

The Center for Folklore and Ethnography
&
The Institute for Environmental Studies
University of Pennsylvania

Sustaining the Mountains: Ecological Citizenship for the 21st Century

An Earth Week Symposium
April 23-24

To get at the last of the bituminous coal in Central Appalachia, the coal industry is taking down the mountains. The latest mining technology, known as “mountaintop removal and valley fill,” uses giant machinery to replace a biologically diverse landscape, rich in historical, cultural, and ecological memory with thousands of square miles of “landform complexes” rendered from coal waste. Can the mountains and communities of Central Appalachia withstand the national demand for coal-fired electricity? At this symposium coalfield activists, musicians, and artists join an interdisciplinary gathering of Penn faculty and federal regulators to explore mountain-sustaining alternatives for ecological citizenship.

Schedule of Events

Wednesday, April 23

Mountain Songs of Struggle and Union: An Evening with Kate Long and Elaine Purkey

7-9 p.m. Ben Franklin Room, 218 Houston Hall
A performance and discussion by leading West Virginia musicians and activists on the role of music in community organizing and ecological advocacy.

Thursday, April 24

From Regional Slurs to Slurry Ponds: Relocating the Footprint of Progress

9:30-11:30 a.m. Golken Room, 223 Houston Hall

With West Virginia community leaders and researchers, Penn faculty and students explore ways to more effectively combine the knowledge of experience with the knowledge of expertise in ecological planning.

Out of the Overburden, Onto the Map: Cultural Assessment and the Case of Mountaintop Removal Mining

12 noon - 1:30 p.m. Wistar Auditorium

Hundreds of thousands of square miles of the world's most diverse temperate-zone hardwood forest are being turned into "overburden" – that is, waste from mountaintop removal mining. With members of West Virginia's Coal River Mountain Watch, Mary Hufford (Director of Penn's Center for Folklore and Ethnography) discusses the related violence to cultural memory and social institutions grounded in the mountains, and ways of gaining recognition for these in the permitting process.

Groundtruthing NEPA: Toward a Community-Based EIS

3 to 5 p.m. Golken Room, 223 Houston Hall

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 envisioned an ecologically sustainable approach to development, which would bring the insights of the sciences and social sciences to bear in meeting the environmental needs of communities while fostering economic growth. Accordingly, the Region III office of the EPA here in Philadelphia is preparing to release a draft Environmental Impact Statement on Mountaintop Mining and Valley Fill. Members of the steering committee for the EIS will meet with Penn faculty and members of the Coal River Mountain Watch, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition to explore the role for ethnographic, community-based research in protecting mountain ecology under the provisions of NEPA and related federal legislation.

For further information call 215-898-7352 or 215-573-3164

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