

## Press Release – For Immediate Release

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## Wind Power or Mountaintop Removal?

### Landmark Wind Project Could Power More Than 150,000 Homes, Forever

On Coal River Mountain in West Virginia, community members are envisioning an exciting new energy option – the development of enough wind power to keep the lights on in 150,000 homes while preserving the mountain for future economic and community benefit.

Coal River Mountain is one of the last mountains still intact in the beautiful Coal River Valley of West Virginia. However, Massey Energy plans to strip-mine for coal nearly 6,600 acres of the mountain - almost 10 square miles – and construct 18 valley fills that would impact the residents along the Clear Fork River, including the communities of Colcord and Dorothy that were devastated by heavy flooding in 2001.

However, a strong new alternative to the proposed mountaintop removal coal mining exists. A 440-megawatt wind farm proposed by a coalition of community and environmental groups has the potential to preserve Coal River Mountain while providing energy and much needed jobs for the Coal River Valley communities, forever.

"We're optimistic about the potential for local leaders to support this project and put Raleigh County on the map. This would be the biggest wind farm proposed on the East Coast, and could provide a model for other counties in West Virginia looking to develop affordable, clean energy and create safe, healthy jobs in their own communities," said Matt Noerpel of Coal River Mountain Watch.

In 2006, a study showing the wind potential on Coal River Mountain was conducted by WindLogics, a nationally recognized firm, and it indicates that Coal River Mountain is an ideal location for developing utility-scale wind. "Coal River Mountain can accommodate 220 two-megawatt wind turbines--enough energy to power over 150,000 homes," says Rory McIlmoil of Coal River Mountain Watch, "and you can't put wind power on a strip mine, because the wind patterns are impacted, and the land is rendered unstable for supporting utility-scale wind turbines."

Permit data shows that the mountaintop removal operation will only provide jobs and energy for 14 years, and will eliminate any potential for alternative economic development, such as wind energy. A wind farm, by comparison, would allow for other uses of the land that would benefit the local communities, like sustainable forestry, tourism, and the harvesting of ginseng and other wild plants.

(Wind or Mountaintop Removal Press Release cont...)

"I live in the west end of the county, which has been heavily impacted by coal mining," Lorelei Scarbro of Rock Creek said. "Our concern today is our homes, our environment and the sustainability of the environment. The house I live in and raised my children in, which my husband built and he is buried in the family cemetery next door, would be in danger from this mine. The wind farm would preserve the mountain."

"Economic development is of the utmost importance, but concern for the well-being of citizens is a priority. This wind farm could save local communities, people's lives, and our way of life, while also bringing new economic development to the area. This idea is an excellent alternative, and maybe the only alternative for our lands which are being permanently destroyed," said local resident and former coal miner Chuck Nelson.

The proposed wind farm would generate over \$20 million per year in direct local spending during construction and \$2 million per year during the operational period. It would create 200-plus construction related jobs over the first two years, and 40-50 permanent on-site operation and maintenance jobs that would last as long as the wind farm exists. The project would also provide a minimum of \$400,000 in State Tax Revenues, and between \$750,000 and \$3,000,000 in County Tax Revenues annually. Also, this wind farm could potentially provide the city of Beckley and the whole of Raleigh County with clean wind energy.

"The national conversation on energy and global warming makes it clear that America needs to start investing heavily in renewable energy, as well as get ourselves off foreign sources of energy. Carbon taxes could make coal more expensive in coming years, and West Virginia needs to prepare itself by developing innovative, affordable, new sources of domestic energy before that happens," adds Rory McIlmoil.

The purpose of the wind campaign is to spread awareness about the potential for wind development on Coal River Mountain, and to generate comments and letters directed at Governor Joe Manchin in order to ask him to rescind the mountaintop removal permits for Coal River Mountain, and lend his support for the development of clean energy and green jobs through the construction of a wind farm.

The Coal River Wind Project is a joint effort between Coal River Mountain Watch, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Appalachian Voices and the Student Environmental Action Coalition. Coal River Mountain Watch has been working for community preservation in the Coal River Valley for over 10 years. To learn more about the Coal River Mountain Wind campaign, please visit [www.coalriverwind.org](http://www.coalriverwind.org).

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