

## Group Prays To Stop Mountaintop Coal Mining

January 9, 2012

By Adam Ghassemi

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – It may look and sound like any service, but a group that met on a random Tuesday night represents nearly all denominations ended 40 days of praying for the same thing.

"The way we love the creator of the universe is to love the creation," said Pastor Ryan Bennett says the environment may not be the first thing you'd think from a pew, but here it's a grassroots issue firmly planted in faith. "It's sort of like a David and Goliath sort of scenario. We're volunteers. We don't know what we're doing, but we believe that God is with us."

In their eyes, Goliath is the mining companies that shave off mountaintops across the Appalachians to mine for coal. They say the process destroys natural beauty and the environment for people who live around them.

"People in the coal fields and people who live downstream from a lot of these sites are suffering major health effects from this," said Pat Hudson the director of Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship, or [LEAF](#).

The turnout Tuesday night at downtown Nashville's Christ Church Cathedral seemed small, but was just one of many groups praying across the state.

"This is the time when we're still can control it and keep what's happened in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky and these other places from happening in Tennessee," Bennett said.

They say they hope lawmakers understand they aren't anti-mining, but anti anything that changes Tennessee from the way it's supposed to be. "We hope that our elected officials here that concern and understand that it's a very, very deep issue for many Christians," Hudson went on to say.

A representative from Knoxville-based Tennessee Mining Association, or [TMA](#), provided the following statement:

*"It is my opinion that the prayer service is misguided. Their prayers should be directed at the guidance of the country in these difficult economic times and for the safety of the coal miners that provide for over 50% of the energy consumed by this country. Coal miners have carried the nation's energy needs on their backs for decades, provided the coal for two world wars, providing the coal for steel generation and economic growth and leading us through the Cold War years. Coal provides cheap energy which benefits every American when they turn on their lights, access the internet, charge their electric automobiles, etc. In these tough economic times when many citizens, especially senior citizens, are making critical decisions about paying for heating bills or critical medications, environmental activists are raising the costs for energy on everybody. The mining that occurs today in the Tennessee coal fields is around 90% re-mining which means that dangerous high walls and old deep mine openings are reclaimed. It is a shame that efforts are directed at eliminating these gains. These misguided efforts affect each and every one of us. Remember, if you can't grow it, you have to mine it. Mining is critical to the growth of this nation and its security." - Tim Slone, Chairman, Tennessee Mining Association*

The group is pushing the Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act that would ban mountain-top coal mining on peaks above two-thousand feet. They say to date more than 500 mountaintops have been mined across the Appalachians.

# ELIZABETHTON STAR

## Green Around the Hills: There is nothing like a mountain

By: Jennie Young

Our first words are those of gratitude to the Elizabethton STAR for providing this space for environmental stewardship talk. Our goal is to inform, start a conversation and inspire involvement in environmental concerns critical to us all.

Steven Cope is a Kentucky poet, songwriter and author. His work, *Sayings of the Appalachees*, contains a thousand original proverbs. Number 663 teaches, "There is a sort of humanoid that would destroy a mountain for a nugget, drain the sea for a pearl, annihilate a species for a tusk." He is right. There is.

Such humanoids are advancing an assault on a common birthright: Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau. They fully intend to explode off even our signature ridgelines, which so define us, for the thin layers of low-grade coal which those mountains hold. And they wish to prevent the citizens of Tennessee from saying how our mountains will be treated.

Our goal is twofold. First, we hope to provide verifiable information about the process of Mountaintop Removal Mining (MTR), its human and environmental impacts and the real costs involved. We will examine MTR's place in the context of our energy needs and economic considerations. Second, we will endeavor to keep readers updated on national, interstate and state legislative news. It is with this information that the people of Tennessee will continue to have a voice in the legislative process. Without this information, our voices will be made silent.

The folks of Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia face great obstacles because their states didn't claim and frame the issue legislatively before the first of 500 of their mountains were leveled. Let us learn from their loss.

Mountaintop Removal Mining employs powerful explosives and machines as big as houses. After it's all over, huge piles of rock replace fully forested mountaintops, including vital headwaters. Counter to what has been promised, these ecosystems cannot be restored. This has been proven 500 times over.

