 1 More Mountain" provides information packets to people of faith throughout the state with the goal of urging the people of Tennessee to press state legislators to support legislation that would protect the mountains of East Tennessee from this threat to the economies, environments and communities of East Tennessee.

First Presbyterian Church will also host a letter-writing and phone-calling event before the concert. This event will start at 4 p.m. Bring your phone, laptop, iTouch, or pen and paper and join us as we communicate with legislators about the need to support the Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act, which will be reintroduced in early Spring. Feel free to bring a light dish to share at a potluck between events.

A donation of \$10 is suggested for the concert. For more information contact Jennie Young at 213-5356.

ELIZABETHTON STAR

Green Around the Hills: Protecting mountains means overcoming deep pockets

January 23, 2012

By Jennie Young

We Tennesseans have the opportunity to distinguish ourselves this upcoming legislative session. We are poised to become the first state to ban the destructive, toxic practice of exploding off mountaintops to get coal. We already oppose it, but that doesn't make it easy. Here's why.

On March 30 of 2011, in a torturous four-hour session of the Senate Environment, Conservation and Tourism Committee (interesting how even the state legislature connects those three issues), The Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act was defeated in a 6-2 vote. The bill had been locked in committee for four years.

Chuck Laine, coal industry lobbyist, dominated the session and refused all efforts for a negotiated resolution urged by members of both parties. In the words of one participant, "Industry's uncompromising approach, so often exhibited in other states, was publicly evident for the first time in the Senate. It is an approach that requires powerful allies and a great deal of money to maintain."

Before the vote, Laine made two revelations which were jarring for the Senate: huge conglomerates from Texas and West Virginia had bought out almost all of Tennessee's local small operators, and those huge conglomerates have "deep pockets," standing ready to finance a challenge to the bill if it passed. Indeed, money talks.

Up to the point of the vote, Democrats Stewart (District 14) and Marrero (District 30) and Republicans Summerville (District 25), Roberts (District 18) and Faulk (District 4) all supported the bill. Only Summerville, Roberts and Faulk can explain why they changed their votes under pressure from the likes of Laine.

Much money was involved. On March 23, investigative reporter Ben Hall made public the dramatic increase in coal industry money at work in the 2010 elections. More than \$300,000 was contributed from 2009 to 2010. More than \$195,000 of that went to Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey or his political action committee. The states' coal industry is small but its influence is big, thanks to the deep pockets of their Texas and West Virginia parent companies. Ramsey even claims credit for keeping the bill in committee to prevent a floor vote. He has been recorded as saying words to the effect that "God put that coal in the mountains for us." He seems to care little for how we access it, or for the worth of the mountains that would be destroyed in the process.

We can do a great thing by pushing Tennessee's legislators to stand up against the coal industry's money and intimidation. That industry says we can't do it. But we can make sure the issue doesn't get lost in who owes what to whom, questionable allegiances and all that talking money. After all, stewardship is more than thinking that God put the coal in our mountains for us to get at, regardless of the cost. Isn't it possible we should be protecting those mountains, regardless of the temptation? In the case of the Scenic Vistas Protection Act, the whole IS greater than the sum of its parts.

— Jennie Young is a retired educator and a member of First Presbyterian Church in Elizabethton. Each week, she will provide insights into environmental stewardship and offer ways to protect and preserve the world around us.

knoxnews.com Printer-friendly story
Read more at knoxnews.com

January 24, 2012

Mark Shipley, Knoxville

As the state Legislature reconvenes, one very important piece of legislation that desperately needs to be passed is the bipartisan Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act, which would not permit surface mining above elevations of 2,000 feet.

This legislation is critical not only for the long-term protection of the beautiful mountains and streams that our creator has blessed this region with but also for the economic viability of our area. Protecting the scenic beauty of our mountain lands generates far more jobs and tax dollars and leaves behind a much greater legacy for our children and grandchildren than permitting certain politically powerful mining companies to have the ability to blow off the top portions of mountains and dump the overburden into once-living streams in an effort to maximize profits by more easily and with less labor (i.e. fewer jobs) access their mining product. The last time I checked, scarred and deformed

mountains and buried streams were not marketed in any tourist brochure for the state of Tennessee. Our state can do much better than that. We can have viable energy production without sacrificing what makes this area special.

Please contact your legislator and let them know that you value the natural beauty of the mountains in Tennessee and that they need to support the bipartisan Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act. This is not a Republican or Democratic issue. This is a moral issue and a reflection of humanity doing the right thing for this and future generations.

THE TENNESSEAN

Notice sent on Premium Coal discharge in New River

January 24th, 2012

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The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation issued the Monday letter in response to a Jan. 3 discharge of partially treated coal process wastewater and coal slurry that includes chemicals used in the washing operation in the Devonia community of Anderson County.

The operation remains shut down. No drinking water operations are affected, although there were reports of a black water pollution "plume" more than 28 miles away, said agency spokeswoman Meg Lockhart.

Premium Coal's chief engineer in Briceville, Derrick O'Neal, declined to comment when contacted by telephone Tuesday.

The discharge originated from a pipe in the company's Gum Branch Slurry Impoundment and was not reported within 24 hours as required, according to the notice letter signed by Dave Turner, an environmental specialist with the mining section of the state agency's water pollution control division. The letter also says the company failed to quickly start collecting discharge water samples.

Permit records show there have been violation notices in previous years.

Lockhart said the notice is a "first step" in its investigation with the federal Office of Surface Mining, which the notice said issued an order to cease operations following a citizen complaint about the discharge.

