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Speakers for Safer Coal Mining Practices to Visit IWU

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Speakers for Safer Coal Mining Practices to Visit IWU

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The Illinois Wesleyan University Environmental Studies Department will host a presentation, “Appalachian Treasures: Helping Our Neighbors in Appalachia End Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining,” on Tuesday, Sept. 26, at 7 p.m. in the Center for Natural Science, 201 Beecher St., in Bloomington in room C102.

The event, which is free and open to the public, is part of a campaign to increase education about mountaintop removal (MTR) coal mining. Representatives of Appalachian Voices, an organization committed to building public support for environmental protection in the Appalachian region, will talk about MTR and the possibilities for safer mining practices. The presentation will culminate with an audio-visual presentation featuring photos of Appalachia and mining sites, voice recordings from coalfield residents and traditional Appalachian music.

A relatively new type of strip mining that began in the 1970s, MTR accesses coal seams by blasting up to 1000 feet of a mountaintop with dynamite. The debris created by this procedure affects the surrounding environment, destroying forests and often covering streams. Mining companies favor the procedure because it recovers nearly all available coal and requires far less human labor than other forms of mining.

According to Appalachian Voices, MTR has already destroyed at least one million acres of forested mountains in the Appalachian coalfields of West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee. Appalachian Voices emphasizes the danger to humans as well as the environment: the landslides and flooding that result from the dynamite blasts have damaged and destroyed many homes, while the associated debris contaminates water and air supplies.

Since the 1990s, Appalachian Voices has provided funding, training and other resources to the grassroots advocates who live and work in the coalfields, empowering them to speak out against MTR. Other related Appalachian Voices projects include reducing air pollution and restoring forests in the region.

For more information, contact Given Harper, professor and chair of biology and professor of environmental studies, at gharper@iwu.edu.