Currently, 23 surface mines are active in Tennessee, with 18 actively producing coal. Most are small and do not use MTR methods. They account for only two-tenths of one percent of U.S. coal mining. Bull Ridge, Mingo, Double Mountain, Leach, Cross and Zeb Mountains are MTR sites and represent the largest operations. Eight more surface mining permits are under review at the Federal Office of Surface Mining. According to the National Parks Service, the proposed new areas for MTR mining include 53,000 acres in the headwaters of the Big South Fork watershed of the Cumberland Plateau. This watershed contains over 1,900 miles of streams, five lakes and five national and state wildlife areas.

Request information/action packets at [not1more@embarqmail.com](mailto:not1more@embarqmail.com). These packets were created locally for churches and other groups who would rather not have Mr. Cope's sort of humanoid sneak up on us unawares. Till next week, then, we leave you with original proverb number 529: "There is nothing like a mountain to teach a man right where to stand."

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.

# ELIZABETHTON STAR

## Reader shares thoughts on mountaintop removal

By [Staff Reports](#)

Editor:

I would like to thank The STAR and the Bonnie Kate Theatre for having the courage to educate the public on the devastating consequences of mountain top removal. For too many years coal companies kept their dirty little secret locally thinking they only had to deal with the poor people living in the communities they were destroying.

Today in the age of communication, there is a groundswell of opposition nationwide as people find out how they turn communities into ghost towns unfit for even the ghosts. Daily blasting that would drive even the sane crazy, contamination of water supplies, burying of rivers and streams, killing of wildlife, crimes against God's creation, flooding that drowned over 100 people, and for what? So the heads of the corporations can walk away with hundreds of millions of dollars? Their argument is that they provide jobs. Fact is, thousands of jobs were lost as they mechanized and broke the backs of unions. Alternative energy systems would employ thousands without all the destruction.

It's all part of the deception and lies they feed the public so they can profit from their disgraceful agenda. Shockingly they have already destroyed over 500 mountains in West Virginia and Kentucky and are starting in Tennessee. Sadly they could not carry out their criminal actions if it weren't for their political allies in Congress.

If a foreign nation came over here and did what the coal companies are doing, we would be declaring war and mustering an army to defend the homeland, but corporations simply use corrupt politicians and change laws to their advantage when they should be prosecuted for genocide and environmental devastation. We need to expose their allies in Congress and make sure that they are kicked out of office for not protecting the people who they represent!

Marie Pendzich

209 Reece Hill Road

Hampton

## **Prayers over mountain top removal offered in TN** Supporters in TN look to heavens over mining concerns as lawmakers reconvene

January 9, 2012

Those who don't believe that the ridges of mountains should be blasted away to extract coal in Tennessee have taken to [prayer in the 40 days](#) leading to this year's opening of the state legislature.

Baptist, Catholic, Church of Christ, Presbyterian and Methodist church members are among those who have been focusing on the beauty and wonder of the mountains, waters and sky in advance of the upcoming legislative session.

"Our hearts care about God's creation," Kim McLean, pastor of the Church of Nazarene, said quietly.

McLean was seated in a circle at First Lutheran Church, off Eighth Avenue South, with five other members of a [Tuesday night prayer group](#).

The group meets there each week in a denlike room that has easy chairs and a fireplace, and this evening part of its meditations and songs pointedly included mountains — a frequent theme of the Bible.

Religious groups large and small across the state have expressed their concerns about the state's ridge tops over the 40 days. Some have quoted Scripture, calling for care of "the garden," or have spoken of nature's marvels or talked of the need to stick to less-damaging ways to mine coal.

A prayer has been put online each of the days by different people, beginning Dec. 2. The culmination of the posts and gatherings will be at a 6:30 p.m. gathering at Christ Church Cathedral, off Broadway, on Tuesday, the day state lawmakers reconvene.

The prayerful support of the political action on behalf of the mountains has come from Franklin, Murfreesboro, Sweetwater, Nashville, Knoxville and elsewhere.

All is a blessing to Dawn Coppock and Pat Hudson, who have spent five years lobbying for a halt to the controversial coal mining practice that is often called mountaintop removal.

"I thought it would take one year and three to four trips to Nashville," Coppock said of her effort to end not the mining, but the blowing up of ridges.

She and Hudson, both members of the Church of the Savior United Church of Christ in Knoxville, had started a group called the [Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship](#) in memory of a former church

youth leader. They said Kathy Lindquist, now deceased, opened their eyes with a piece she wrote about mountaintop removal. That is the sole issue for LEAF, a Christian fellowship, to go after politically.

