

**Written Testimony of Maria Gunnoe for 6-1-12 hearing titled**

***“Obama Administrations Actions Against the Spruce Coal Mines: Canceled Permits, Lawsuits and Lost jobs.”***

***1324 Longworth House office Building 10:00am June 1, 2012***

***Held By: The Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources.***

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I am Maria Gunnoe from Boone County WV and I (like 100's of others) help to represent the stories of the Appalachian Communities where coal mining impacts are killing the people and depopulating our mountain culture. Thank each of you for again allowing me the opportunity to speak to you. I appreciate your obligations and responsibilities in protecting and serving all US citizens. My hope is that you listen and hear these pleas for our lives from the Southern Mountains of Appalachia where these atrocious mountaintop removal permits are operating.

The Spruce No. 1 permit is in the headwaters of Pigeon Roost creek. This stream and the people of Blair seem unimportant to most people in this room but to me and the people of Blair this stream is a part of our home. When mountaintop removal is permitted near your home, you will soon be forced to leave what is the birthplace of your family and your children's birthrights as heirs to your family's land. You are forced (by destruction) to leave the American dream that our forefathers prepared and fought for. Why is it acceptable to depopulate our communities and culture, poison our water and air and leave us to die in a post mining waste land for temporary jobs and energy? You should ask yourselves: are we knowingly and willingly flipping on our lights and lining our pockets at the expense of the lives, livelihoods and the health of the people in Appalachia? The answer to this in my opinion is YES you are!

The Spruce No. 1 permit is one of the first examples of steps that the EPA has taken to STOP irresponsible mining practices which were ignored during the Bush Administration. People from all over Appalachia have lobbied the EPA for these protections for the past 15 years. During the Bush Administration the oversight of mountaintop removal permits was non-existent. The Bush Administration sent word to W.Va state Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Stephanie Timmermyer to get these permits pushed through as quickly as

possible, In George Bush's words "We need this coal, our homeland security depends on it." The coal industry was allowed to do as they please during the 8 years of the Bush Administration. Then in 2009, in steps the Obama administration's EPA trying to fix the problems that the Bush administration created and then ignored. One of the biggest problems was the lack of enforcement of current regulations on mountaintop removal operation in Appalachia. The coal industry was allowed to run out of control in our mountains and depopulate many of our local communities during this rush to get the coal. In response to this insurgence by the coal industry, impacted community members organized to stop the attack of this industry on us in our homes. The EPA heard from us often and we appreciate that they are listening to the science. We have organized meetings with the impacted community members so that the representatives within the government agencies can see and hear the people's pleas. Still, most of these decision makers walked away thinking that there is some sort of balance to be found in blowing up the mountains over our homes and shoving them into our streams. In reality the fact is mountaintop removal is killing people. These facts are out and available to anyone who wants to see them. Please understand that the majority of people in Appalachia are against mountaintop removal coal mining. The only ones who support it are the ones who are making money from it. These are the ones that should be made to live in our communities and suffer the consequences of their actions. If you support mountaintop removal and what it is doing to us, you are supporting the murder of the people of the Appalachian culture that depends on these mountains and their waters for our very lives.

The coal industry has said that the EPA and the Obama administration are "trying to shut down coal." The coal industry is perpetuating a lie that there is a "war on coal" and that coal mining jobs are under attack. This is the same false crisis that is created by this industry every time they don't get what they want. According to recent reports by Ken Ward of the Charleston Gazette coal mining jobs have increased by 7.4 percent since 2009 when the Obama Administration took office. Ted Boettner with the WV Center for Budget and Policy looked at mining jobs over the last two decades; annual West Virginia coal mining employment was higher in 2011 than at any time over the last 17 years, according to Workforce West Virginia. Quoting the title and text of Daniel Weis's article on climateprogress.com "The War on Coal is a Lie invented by the coal industry. It is a multimillion dollar misinformation campaign funded by big coal polluters to distract Americans from the deadly effects of coals pollution on public health." There is a war in Appalachia, do believe this. This war is not on coal, coal jobs, or the coal industry. This war is on these mountains, our water and the people who depend on it all. Coal is not our King, God is! Coal is only the dictator of some.

