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**Water Pollution Concerns Lead to Challenge of Mine Expansion
ICG Hazard Company mine would ruin pristine area and threaten community**

Louisville: Due to violations of key environmental safeguards, the Sierra Club and Kentucky Waterways Alliance are challenging plans to expand the already massive ICG Hazard mountaintop removal mine in Eastern Kentucky. The plan would increase the mine by almost one thousand acres, destroying a total of about 4,400 acres of pristine wilderness and filling nearby valleys with mining waste. The waste would bury and pollute several miles of streams and creeks, which lead into the Kentucky River--a water source for more than 1 million people.

The groups filed the challenge against the Army Corps of Engineers in U.S. District Court in Louisville today after the agency permitted the expansion of the mountaintop removal coal mine in violation of the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Protection Act. The mine in Hoskinston (Leslie County) is operated by ICG Hazard, a subsidiary of International Coal Group.

"I have watched mountain after mountain reduced to rubble," said Teri Blanton, a Sierra Club member in Berea, Kentucky, who visits the mine site regularly. "The area that the Army Corps has opened to mining is a green oasis rising out of the flattened and bare moonscape the company has already created."

In March 2007, a federal judge ruled that four mountaintop removal mining permits similar to ICG Hazard's violated the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The Army Corps, however, approved the ICG Hazard permit on December 3rd of this year. Under the Clean Water Act, the Corps must ensure that permitted activities will not result in unacceptable adverse environmental effects on streams.

"It's ludicrous, absolutely mind-boggling to think that the Corps of Engineers actually believes that mountaintop removal mining in this region will have no unacceptable adverse impact on the environment," said Judith Petersen, Executive Director of Kentucky Waterways Alliance. "It's time to ask the courts to enforce environmental laws requiring the Corps to consider and account for the value of headwater streams for the environment."

Across Appalachia, mining companies blow the tops off mountains to reach a thin seam of coal and then, to minimize waste disposal costs, dump millions of tons of mining waste into the valleys below, causing permanent damage to the ecosystem and landscape. Mountaintop removal mining has damaged or destroyed approximately 1,200 miles of streams, destroyed forests on some 300 square miles of land, disrupted drinking water supplies, flooded communities, and destroyed wildlife habitat. The Corps has authorized the destruction of an additional 535 miles of streams.

This mine expansion is part of a wave of proposed mountaintop removal mines and mine expansions in Kentucky and across the country ICG's mountaintop removal mines use some of the most environmentally devastating types of mining, flattening the landscape and burying miles of streams. The Sierra Club and Kentucky Waterways Alliance are represented in the challenge by Joe Lovett at the Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment, Jim Hecker at Public Justice and Greg Howard of the Appalachian Citizens' Law Center, Inc.

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