The women for years have repeatedly made the trip to Nashville as volunteers to attend legislative committee meetings. Upon their arrival, they have seen their bill delayed and deferred time after time. Parts of the original bill have been dropped and parts rewritten to try to win approval.

“We keep David and Goliath with these people,” said Coppock, a lawyer and single mother.

At this point, the legislation, [Senate Bill 577-House Bill 291](#), has been stripped to basically one stipulation: to stop surface mining above 2,000 feet.

It wouldn't affect deep or other coal mining, and the advocates say they have offered to exempt abandoned mine lands on mountains. Those opposed have said these sites are mainly where mining is done today and that the locations, some of which are like open sores on the Earth, oozing acidic runoff, are later improved.

### **'Creation care' advocates**

The women espouse “creation care,” a national movement to reawaken a part of the Christian tradition that seemed to have been forgotten after the industrial revolution came along, Hudson said.

“Mountaintop removal is poor stewardship at every level,” she said. “Damage is so extensive and lasting that we truly do feel this particular type of mining can't be done in a manner that is environmentally acceptable.”

Not so, says Chuck Laine, president of the [Tennessee Mining Association](#).

“They are praying for West Virginia, not Tennessee, because we don't do that,” he said. “We don't take the tops off of mountains and shove them into valleys.”

In mountainous West Virginia, it can be a benefit to have mountains turned into mesas that provide flat lands for schools, for instance, and airplane landing fields, he said.

Coal mining is done carefully in Tennessee with sensitivity to the environment, he said.

The [industry](#) is much less widespread here than in some other nearby states. Last year, about 1.78 million tons of coal were mined in Tennessee, specifically on the Cumberland Plateau and in East Tennessee. In Kentucky the amount was almost 105 million tons, and in West Virginia even more, 135 million tons.

Laine said that ridgetop mining means critical [jobs](#) in poor areas.

On the other side are those who say the process requires fewer people, costing mining jobs.

## **Prayer helps pair**

For Hudson and Coppock, the 40 days of prayer was a natural way to spread the word of their issue to others. It doesn't require a person to visit lawmakers. And people don't have to commit their congregation to anything, either. They only have to pray.

The two women themselves have done so a lot over the years.

"It is not weird for us to pray at a hotel before we go to Legislative Plaza or at a big meeting," Coppock said. "We just feel really alone and, frankly, a little bit vulnerable over there. Sometimes when you're walking in there, it makes you feel like you're not so by yourself."

**Contact Anne Paine at 615-259-8071 or [apaine@tennessean.com](mailto:apaine@tennessean.com).**

## Melissa Waage's Blog

# 40 Days of Prayer Launches Fight for Tennessee's Mountains

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Will this be the year that Tennessee becomes the first state to ban [mountaintop removal mining](#)? Leaders in the state legislature are once again pressing forward with the Scenic Vistas Protection Act, a bill to end mountaintop removal in the state. And they do not stand alone.

That's because our friends at [Tennessee LEAF](#), a Christian fellowship dedicated to protecting Tennessee's environment, have just wrapped up an incredible organizing effort, featured in [yesterday's Nashville Tennessean](#). They have brought together [faith leaders around the state](#) in Forty Days of Prayer for the Mountains, seeking "wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature so that no one suffers from our abuse of them."

That is some wisdom that legislators will absolutely need if they are going to cut through the coal industry's obfuscations on MTR in Tennessee. The industry [scuttled the Scenic Vistas Protection Act](#) last time it came up, and they're at it again. Naturally, it is a little uncomfortable for industry flaks to go up against faith, conviction, and a common sense message of respect for communities and the environment. So they're resorting to denial and semantic games.

In response to the Forty Days of Prayer, the president of the Tennessee Mining Association absurdly [told the Tennessean](#) that "They are praying for West Virginia, not Tennessee, because we don't do that...We don't take the tops off of mountains and shove them into valleys."

That assertion doesn't survive a second of examination. Call it mountaintop removal, crossridge mining, or steep slope mining, but the fundamental act of blasting to remove mountaintops and access coal is very much happening in Tennessee. ([United Mountain Defense](#), [LEAF](#), and [Appalachian Voices](#) provide some great background information and documentation.)

It is true that mountaintop removal has not yet been as extensive in Tennessee as in some other parts of Appalachia. That makes it all the more important to pass the Scenic Vistas Protection Act as soon as possible. There's so much left to save, and so much good to be done for communities that rely on the clean water, healthy environment, and quality of life that Tennessee's mountains provide.