Mountaintop removal is not only killing the people who work these jobs but it is also killing the people who live in the surrounding communities. Jobs in any region are important; however ALL of those jobs need to be safe for the workers and for the communities that they operate in. Mountaintop removal is NOT safe for anyone. Science has repeatedly proven this. The facts that mountaintop removal is killing us are in the 19 health studies that have been compiled. This committee, Congress, the coal industry and the Obama administration continue to ignore these studies and continue to allow the blowing up of our mountains and poisoning of our waters and air to get to the coal that currently powers about 44 % of America's electricity.

Expanding any mtr mining including the Spruce No. 1 permit means the depopulation of yet another mountain community and the sickening of the people who live in these communities. Living this depopulation has made me more aware of the large-scale impact of this ousting and killing of people on the culture that I love. We will die as a culture as we suffer with the inability to pass this mountain culture on to our children. Not even our historic mountain cemeteries are left intact and accessible. Our people are being mortally impacted by the fallout from mountaintop removal coal mining in our water and air in our native homes. Do we really need to prove that blowing up mountains over our homes and pushing them into our streams is NOT good for us? It is not as if this Committee, Congress and the coal industry doesn't know what mountaintop removal does to people. They not only know about it but they are supporting and allowing it and by **not ending it**. After visiting the central Appalachian communities The UN Women's Tribunal on climate change jurist recommendation will include that mountain removal should be immediately stopped - an immediate moratorium on any removal operations until a full investigation including health related disease incidence rates can be undertaken.

I had hoped that the last time that I came to speak to this committee that someone would have heard our pleas for our lives in Appalachia but our pleas fell on the deaf ears of coal supporters. We had to request that this committee post our comments on their website for others to view days after the industry's comments were posted. We were timed to the second on our comments, while pro coal supporters were allowed to go minutes over their allotted time to speak. Mountaintop removal cannot be silenced. The more people that are impacted, the more that will continue to stand up to protect all that makes us Appalachians FREE! We will not back down. We know we are doing the right thing in ending this evil that has come in to destroy our very existence. We Appalachians have for many years lobbied the EPA to enforce the laws that are intended to protect our lives in our homes. The coal industry in Appalachia is anti-life and the FIRM enforcement of the laws are the only chance that we have of surviving as a culture after this industry is gone.

Parts of my family first settled this area during the forced removal of the Cherokee known as the "Trail of Tears." What the coal industry and our government is doing to our native communities in Southern Appalachia feels much like the second silent forced removal of our people.

A few notes from community members:

- Selenium discharges downstream from Spruce No 1 are already much higher than EPA standards according to recent water testing. The Spruce 1 permit will allow more selenium to be released into this stream. This is the making for life threatening levels of selenium.
- The community of Blair has NO municipal drinking water available to them. The only water in these communities is the well water which in some cases has already been polluted. The community of Blair needs water infrastructure to supply their homes with healthy water before any area permits are even discussed.
- From what we see on the ground the coal companies have already moved forward in preparing the permit area as if they had an approved permit.

- The Spruce permit is in the Coal River watershed. Mountaintop removal is why American Rivers placed the Coal River on our *America's Most Endangered Rivers*® list this year – because the river is at a decision point – not because it's the most polluted. We can save these precious headwater streams that also serve as drinking water to our communities but we must act now before it is too late.

# Truth from the headwaters

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“We are all down stream”

