

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Economic study concludes wind energy better for community, county than mountaintop removal mining**

Citizens hope this study will convince Governor Manchin to support wind on Coal River Mountain

In both Beckley and Charleston today, Coal River Mountain Watch will present the results of a study they commissioned in June from Downstream Strategies, LLC of Morgantown. The study shows that wind development is a better economic land use option than mountaintop removal coal mining, not only for Coal River Mountain, but potentially for all areas in southern West Virginia that exhibit good wind potential.

“This report confirms that developing a wind farm on Coal River Mountain is the best way to diversify the local economy,” said Lorelei Scarbro, Coal River Mountain resident and community organizer for the wind campaign. “It would provide Raleigh County with additional and much needed funds for stimulating new economic development and creating new jobs for the area surrounding Coal River Mountain.”

The study shows that the proposed wind farm, consisting of 164 wind turbines and generating 328 megawatts of electricity, would provide over \$1.74 million in annual property taxes to Raleigh County. By comparison, the coal severance taxes related to the mountaintop removal mining would provide the county with only \$36,000 per year.

Evan Hansen, President of Downstream Strategies, stated, “Mountaintop removal mines on Coal River Mountain would be more profitable for private landholding and coal mining companies, but it is not defensible from the perspective of Raleigh County citizens. Our analysis confirms that a wind farm would produce greater economic benefits to the citizens of Raleigh County when health and environmental externalities are included in the analysis.”

The report also analyzed the benefits of opening a wind turbine manufacturing plant in Raleigh County. It concluded that substantial economic benefits would also result from the development of a strong wind industry in southern West Virginia. Coal River Mountain Watch and concerned residents of the Coal River Valley are hoping that Coal River Mountain will be the starting point for developing such an industry. They continue to ask Governor Joe Manchin to do the right thing for the citizens and economy of West

Virginia by exercising his authority to rescind Massey's mountaintop removal coal mining permits.

"I'm not against mining coal," said Gary Anderson of Colcord. "My father was a coal miner for 37 years, but the way they're doing it now just isn't right. If they can put a wind farm on Coal River Mountain and mine the coal underground, then that's what they should do. If this study shows that a wind farm is better for the economy than the mountaintop removal, then Governor Manchin should do what he can to make that happen."

"This study clearly shows that the costs of mountaintop removal mining are greater than the benefits," said Scarbro. "On the other hand, the benefits of having a wind farm on our mountain would last forever, and it would save my home and the mountain I love at the same time."

The Downstream Strategies study also indicates that reducing the Coal River Mountain's altitude by hundreds of feet will make the mountain uneconomical for wind farm development. Anderson added, "You can't restore the mountains once they're gone."

The first press conference starts at 1:30 p.m. in the Atrium Dining Room of Beckley's Tamarack (off I-77, well-marked). The Charleston press conference begins at 4:30 p.m. in the governor's press conference room, located in the Secretary of State's office in the State Capitol.

### Organizational Information

Downstream Strategies is an environmental consulting firm based in Morgantown, West Virginia. They provide science, research, and tools to organizations, businesses and agencies. Downstream Strategies combines sound interdisciplinary skills with a core belief in the importance of protecting the environment and linking economic development with natural resource stewardship.

Coal River Mountain Watch is a grassroots organization based in Whitesville, WV. The mission of Coal River Mountain Watch is to stop the destruction of our communities and environment by mountaintop removal mining, to improve the quality of life in our area and to help rebuild sustainable communities.

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