Are you a Tennessean? If so, you can join in the effort by [sending a message to your state assembly members here](#).



**January 15, 2012**

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Dawn Coppock and Pat Hudson, who have spent five years lobbying lawmakers to end the controversial technique of blowing up the ridges of mountains to mine for coal, said the groups are a blessing.

“I thought it would take one year and three to four trips to Nashville,” Coppock said of their efforts.

The women are members of Church of the Savior United Church of Christ in Knoxville and started a group named Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship, which has one purpose — to lobby for the end of mountaintop removal coal mining.

They have repeatedly come to Nashville only to see bills on the issue delayed, deferred or dropped.

“We keep David and Goliath with these people,” said Coppock, a lawyer and single mother.

The women say they are advocating for “creation care,” Hudson said.

“Mountaintop removal is poor stewardship at every level,” she said. “Damage is so extensive and lasting that we truly do feel this particular type of mining can’t be done in a manner that is environmentally acceptable.”

Tennessee Mining Association President Chuck Laine disagrees, saying mining operations in the state operate carefully and are sensitive to the environment.

“They are praying for West Virginia, not Tennessee, because we don’t do that,” he said. “We don’t take the tops off of mountains and shove them into valleys.”

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Currently, legislation has been proposed in both the Senate and House that would stop surface mining above 2,000 feet.



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Information from: The Tennessean, <http://www.tennessean.com>

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McLean says the groups "care about God's creation" and want the best for it.



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By: [The Associated Press](#) | 01/14/12 8:51 AM  
*The Associated Press*

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"They are praying for West Virginia, not Tennessee, because we don't do that," he said. "We don't take the tops off of mountains and shove them into valleys."

There were about 1.78 million tons of coal mined last year on the Cumberland Plateau and in East Tennessee.

Currently, legislation has been proposed in both the Senate and House that would stop surface mining above 2,000 feet.

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## Groups take prayerful approach to mining

Posted: Jan 14, 2012 8:01 AM CST Updated: Jan 14, 2012 10:02 AM CST

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) - For 40 days before lawmakers arrived in Nashville, Christian groups around the state offered up prayers for the end of mountaintop removal coal mining.

A prayer was posted online each day beginning on Dec. 2 up until legislators began meeting on Tuesday. They came from all over the state and from different denominations. Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians and Methodists offered up prayers focusing on the wonder and beauty of mountains, according to The Tennessean (<http://tnne.ws/Ael4RQ>).

Kim McLean, pastor of the Church of Nazarene attended a prayer group at First Lutheran Church in Nashville shortly before the session began.

"Our hearts care about God's creation," McLean said

Dawn Coppock and Pat Hudson, who have spent five years lobbying lawmakers to end the controversial technique of blowing up the ridges of mountains to mine for coal, said the groups are a blessing.

"I thought it would take one year and three to four trips to Nashville," Coppock said of their efforts.

The women are members of Church of the Savior United Church of Christ in Knoxville and started a group named Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship, which has one purpose - to lobby for the end of mountaintop removal coal mining.

They have repeatedly come to Nashville only to see bills on the issue delayed, deferred or dropped.

"We keep David and Goliath with these people," said Coppock, a lawyer and single mother.

The women say they are advocating for "creation care," Hudson said.

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# TIMES-GAZETTE

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# STATE GAZETTE

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# ELIZABETHTON STAR

## [Green Around the Hills: MTR opposition reflects national attitudes](#)

By [Staff Reports](#)

By Jennie Young

We don't have a lot of coal mining in Tennessee. As reported last week, Tennessee mines make up barely two-tenths of one percent of the coal mining done in the U.S. Our mountains here in NE Tennessee, as well as the Smokies, have no coal reserves. So, it isn't surprising that about half of the people of Tennessee know nothing of Mountaintop Removal Mining (MTR) and the intended assault of the Cumberland range. Most of those who are aware oppose MTR. This reflects the national attitude.

Nationally, the stewardship of our mountains is a big deal, and a moral issue. The Southern Baptist, Presbyterian USA, Unitarian, Lutheran, United Methodist, Catholic, Mennonite and Episcopalian national organizations have issued policy statements against MTR. Five of our largest banks (Citi, JPMorganChase, Morgan Stanley, Wells Fargo and PNC), as well as Credit Suisse, announced in 2010 that they will no longer finance coal operations that explode away mountaintops.