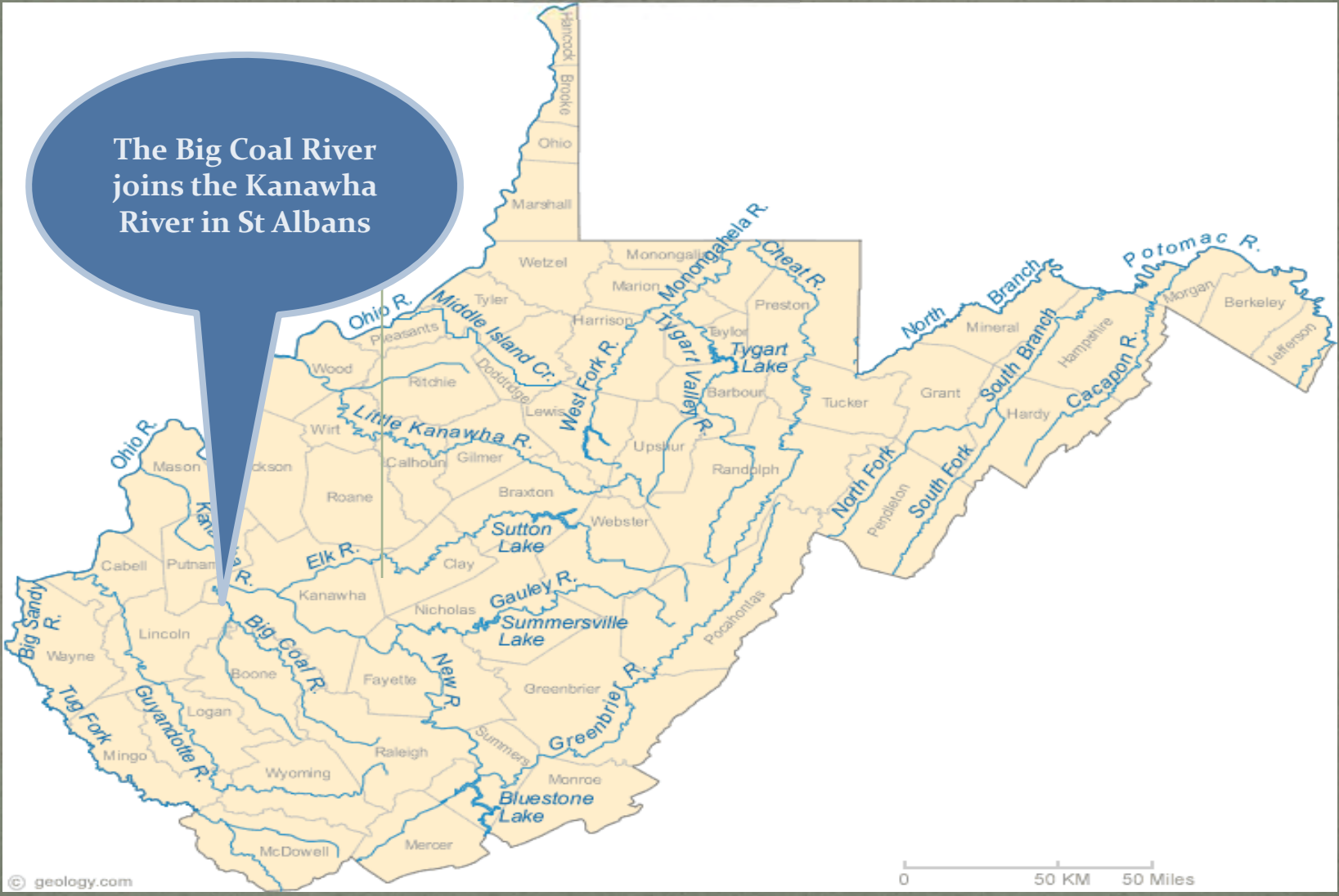
Maria Gunnoe

[www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org)

[www.sludgesafety.org](http://www.sludgesafety.org)

Know your watersheds and your water resources and help protect them. Good health *begins and depends on clean water*. Always ask what is my water resource, is it healthy water?

The Big Coal River joins the Kanawha River in St Albans



# Quick FACTS

- Water is the basis of all life and that includes your body. Your muscles that move your body are 75% water; your blood that transport nutrients is 82% water; your lungs that provide your oxygen are 90% water; your brain that is the control center of your body is 76% water; even your bones are 25% water.
- Our health is truly dependent on the quality and quantity of the water we drink.
- There are 722 references to water in the Bible. Most of which refer to water as **THE Gift of Life...**
- In Genesis 1: 1-31 it was water that brought life to all the moving creature of the earth.

