

Grassroots Progress Report Summary

In December 2014, The Alliance for Appalachia released a report titled: [*Grassroots Progress Report: The Obama Administration's Successes and Shortfalls in Addressing the Impacts of Mountaintop Removal and Investing in a Just and Sustainable Economy in Appalachia.*](#)

This report is part of on-going communications with the Obama administration. In June, 2009, the Obama administration created a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among federal agencies responsible for protecting Appalachian communities from the extreme damage of mountaintop removal coal mining. Though grassroots groups realized this MOU would not fully end the practice of mountaintop removal, nor ensure a just and sustainable economy in our region, citizen groups saw this MOU as a small, though significant, step in the Obama Administration taking much needed federal-level action to address the intersecting health, environmental, political and economic challenges our region continues to face.

The purposes of the grassroots report are to: 1) evaluate what progress has been made in implementing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of 2009 with regard to the interagency action plan on Appalachian Surface Coal Mining, 2) to discuss serious lapses in regulation, enforcement, and oversight of mountaintop removal mining operations, 3) to begin to foster a collaborative dialogue around solutions and mitigation for adverse impacts caused by mountaintop removal mining operations—especially with regard to four key Obama Administration decisions in 2015, and 4) to invite this Administration to reopen a dialogue regarding what is next for the future of the Appalachian economy.

The four key Obama Administration decisions recommended in the report include: 1) a Selenium Standard to ensure that citizens maintain the ability to test for selenium pollution in their own water, 2) a strong Conductivity Rule based on scientific research US EPA has already conducted because we, and our federal agencies, know that high conductivity can be a key measure of dangerous water, 3) a Stream Protection Rule that preserves a strong stream buffer zone requirement so that mining waste can no longer be dumped into our streams, and D) a strong Minefill Rule to address the currently unregulated dumping of coal burning waste into abandoned mine sites.

This administration has an opportunity to follow through on its 2009 plan. If this administration does not find the political courage to create and enforce effective regulations to protect our communities and our environment, widespread pollution will remain unaddressed, hindering efforts aimed at improving the region's economic outlook and further impairing our region's ability to build a viable, diverse economy and respond to the compounding impacts of the coal industry's acute legacy costs and climate change.

Much work is needed to complete the MOU process, to ensure effective regulatory enforcement in our region, to create sound rule-makings, to strengthen citizen engagement and to invest in a bright future for Central Appalachia. We are a coalition of organizations that represent thousands of citizens who are ready to work. This report is an invitation for the Obama Administration to do the same.