The thin seams of low-grade coal are in our Cumberlands, one of the most bio-diverse regions of the world. Tennessee's economy relies heavily on tourism. Almost 200,000 Tennesseans work in the tourism industry, as opposed to the few who work in the state's coal industry at present. Recent closings of offices and work stoppage at mine sites account for the low number of jobs, but at top employment the number was under 400. There will be more, later, about MTR as the much trumpeted job creator, but, for now, doubt it.

Specific to MTR, the Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act is the first effort at legislation to prevent the loss of any more of our mountains to MTR. The bill was intentionally held in committee for four years before it was defeated — first in the House and then, on March 30, 2011, in the Senate. It was never allowed to come to a floor vote where, under more public scrutiny, it likely would have passed.

The short bill was drafted by the Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship (LEAF), a multi-denominational network, and the National Parks Conservation Association. It is not anti-coal. It prohibits "surface coal mining operations to alter or disturb any ridgeline that is above two thousand (2,000) feet above sea level." It further clarifies, "This subsection does not prohibit any other allowable surface coal mining above two thousand feet (2,000).... that does not alter or disturb a ridgeline." In other words, it protects those scenic ridgelines that so define us while allowing traditional coal extraction to continue. Surface mining below 2,000 feet, where 90 percent of Tennessee's coal reserves are embedded, is not prohibited. The bill will be reintroduced in both houses in January. Members of both parties have expressed support for the bill, although the vote that defeated it ended up being largely along party lines. More about that next week, when we will be giving details about the bill's initial defeat, and how some senators who consistently supported it, voted against it. It's not uplifting.

If the bill's provisions already resonate with you and you'd like to say so to encourage the good folk behind it, go to the following link and cast your vote. It's easy.

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/support-the-tennessee-scenic-vistas-protection-act.html>.



January 10, 2012

## Ending Mountaintop Removal Mining in Tennessee



Tennessee coal production is in steep decline. Having fallen more than 80% in two decades, coal produced in Tennessee now represents just 0.2% of the coal mined in the United States. That coal increasingly comes from destructive surface mining methods. Roughly two-thirds of Tennessee's coal comes from surface mines, which have negatively impacted more than 125 square miles of Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau. Just three Counties (Claiborne, Campbell, Anderson) represent 98% of all coal production in Tennessee. Tennessee has the smallest recoverable reserves at active mines of any state in the U.S., according to the Energy Information Administration.

The bottom line? Coal is on its way out the door in Tennessee. Tennessee's coal production and employment has plummeted in the last 20 years, and will continue to fall years to come. Hardly any of the coal mined in Tennessee stays in Tennessee. Yet the destruction in our state continues. Its time that Tennessee leads the way in stopping mountaintop removal.

| 1990                    | Tennessee Coal                    | 2010                    |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 6.19 million            | Production (Tons)<br>↓ 82%        | 1.77 million            |
| 1725 Jobs               | Coal Mining Jobs<br>↓ 68%         | 550 Jobs                |
| 68%                     | Coal % of TN Electricity<br>↓ 16% | 52%                     |
| 73%u - 27% <sub>s</sub> | Underground% - Strip%             | 31%u - 69% <sub>s</sub> |

Appalachian Voices' primary goal is to pass the bipartisan Tennessee Scenic Vistas legislation. This legislation will ban surface mining over 2000 feet of elevation in the state. Secondly, we will work with allies to ensure that the North Cumberland Lands Unsuitable for Mining (LUM) petition is finalized. This LUM would protect more than 67,000 acres in central Tennessee. Lastly, we will fight individual surface mining permits that threaten the well-being of Tennessee's mountains, streams, and communities.

## Shuck and Jive (Blog)

A Presbyterian minister blogs about spirituality, culture, religion (both organized and disorganized), life, evolution, literature, Jesus, and lightening up.

**Friday, January 06, 2012**

### **Faithful Resistance to Mountain Top Removal Mining on the Next Religion For Life**

500 mountains in Appalachia have had their tops destroyed in order to get to the coal seams. Many within faith communities see this destruction as an assault on God's creation. Coal companies have their sites set on Tennessee's mountains.

Jennie Young of Elizabethton, Tennessee talks to me on [Religion For Life](#) about efforts to alert people, particularly in faith communities, about mountain top removal strip mining, and to encourage them to tell our political representatives to take action.