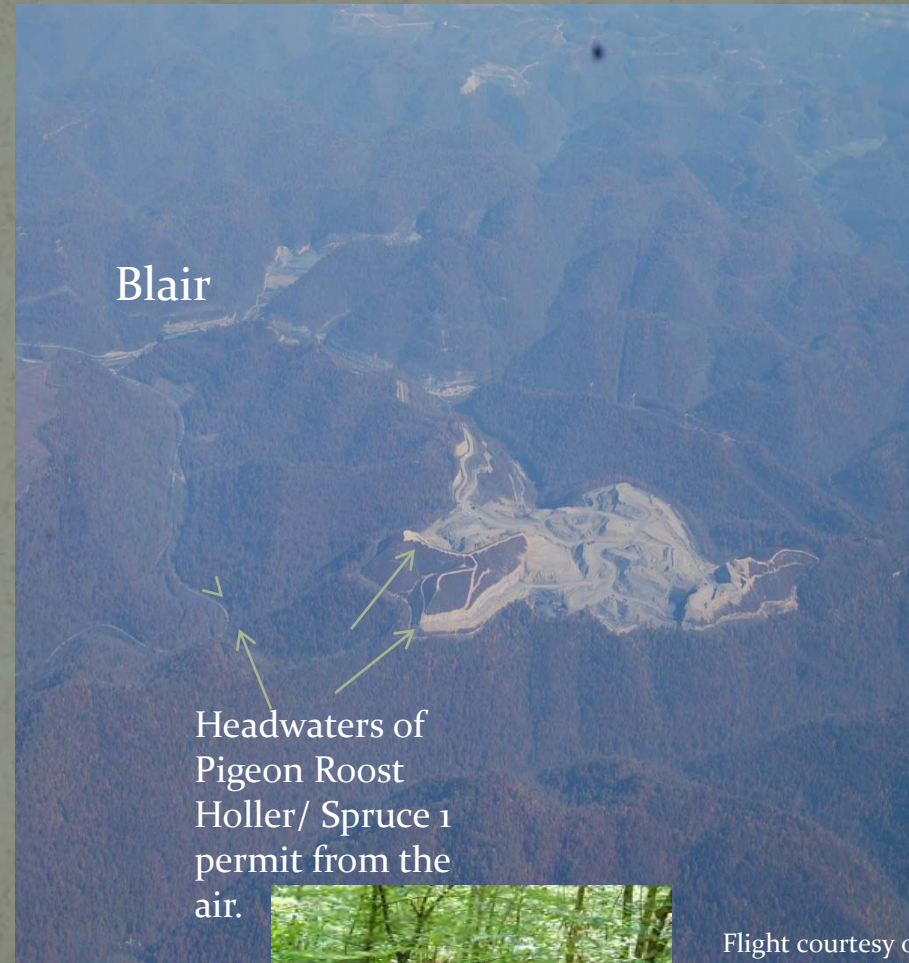
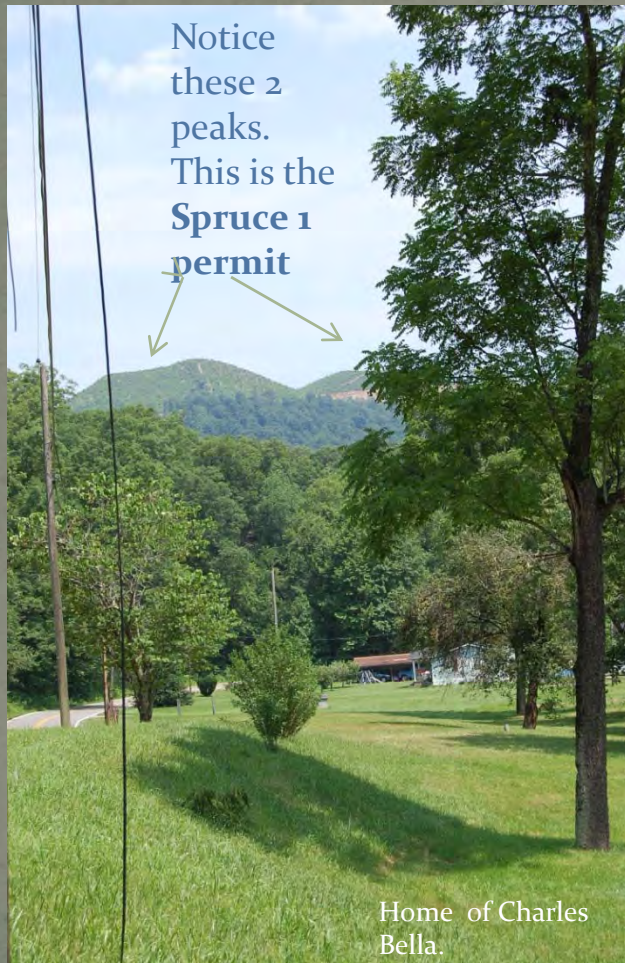
Pigeon Roost Holler Blair, Logan WV

This is the stream that the Spruce 1 permit will destroy if it allowed to move forward.





