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New Report: Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining Too Costly to Appalachia's Economies

Transition to Clean Energy Would Bring More Jobs, Economic Sustainability

Washington, D.C. -- The Sierra Club today released a groundbreaking new report that reaffirms the economic benefits of ending mountaintop removal coal mining and transitioning to clean energy sources in Appalachia. Conducted by Synapse Energy Economics, Inc., the report comes on the heels of the Obama administration's praiseworthy decision to review 79 permits for new mountaintop removal coal mining permits citing water quality concerns.

The report -- along with other recent studies of this most destructive form of coal mining -- shows that America can have affordable electricity without mountaintop removal because many factors contribute to the cost of electricity, with coal prices playing just one small part. There are an abundance of cost-effective alternatives to mountaintop removal coal -- including natural gas, energy efficiency and renewable sources such as wind power and low-impact hydroelectric.

"This new report highlights the benefits for Appalachia that would result from ending mountaintop removal mining and transitioning to clean energy jobs," said **Mary Anne Hitt, Deputy Director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign.** "We can have affordable electricity without mountaintop removal, and we can protect our communities, streams, forests and mountains at the same time."

According to the report, mountaintop removal is not the economic savior for Appalachia that some have claimed. In fact, the studies show that other types of mining in Appalachia actually employ more workers, and that mountaintop removal coal mining costs state budgets more than it generates.

This week the Army Corps of Engineers is holding public hearings across Appalachia where hundreds of residents are calling for an end to a "one-size-fits-all" nationwide permit that has been used for years to allow this destructive type of coal mining. At the hearings, the coal industry will likely argue that radical strip mining benefits Appalachia's economy, but this new report reaffirms the value of clean energy.

The Synapse report demonstrates the importance of supporting clean energy sources instead of leveling areas for mountaintop removal coal mining. This radical form of blasting destroys clean energy sources. Appalachia can only tap the power of clean energy if the mountains, valleys and waterways that support these resources remain intact.

Find a full copy of the report, including an executive summary and a white paper on other recent mountaintop removal coal mining studies, at www.sierraclub.org/coal/factsheets.aspx

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