Jennie Young was featured in the Elizabethton Star, [Struggle to Protect State's Mountains is a Moral Issue at Heart for Activist](#)



Jennie Young and others from [First Presbyterian Church of Elizabethton](#) speaking out for Appalachia's mountains.

Listen to [Religion For Life...](#)

- Monday, January 9th at 1 pm on [WEHC, 90.7](#).
- Thursday, January 12th at 8 pm on [WETS, 89.5](#).
- Sunday, January 15th, at noon on [WEHC, 90.7](#).
- Sunday, January 15th, at 2 pm on [WETS, 89.5](#).
- Via [podcast](#) beginning January 16th.

## Mountaintop removal in Tennessee

By Jenni Veal • Published Sunday, December 18th 2011 at 9:04am



Mountaintop removal at Zeb Mountain Mine in Campbell County, Tennessee. Photo contributed by Appalachian Voices.

The Appalachian Mountains are not only a landmark of East Tennessee, but a landscape that has defined the history and culture of the region. However, just a few hours north of Chattanooga, mountaintop removal—a form of surface mining for coal—is destroying the very mountains that Tennesseans cherish, impacting an area the size of metropolitan Chattanooga (roughly 80,000 acres).

In an effort to end mountaintop removal in Tennessee, Appalachian Voices opened an office in Nashville last May. Led by J.W. Randolph, Appalachian Voices is working to educate citizens of the state about the impacts of mountaintop removal in Tennessee, which has 15 active surface mines in three counties: Campbell, Claiborne and Anderson.

“Tennessee has the opportunity to be a leader in the Southeast by creating rules and regulations that favor citizens and public health over destructive mining practices that take mountains and our money out of state,” says Randolph, who grew up outside of Chattanooga in Birchwood, Tenn. “Tennessee is a mountaintop removal state, but the coal industry does not have the same iron grip on Tennessee’s political process.”

### **Mountaintop Removal in Central Appalachia**

Central Appalachian coal—coal produced in southern West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, southwest Virginia and eastern Tennessee—is a high-grade coal that dominates the U.S. metallurgical coal market and international markets. Currently, Tennessee supplies a small fraction of the coal used for electricity in the state and nation; however, as global markets for coal increase, the demand for Central Appalachian coal has the potential to grow, as well.

About 48 percent of coal in Central Appalachia is extracted through mountaintop removal, a surface mining technique. Topsoil and vegetation are cleared or burned, and millions of pounds of explosives are detonated to break through the surface to coal seams. Then, coal and debris are removed with huge earth-moving machines called draglines, which replace the manpower required in conventional mining. Afterward, the debris is bulldozed over the side of the mountain into valleys and streams below, a practice that has buried and polluted nearly 2,000 miles of headwater streams in Central Appalachia.

Coal sludge, the toxic byproduct of separating coal from rock, is then stored in massive lagoons or surface impoundments near mountaintop-removal sites. Hundreds of these impoundments, which contain dangerous heavy metals including lead, arsenic and mercury, are scattered across Central Appalachia. Occasionally, an impoundment fails, resulting in a tragic human health and environmental catastrophe.

It is estimated that nearly 1.2 million acres in Central Appalachia have been affected by mountaintop removal. According to Appalachian Voices, 501 mountains have been impacted: 293 mountains in Kentucky; 135 mountains in West Virginia; 67 mountains in Virginia; and 6 mountains in Tennessee.

There are currently no federal or state agencies tracking the overall extent or cumulative impacts of mountaintop removal coal mining, according to Appalachian Voices. However, communities affected by mountaintop removal find the impacts to be far-reaching, including contaminated drinking water, forceful blasting near residential dwellings, increased flooding, and unsafe sludge and slurry impoundments. A 2009 study, "Mortality in Appalachian Coal Mining Regions," found that compared to other regions of Appalachia and the nation, coal-mining areas had the highest mortality rates for every year from 1979-2005. Furthermore, despite required reclamation efforts, cleared areas rarely return to their original level of biodiversity.

"Mountaintop removal is not just an environmental issue – it's a human rights issue," explains Randolph. "We want everyone to know this is going on and to feel a bit of responsibility to bringing it to a close."

Although surface mining has existed in some form since the 1960s, mountaintop removal became prevalent during the 1990s. However, this growth in production has not supported the Central Appalachian labor force—one of the poorest in the region—due to the replacement of manpower with heavy machinery and equipment. For instance, in the 1950s between 125,000 to 145,000 miners were employed in West Virginia, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. More than 50 years later, only 16,000 miners were employed in the state despite a growth in coal production.