# Headwaters of Pigeon Creek Holler, Logan WV in November 2011



Flight courtesy of  
[www.southwings.org](http://www.southwings.org)

# Headwaters of West Fork of Pond Fork of the Little coal of the Big Coal River. William's Mtn in Boone County



Photo by Maria Gunnoe  
[www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org) flight  
courtesy of  
[www.southwings.org](http://www.southwings.org)

# Twilight Surface Mines & Headwaters of West Fork of Pond Fork of The Little Coal of The Big Coal River.



Asbury Cemetery

Bailey Cemetery

Jarrell Cemetery

Revelation 16:4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

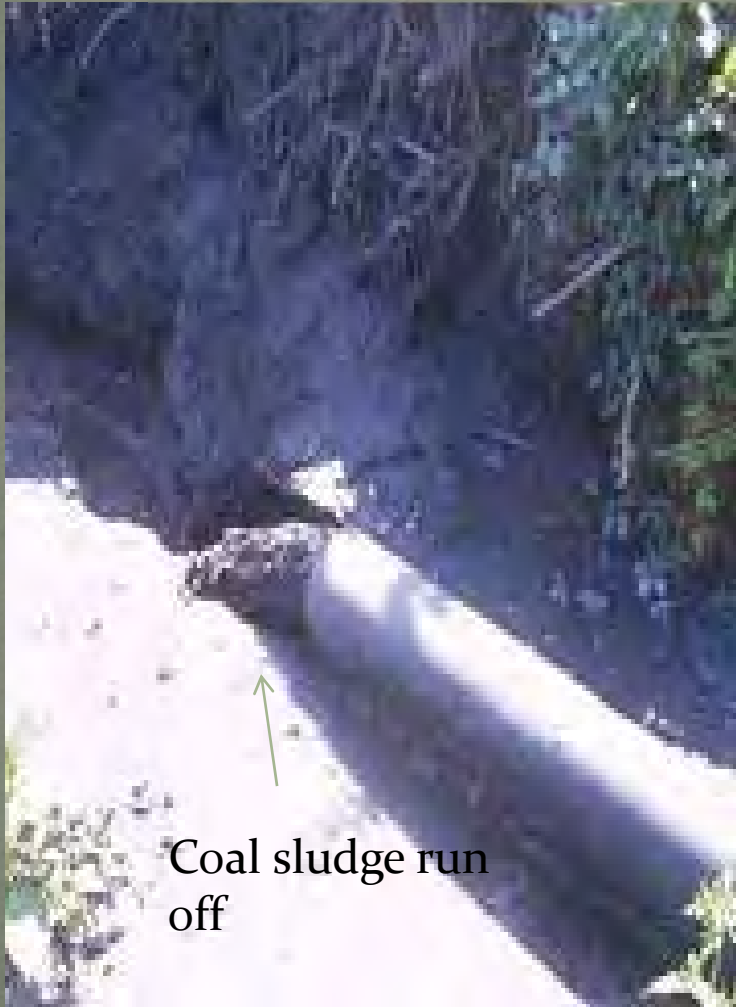


Photos by Maria Gunnoe [www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org)

Head waters of Spruce River of the Little Coal River of the Big Coal River. Sludge dams near Blair, Logan Co WV



# Coal Sludge pollutes our water. This is your headwaters!



Coal sludge run  
off



Coal waste  
running into  
The Big coal  
River

Photos courtesy of Vivian  
Stockman [www.sludgesafety.org](http://www.sludgesafety.org)

Near Bob White in Boone Co WV. Headwaters of the Pond Fork River of the Little Coal of the Big Coal River. Pond Fork River has 14 Class C (high hazard) sludge dams in about 20 miles of stream.



Photo by Maria Gunnoe [www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org)  
Flight courtesy of [www.southwings.org](http://www.southwings.org)

## Underground Controlled Injection..(UCI)

- Slurry **not** stored above ground is pumped, or "injected," into abandoned underground mines. Once underground it can migrate into the groundwater contaminating local well water, especially when blasting from surface mining occurs in the area. Several communities have had their water supply contaminated by underground injection causing widespread, often life-threatening illnesses.



