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Contacts:

Oliver Bernstein, Sierra Club, 512-477-2152

Judith Petersen, Kentucky Waterways Alliance, 270-524-1774

**Under Pressure, Army Corps of Engineers Suspends Kentucky Coal Mining Permit  
Sierra Club, Kentucky Waterways Alliance Celebrate Victory for Clean Water**

Louisville – Under pressure from the Sierra Club and Kentucky Waterways Alliance, the Army Corps of Engineers suspended the permit they had just granted for a mountaintop removal coal mine expansion in eastern Kentucky. This victory will help protect drinking water quality for more than 1 million Kentuckians, and it represents the first time that the Army Corps has suspended one of its coal mining permits in Kentucky.

“This permit suspension is an admission that the Army Corps’ regulatory program has serious problems,” said Judith Petersen, Executive Director of Kentucky Waterways Alliance. “The fact that this permit was even issued in the first place was a blatant violation of the Clean Water Act and the National Environmental Protection Act.”

The suspended permit was originally issued by the Army Corps in December 2007 to allow ICG Hazard, LLC, a subsidiary of International Coal Group, to fill five valleys with coal mining waste. These waste fills would have buried more than two miles of valuable headwater streams near the coal mine in Leslie County, Kentucky.

Sierra Club and Kentucky Waterways Alliance identified several problems with the permit, including the Corps’ failure to investigate ways to make the mining less damaging and the failure to consider the cumulative impact of all past and present dumping in the area near the mine.

“This Army Corps permit would have been an inexcusable, environmental travesty,” said Teri Blanton, a Sierra Club member in Berea, Kentucky, who visits the mine site regularly. “The streams that this mine destroys run into the Kentucky River – a water source for more than 1 million people.”

Unfortunately, the suspension by the Army Corps came too late to prevent ICG from causing further damage at the mining site. Since the lawsuit was filed, the mining company managed to conduct major work on two of the five valley fills, including rock blasting and stream filling. There are already more than 3,000 disturbed acres and more than 20 valleys fills already on this site. The suspension will, however, prevent ICG from dumping waste into additional valleys mentioned in the challenge.

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.

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 at the Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center, Inc.