### **Appalachian Voices**

Founded in 1997 in Boone, N.C., Appalachian Voices aims to reduce coal's impact on the central and southern Appalachian region and advance a vision for a cleaner energy future. Randolph says the organization has three priorities in Tennessee: ending mountaintop removal; moving TVA away from purchasing mountaintop removal coal and toward job-creating measures such as energy efficiency; and increasing economic opportunities in Appalachian communities.

For Randolph, who grew up in a log cabin along the banks of the Tennessee River, the cause is personal. “Growing up in East Tennessee, I developed a deep appreciation for the landscape and community,” says the 2001 Baylor School graduate. “In 2005, I saw mountaintop removal for the first time – at Kayford Mountain in southern West Virginia – and I knew that I would be working on that issue until it was over. I felt violated when I saw it – I was really just crushed by the scale of it. I had seen pictures, but you cannot anticipate the scale of a mountaintop removal site until you step foot on it.”

Randolph joined Appalachian Voices in 2004 when mountaintop removal was relatively unpublicized. “At the time, we called mountaintop removal the best-kept secret in the United States,” he says. “It was a small regional issue that nobody knew about. “ Today, the environmental and health effects of mountaintop removal are reported more often. In 2009, the movie "[Coal Country](#)" helped bring the devastating effects of mountaintop removal to light in the Southeast.

While he has seen firsthand the devastating effects of mountaintop removal, Randolph is hopeful: “Through the work of thousands of citizen in impacted communities, we have created allies in people as different as John McCain and President Obama, and earned the support of more than 170 bipartisan members of the House and a dozen bipartisan senators to cosponsor legislation that would prohibit most mountaintop removal in Central Appalachia. Our victory will be a triumph of regular people like you and me, who chose to stand up and do something to improve our lot in life.”

In the coming year, Appalachian Voices in Tennessee aims to work with politicians to enact the Tennessee Scenic Vistas Act, finalize the North Cumberland Lands Unsuitable for Mining Petition, and stop mining of the Sewanee Coal Seam, one of the most toxic coal seams east of the Mississippi River. Randolph says Senator Lamar Alexander has been a leader on the issue of protecting mountains and communities from mountaintop removal, as well as Rep. Jim Cooper.

Visit the Appalachian Voices [website](#) to learn more about mountaintop removal. Randolph also encourages citizens to contact their state legislators to tell them to end mountaintop removal in Tennessee. “It is absolutely critical to our success that individuals contact their state legislators as early and as often as possible,” he says. “Ending mountaintop removal is an urgent issue for protecting the economy, ecology and communities of rural Tennessee.”

January 16, 2012

## Mining industry should not demonize 40 Days of Prayer

**Nashville, TN** - It is truly disturbing that the Tennessee Mining Association's response to the 40 Days of Prayer held to stop mountaintop removal is so sadly misguided, thoroughly misleading and ultimately disappointing.

I guess it would be too much to expect them to admit that mountaintop removal has put thousands of coal miners out of work by blowing mountains apart rather than continuing less environmentally destructive deep-mining practices.

Likewise, it is probably too much to expect them to admit that the senior citizens they claim to care about often have higher medical bills as a result of the toxic substances that mountaintop removal pours into the air and water.

But most disappointing of all is how this industry continues to mislead by demonizing those who want to preserve our scenic vistas and healthy environment by distorting or ignoring the alternatives they are praying for.

The 40 Days of Prayer were not aimed at ending coal mining, but at hoping the Tennessee Mining Association would hear some higher message telling them to actually create more jobs, both in mining and recreation, by committing to safe, deep-mining practices that leave our mountains where they are, and our streams and rivers unpolluted by the toxic waste that otherwise is left for citizens to pay for with their health and dollars.

**Jeff Stein**  
**Nashville 37221**

## Coal-tainted slurry hits TN's New River

Coal mining waste from a Premium Coal plant has tainted several miles of Tennessee's New River near Frozen Head State Park in violation of the company's permit.

A fine, grayish-black material from the operation that separates coal from shale and rock was released into the river for 12 hours Jan. 2, according to information from a state investigation.

The state was not notified as required at the time of the release, said Tisha Calabrese-Benton, spokeswoman for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation.

Premium Coal, which owns the Baldwin plant in Devonia, Tenn., did not return calls asking for comment.

This is a water quality issue and is not a danger to the public, Calabrese-Benton said.