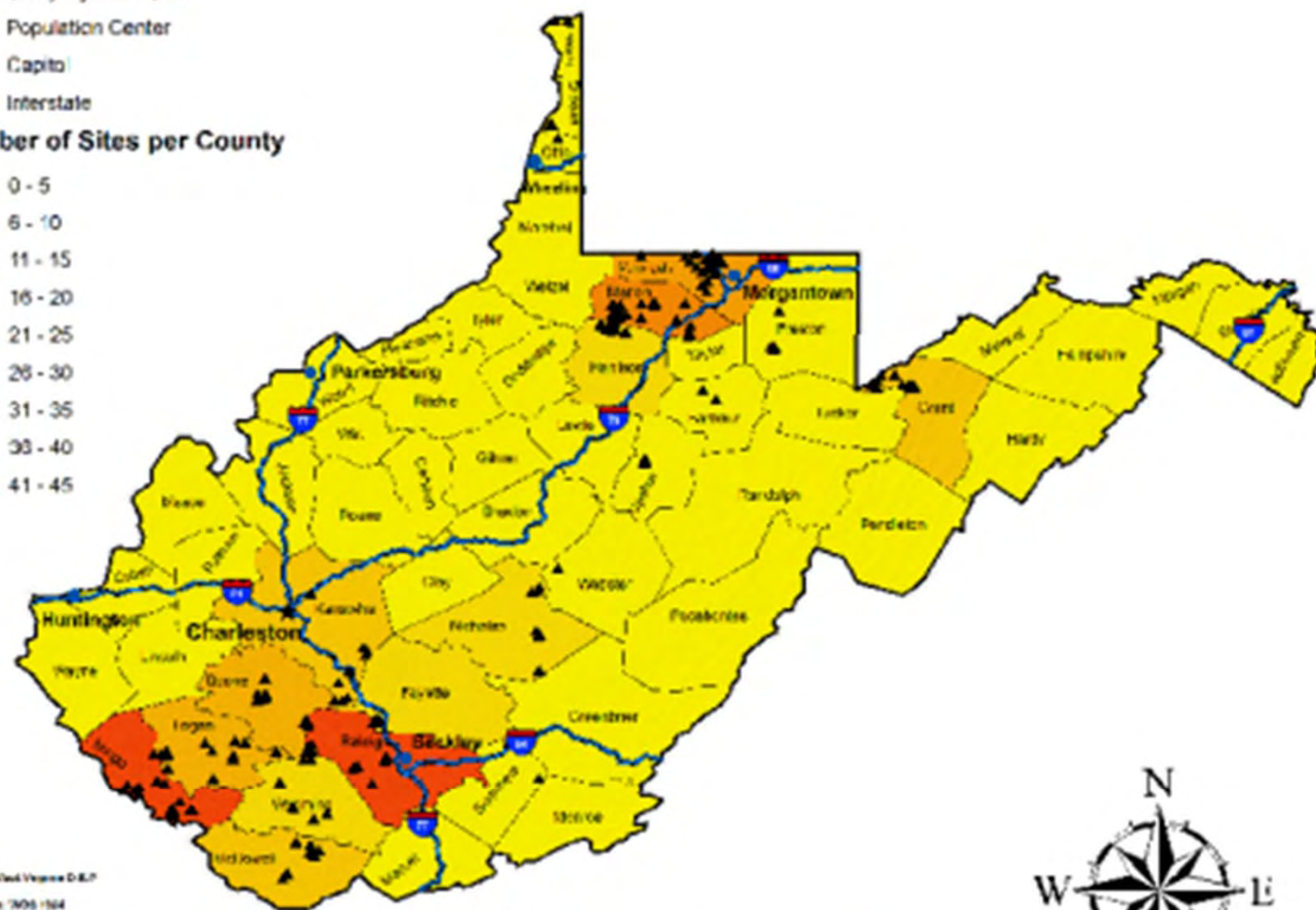
### Legend

- ▲ Slurry Injection Sites
- Population Center
- ★ Capito
- Interstate

### Number of Sites per County

- 0 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- 21 - 25
- 26 - 30
- 31 - 35
- 36 - 40
- 41 - 45

## Slurry Injection Sites in West Virginia



Source: West Virginia D.E.P.  
Revised: 10/05/1994



Slurry Safety Project  
FOR THE WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
1000 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, SUITE 1000  
CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA 25302-3000

0 12.5 25 50 75 100 Miles

1 inch equals 35 miles



# The impact of heavy metal pollution on water in homes in the Southern Mtn communities.

Toilet Bowl



Toilet tank



# Heavy metal stains in bathtubs in Boone County, WV.



The coal waste in water settles in water heaters this is an examples of this. Water may come from the faucet clear while solids will settle after the water sits for a bit. These same solids ends up in the human body when this water is consumed. This causes fatal health problems.