The notice orders the company to continue collecting daily samples and provide detailed water analysis within 30 days.

The company in a Jan. 13 report said that about 1.4 million gallons of the water "left the impoundment" and an undetermined amount reached the river. Premium Coal's report said its managers "voluntarily idled the preparation plant" and have since been taking corrective action.

Environmental activist Patrick Morales, a member of the board of Statewide Organizing for Community Empowerment, said "more than 1 million gallons of toxic waste drained into the New River which flows to the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area." Morales said the pollutants "include mercury, selenium, arsenic and all kinds of heavy metals."

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Associated Press

Updated 07:04 p.m., January 24, 2012

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State cites Premium Coal for water quality permit violation

By Bob Fowler

Tuesday, January 24, 2012

BRICEVILLE — The state on Monday issued a water quality permit violation notice to the coal company that discharged more than 1.4 million gallons of black water into the New River earlier this month.

A "pollution plume" of fine particles of coal, shale and other rocks from the discharge was seen nearly 29 miles downstream, a state official said.

Premium Coal's coal-washing plant in Anderson County's Devonia community will remain shuttered until it receives both state and federal approval to resume operations, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation spokeswoman Meg Lockhart said.

The violation of Premium Coal's water quality discharge permit at its Baldwin Coal Preparatory Plant occurred Jan. 3, according to state environmental specialist Dave Turner.

"The discharge condition was not reported within 24 hours of knowledge," Turner wrote in his notice of violation letter to Premium Coal.

While a gray plume from the discharge was seen in the river 28.7 miles downstream, fine coal and rock particles were deposited on rocks and algae seven miles downstream, officials said.

"It's a situation that never should have happened," said Ann League, with the environmental group Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment.

She called the New River "an exceptional river" that flows into another exceptional waterway, the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River.

League said officials "really don't know exactly what happened because the company didn't self-report it."

Lockhart called the spill a water quality issue because of the sedimentation but said it's not a danger to the public. She said the nearest drinking water utility is more than 30 miles downstream in Huntsville.

Lockhart said the mishap occurred as a new, higher pipe was being installed in an impoundment pond at the coal-washing plant. The new pipe was needed because the pond was filling with coal slurry, she said.

Clean water from the top of that impoundment was supposed to be released into the river from the new pipe, but the black water was instead discharged from an older, lower pipe, Lockhart said.

She called the mishap "an operational problem."

Derrick O'Neal, chief engineer for Premium Coal at its Briceville office, declined comment Tuesday. He said he didn't know how many employees had been employed at the Devonia operation.

The Jackson Sun

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The discharge originated from a pipe in the company's Gum Branch Slurry Impoundment and was not reported within 24 hours as required, according to the notice letter signed by Dave Turner, an environmental specialist with the mining section of the state agency's water pollution control division. The letter also says the company failed to quickly start collecting discharge water samples.

Permit records show there have been violation notices in previous years.

Lockhart said the notice is a "first step" in its investigation with the federal Office of Surface Mining, which the notice said issued an order to cease operations following a citizen complaint about the discharge.

The notice orders the company to continue collecting daily samples and provide detailed water analysis within 30 days.

The company in a Jan. 13 report said that about 1.4 million gallons of the water "left the impoundment" and an undetermined amount reached the river. Premium Coal's report said its managers "voluntarily idled the preparation plant" and have since been taking corrective action.

Environmental activist Patrick Morales, a member of the board of Statewide Organizing for Community Empowerment, said "more than 1 million gallons of toxic waste drained into the New River which flows to the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area." Morales said the pollutants "include mercury, selenium, arsenic and all kinds of heavy metals." He said there were reports of black water just outside the Big South Fork area.



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LewisHerald.com

Hohenwald Tennessee

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Jan. 24, 2012, 6:50 p.m. EST

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OakRidger.com
Serving Anderson and Roane counties since 1949
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Posted 1/24/2012 6:56 PM ET

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The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation issued the Monday letter in response to a Jan. 3 discharge of partially treated coal process wastewater and coal slurry that includes chemicals used in the washing operation in the Devonia community of Anderson County.

The operation remains shut down. No drinking water operations are affected, although there were reports of a black water pollution "plume" more than 28 miles away, said agency spokeswoman Meg Lockhart.

Premium Coal's chief engineer in Briceville, Derrick O'Neal, declined to comment when contacted by telephone Tuesday.

The discharge originated from a pipe in the company's Gum Branch Slurry Impoundment and was not reported within 24 hours as required, according to the notice letter signed by Dave Turner, an environmental specialist with the mining section of the state agency's water pollution control division. The letter also says the company failed to quickly start collecting discharge water samples.

Permit records show there have been violation notices in previous years.

Lockhart said the notice is a "first step" in its investigation with the federal Office of Surface Mining, which the notice said issued an order to cease operations following a citizen complaint about the discharge.

The notice orders the company to continue collecting daily samples and provide detailed water analysis within 30 days.

The company in a Jan. 13 report said that about 1.4 million gallons of the water "left the impoundment" and an undetermined amount reached the river. Premium Coal's report said its managers "voluntarily idled the preparation plant" and have since been taking corrective action.

Environmental activist Patrick Morales, a member of the board of Statewide Organizing for Community Empowerment, said "more than 1 million gallons of toxic waste drained into the New River which flows to the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area." Morales said the pollutants "include mercury, selenium, arsenic and all kinds of heavy metals."

He said there were reports of black water just outside the Big South Fork area.



Notice sent on Premium Coal discharge in New River

Jan. 24, 2012, 6:50 p.m. EST

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