

APES- Land and Water Use Unit Mountain Top Removal Webquest

<http://appvoices.org/end-mountaintop-removal/>

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Answer the following questions:

Mountaintop Removal 101

1: What is *mountaintop removal*?

-A destructive form of extracting coal in which coal companies blast hundreds of feet of a mountain ridge top using heavy explosives to access thin seams of coal below

2: *How does each of the following affect the environment:*

- **Clearing**
 - Before mining can start, all topsoil and vegetation must be removed. Usually by burning or illegally dumping into the valley
- **Blasting**
 - Removes 600 feet or more of elevation
- **Digging**
 - Removal of coal and debris using enormous earth-moving machines
- **Dumping Waste**
 - Dumping of debris into nearby valleys. This has buried more than 2,000 miles of headwater streams and polluted many more
- **Processing**
 - Chemically treating coal before it is shipped. The coal slurry produced as a result of this is dumped into open impoundments
- **Reclamation**
 - Sites receive more than a spraying of exotic grass seed

3: *Where* is mountaintop removal happening?

-It takes place primarily in eastern Kentucky, southern West Virginia, southwestern Virginia, and eastern Tennessee.

4: **What can be done** to stop mountaintop removal?

-Passing the Clean Water Protection Act. Also president and federal agencies could put restrictions on mine permits. Essentially it all rests in the hands of those higher up in government.

5: **What agencies** are involved in regulating mountaintop removal?

-The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement are the federal agencies involved.

6: **What is one reason** why we don't need to use this type of process?

-It provides roughly 3% of our nation's electricity and has been dropping for years

Economic Impacts of Mountaintop Removal

7: **Summarize** the economic impacts of mountaintop removal

-It causes less jobs for coal mining but has an increase in coal production. It creates barriers to economic development and diversification making an area look ugly. Places that have coal mining show high rates of economic distress.

Ecological Impacts of Mountaintop Removal

8: **Summarize** the ecological impacts of mountaintop removal

-Pollution of nearly 2,000 miles of headwater stream, forest elimination, destruction of restoring native hardwood forest habitat, and fish species are in danger as well.

Community Impacts of Mountaintop Removal

9: How does mountaintop removal affect the *local community*?

-It causes increased mortality due to diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. It contaminates drinking water and causes fly rock, which is when communities are blanketed in dust and rocks of all sizes. It also causes powerful flash floods.