

**THIS WEEK**

## **EPA Halts Mountaintop Removal Mining Permits**

**March 30, 2009**

*by Roddy Scheer*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced last week that it is halting new permits for mountaintop removal coal mining until water quality impacts from the practice can be fully assessed.

Mountaintop removal coal mining involves blasting hundreds of feet of earth off of mountain peaks and dumping the remains into streams, where it wreaks havoc on the surrounding environment. EPA will now review pending mountaintop mining permits with an eye toward Clean Water Act violations and will recommend specific actions to reduce environmental impacts on projects that do get the green light.

“There is no such thing as a clean coal mine, and halting new mountaintop removal permits is a great first step in addressing the devastating impacts of surface coal mining,” says Tierra Curry of the nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity. Environmentalists like Curry are not only opposed to mountaintop removal mining for its direct ecosystem impacts, but also for its contribution to global warming—coal is one of the dirtiest fossil fuels and coal-fired power plants are a significant contributor to the greenhouse effect.

“From the mine to the smokestack, the coal industry uses dirty, damaging and obsolete technology,” says Curry. “We hope that [EPA’s] announcement on mountaintop removal signals the beginning of a rapid shift to a clean energy future in which coal plays no part.”



**According to the EPA, streams near mountaintop removal sites such as this contain high levels of minerals and decreased aquatic biodiversity.**

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