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Gauley River named one of America's Most Endangered Rivers for 2010

Mountaintop removal mining threatens river, communities

Washington, D.C. — Mountaintop removal coal mining could spell the end to the clean water, fish and wildlife and world-famous recreation on the Gauley River, unless decision makers take immediate action. This threat landed the Gauley in the number three spot in *America's Most Endangered Rivers: 2010 edition*, produced by American Rivers.

“Unless the EPA and Army Corps act now to end the devastating practice of mountaintop removal mining, the Gauley River and its communities will suffer irreparable damage,” said Rebecca Wodder, president of American Rivers.

American Rivers and its partners called on the Environmental Protection Agency to issue critical new water quality safeguards and to ultimately prohibit further destruction of Appalachian rivers from mountaintop removal mining.

“The Army Corps of Engineers must start to follow the science showing the devastating impacts throughout central Appalachia and put an end to mountaintop removal. Business as usual is destroying one of the most biologically diverse and culturally rich areas in the world,” said Margaret Janes, Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment.

“Headwater streams that feed the lower reaches of the Gauley are no less healthy and thriving and worthy of protection than those that rise further upstream in our beloved Monongahela National Forest,” said Cindy Rank with the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. “If we continue to emaciate streams like Twenty Mile, Peters Creek and Muddely the whole Gauley basin is in peril.”

“We can act now to protect the Gauley by stopping mountaintop removal,” said Vivian Stockman, with the Huntington, W.Va.-based Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition. “Not only will ending mountaintop removal protect the revenue generated by recreation and tourism around the Gauley, we will protect human health, too. Studies show that mountaintop removal mining is polluting streams to the point that people's health is compromised.”

Mountaintop removal mining is devastating not only to the environment and clean water, but to the communities and natural heritage of Appalachia. The practice allows coal companies to blast off mountaintops, extract thin seams of coal, and dump millions and millions of tons of former mountains in stream valleys. Mountaintop removal mining has buried nearly 2,000 miles of Appalachian streams, contaminated drinking water, impaired water quality for river recreation, increased water treatment costs for industry, displaced some communities and increased susceptibility to flooding for others. Despite escalating environmental and community costs, more mountaintop removal mining projects have been proposed to access the remaining coal seams in Appalachia.

In the Gauley River watershed, some of the greatest devastation by mountaintop removal mining occurs in the Twentymile and Peters Creek watersheds. Additional permitted activity in this area could harm the National Recreation Area and the health of the Kanawha River, which delivers clean water to Charleston and Huntington and supports industry. The principles of the Clean Water Act must be upheld by federal agencies and Congress to assure the integrity of these headwater streams and valleys is maintained.

About America's Most Endangered Rivers

Each year, American Rivers reviews nominations for the *America's Most Endangered Rivers*[™] report from river groups and concerned citizens across the country. Rivers are selected based upon the following criteria:

- A major decision (that the public can help influence) in the coming year on the proposed action
- The significance of the threat to human and natural communities
- The degree to which the proposed action would exacerbate or alleviate stresses caused by climate change

The report is a call to action and emphasizes solutions for the rivers and their communities. By shining the spotlight on key decisions that will impact the rivers, and by providing clear actions the public can take on their behalf, the report is a powerful tool for saving these important rivers.

Interviews

American Rivers Senior Vice President for Conservation Andrew Fahlund and Liz Garland, Associate Director, Clean Water Program in Pennsylvania are available for interviews, both pre and post embargo. Please contact Amy Kober, 206-898-3864 for booking.

Reporters wishing to direct readers to the report online may use the following link:
www.AmericanRivers.org/EndangeredRivers



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