Well water and entire aquifers are polluted  
by coal waste and it makes people sick!



# Impacts of Coal Sludge on Human Health

- Chronic exposure to the metals found in coal slurry can damage virtually every part of the body. Health problems caused by these metals include intestinal lesions, neuropathy, kidney and liver failure, cancer, high blood pressure, brittle bones, miscarriages and birth defects among others. Studies of the effects of coal slurry on human cell tissues have found evidence that coal slurry causes cancerous proliferation, cell death and damage to kidney cells.

# Chemical found in Coal Sludge

- Aniline  
Acenaphthene  
Acenaphthylene  
Anthracene  
Benzidine  
Benzo(a)anthracene  
Benzo(a)pyrene  
Benzo(b)fluoranthene  
Benzo(ghi)perylene  
Benzo(k)fluoroanthene  
Benzyl alcohol  
bis(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate  
bis(2-chloroethoxy)-  
methane  
bis(2-chloroethyl)ether  
bis(2-  
chloroisopropyl)ether  
Butyl benzyl phthalate  
Chrysene  
Dibenzo(a,h)anthraceneDi  
benzofuran  
Dibutyl phtalate

Diethyl phthalate  
Dimethyl phthalate  
Diocetylphthalate  
Fluoranthene  
Fluorene  
Hexachlorobenzene  
Hexachloroethane  
Indeno(1,2,3-c,d)pyrene  
Isophorone  
N-Nitrosodi-n-  
propylamine  
N-Nitrosodiphenylamine  
Naphthalene  
Nitrobenzene  
Phenanthrene  
Pyrene  
Acrylamide  
Hexachloro-1,3-Butadiene  
Hexa-Cl-1,3-  
Cyclopentadiene  
1,2,4-trichlorobenzene  
1,2-Dichlorobenzene

1,3-Dichlorobenzene  
1,4-Dichlorobenzene  
2,4-Dinitrotoluene  
2,6-Dinitrotoluene  
2-Chloronaphtalene  
2-Methylnaphtalene  
|2-Nitroaniline  
3-3'-Dichlorobenzidine  
3-Nitroaniline  
4-Bromophenyl phenyl  
ether  
4-Chloroaniline  
4-Chlorophenyl phenyl  
ether  
4-Nitroaniline

(When we ask what  
was in coal sludge we  
were told it was  
“trade secret” )

This is Bob White in Boone County. Headwaters of Big Branch Creek of Pond Fork of The Little Coal River of The Big Coal River.



1183 acres of mountaintop  
removal coal mining

Valley fill

Maria Gunnoe's home & Big Branch Creek



# Island Creek Mtn Headwaters of Big Branch Creek of Pond Fork River of Little Coal River of The Big Coal River



Before MTR mining.



After MTR Mining

Photos by the late James Foster of Bob White WV.

# Maria Gunnoe's home in Bob White before and after flooding and MTR.



This is what water does to the insides of facets. These have to be replaced often.



A new and an old internal facet valve.



Knowing what Mountaintop removal and valley fill coal mining has caused to happen to so many other families throughout southern WV including mine I truly regret the decision to in any way move the Spruce 1 permit forward. This is only the beginning of the lives that will be impacted.



Back to Pigeon Roost Holler and the impacts of the Spruce 1 permit... Meet Jimmy Weekly. He lives in Pigeon Roost Holler. He has been fighting the Spruce permit since 1996. Jimmy says “Maria I just can’t imagine the heartbreak of not having my home. This place is everything to me! Its every step and every breath I ever took.. All my life. My hope everyday is that they won’t take it all away and leave me nothing not even my memories.”



On March 3 2012 U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson ruled that the Obama administration overstepped its authority in revoking Spruce 1 permit last year. This was for the largest proposed strip-mining operation in central Appalachia.



Spruce mine permit

Pigeon Roost Holler is currently beautiful.. Lets keep it that way!