The processing plant was directed to stop operating and discharging from the sediment pond on site until the problem could be identified and fixed.

— Anne Paine

**The Tennessean**

## River discharge shuts down coal-washing plant near Lake City

LAKE CITY, Tenn. — East Tennessee environmental officials responding to a complaint found a grayish-black discharge in the New River and shut down a coal-washing plant operated by Premium Coal.

A Tennessee environmental agency spokeswoman said in an email Monday that the Baldwin Coal Preparatory Plant in the Devonia community of Anderson County failed to notify environmental officials as required about a Jan. 2 release of the "fine, grayish black material that is made up of shale and rock" separated from coal.

"This is a water quality issue due to sedimentation, and is not a danger to the public," the email said. "There are no drinking water issues associated with the release."

Operators of the Premium Coal plant did not return a telephone message Monday seeking comment.

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation spokeswoman Tisha Calabrese-Benton said her agency and the federal Office of Surface Mining visited the site Thursday and were investigating the discharge, which lasted from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

"We were not notified at the time, as required," Calabrese-Benton said in the email.

The discharge from a permitted sediment pond "had adhered to algae on the rocks and was deposited in the quiet areas along the edges of the stream" for about seven miles.

The email said the nearest drinking water utility is Huntsville, more than 30 miles downstream, and they are not currently withdrawing from the New River.

Premium Coal executives were scheduled to meet with environmental officials Tuesday to discuss the problem and what must be done to fix it.

Calabrese-Benton said her agency would have released a public notice earlier about the discharge if there was a "danger to the public" or action needed.

"We don't put out a notice for every complaint we investigate," she said.

## River discharge shuts down Tenn coal-washing plant

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## State, Feds probe coal plant discharge into New River

By Bob Fowler

January 9, 2012 at 7:04 p.m.

BRICEVILLE — A coal company violated state and federal water quality permits by releasing shale and rock shavings into Anderson County's New River for 12 hours last week and not reporting the discharge, an official said.

As a result of the Jan. 2 release at the Baldwin Coal Preparatory Plant near the Devonia community, "the plant was directed to stop operations," said Tisha Calabrese-Benton, spokeswoman for the state's Department of Environment and Conservation.

State and federal officials went to the scene Jan. 5 and found "greyish-black material" coating rocks and algae in the New River and deposited along the edges of the river for about seven miles downstream, Calabrese-Benton said.

She said there was no apparent sign of a widespread fish kill as a result of the discharge, but it created a "water quality issue due to sedimentation."

Calabrese-Benton also said the discharge didn't affect the nearest water treatment plant, located 30 miles away in Huntsville, Tenn.

Calabrese-Benton said the release came from the plant's discharge pond and is a by-product of the process when coal is separated from shale and rock. The volume of discharge released in violation of water quality permits hasn't been determined, she said.

The Baldwin processing plant is operated by Premium Coal, which took over Knoxville-based National Coal Corp. last month. Premium Coal is owned by West Virginia coal baron James Justice.

Calabrese-Benton said officials from Premium Coal are to meet today for a compliance review session with state officials as well as representatives of the federal Office of Surface Mining.

The environmental group Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM) in a news release Monday described the incident as a release of toxic "black water" that was noticed 40 miles downstream by a local resident.

"SOCM members and staff will continue to monitor the spill and ensure appropriate action is taken to hold the company accountable," the group's news release states.

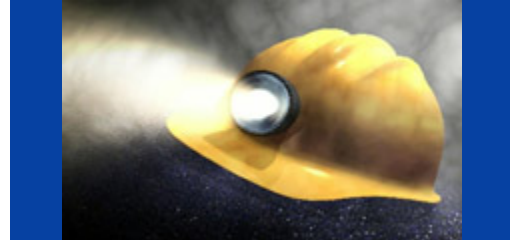


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Posted: 4:49 PM Jan 9, 2012

## River discharge shuts down Tenn coal-washing plant

East Tennessee environmental officials responding to a complaint about a grayish-black discharge in the New River from a coal-washing operation have shut down a Premium Coal plant.



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Premium Coal in Briceville did not return a telephone message Monday seeking comment.

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## River discharge shuts down Anderson County coal-washing plant

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Premium Coal in Briceville did not return a telephone message Monday seeking comment.

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation spokeswoman Tisha Calabrese-Benton said her agency and the federal Office of Surface Mining visited the site Thursday and are investigating the discharge.

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