



ADVANCING APPALACHIA

YOUR IMPACT AT WORK



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In memory of David Hairston, beloved board member and community activist

Read this document online at appvoices.org/impact-report

“The settlement with A&G represents a huge win for the communities that have been impacted by these mines for decades. We will continue to watchdog mine cleanup on the three sites and hold A&G accountable to their promises and legal obligations.”

— Erin Savage
Senior Program Manager
Appalachian Voices



Erin Savage surveys the Looney Ridge mine in 2016. Remediation efforts at Looney Ridge have progressed slowly.

HOLDING COAL COMPANIES ACCOUNTABLE

In 2022, Appalachian Voices and our partners — after years of data collection and monitoring — sent a letter to A&G Coal Corporation informing them of our intention to sue. After years of neglect, 3,300 acres of mines controlled by A&G were left unreclaimed, presenting hazards to local

communities in Southwest Virginia while the company stood in violation of its legal obligations to clean up their mine sites. Thanks to a settlement negotiated with the company, A&G Coal must complete the reclamation of these mine sites by the end of 2025.



A Solar Accelerator apprenticeship program instructor teaches apprentices in Wise County, Virginia.

“Creating these types of employment opportunities is critical to our ability to continue to generate sustainable economic activity focused on clean energy solutions.”

— Adam Wells
Regional Director of Community and
Economic Development
Appalachian Voices

CLEAN ENERGY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The Appalachian Solar Finance Fund was established by Appalachian Voices in 2021 with a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission. The fund provides catalytic grants, financing, and technical assistance to small businesses and organizations seeking to complete solar projects. The response has been overwhelming, and just the grants awarded so far will bring over six megawatts of solar power online. These projects require local skilled labor, and we partnered with area community colleges to create a solar installation apprenticeship program.

Already, there are eight graduates from the apprenticeship actively installing solar in Southwest Virginia. With federal and philanthropic support, we continue to grow the fund — currently capitalized at \$4 million — which continues to make more solar projects possible. Forty-one solar construction projects have been completed in 38 different communities, with hundreds more anticipated in the region thanks to the continued impact and growing momentum of the fund.

APPALACHIA UNDER THREAT: MOUNTAIN VALLEY PIPELINE

It took an unprecedented act of Congress bypassing bedrock environmental laws for the Mountain Valley Pipeline to restart its dangerous path forward after years of revoked permits, stop-work orders, and fines for hundreds of violations of laws and permit conditions. The Mountain Valley Pipeline's developers are intent on using pipes that have spent years sitting on potential construction sites exposed to sunlight and weather conditions that degrade their safety coatings without sufficient protections. Thanks to our advocacy and organizing, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration ordered the project's developers to undertake extensive safety inspections and remediations along the 300-mile pipeline route.

Meanwhile, the MVP Southgate extension, which was not fast-tracked by Congress, lacks critical permits to move forward. We will continue to fight the proposed Southgate extension. Along the pipeline route, we will work to ensure public safety and environmental regulations are enforced. We will not back down from protecting Appalachians from these unnecessary projects, and we will support citizen monitors on the front lines of this fight.

“The developer’s history of violations and failure to maintain the integrity of construction materials is evidence of their disregard for the ecology and communities along the pipeline route.”

— Jessica Sims
Virginia Field Coordinator
Appalachian Voices



Degraded pipe sits exposed to elements in the proposed construction path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline.



“Instead of upholding their commitments to the people of Tennessee and the United States, TVA takes advantage of its lack of regulation to exert unjust control over these processes.”

— Brianna Knisley
*Director of Public Power Campaigns
Appalachian Voices*

Family farms, protected forests, and local habitats are under threat from TVA's proposed gas pipelines.

STANDING WITH TENNESSEANS TO FIGHT PIPELINES

While Tennessee Valley Authority executives assure the public they are committed to reaching carbon neutrality, they are simultaneously attempting to construct three methane gas pipelines through different parts of Tennessee. TVA's objective is to convert former coal-burning power plants into natural gas plants, claiming this is good for the environment. Despite federal goals to switch to a clean electricity sector by 2035, TVA has the largest planned gas plant buildout of any utility in the country.

Pipeline companies have started trying to invoke eminent domain on landowners for easement rights. Appalachian Voices has been working with communities since these ill-conceived plans were uncovered. We have organized and submitted thousands of public comments in opposition to the proposed pipelines, provided resources to frontline communities facing these dangerous projects, and are engaging at every stage of the regulatory and permitting process, including challenging TVA's faulty environmental review for one of the proposed plants in court.

LEVERAGING FEDERAL VICTORIES: DEPLOYING WINS IN APPALACHIA



*Chelsea Barnes,
Appalachian Voices
Director of Government
Affairs and Strategy*

Chelsea Barnes is the Director of Government Affairs and Strategy for Appalachian Voices.

What are some ways federal funds will benefit Appalachian communities directly?

The bipartisan infrastructure law unlocked over \$8 billion to clean up abandoned mines in Appalachia. We were proud to ensure those funds were included in the bill. The Inflation Reduction Act created and expanded tax credits that will provide huge savings to communities in Appalachia that invest in clean energy like solar — and our advocacy led to major additional tax incentives

to bring clean energy to historically energy-producing communities. These two pieces of legislation also provide a big boost to the impact of the Appalachian Solar Finance Fund, which provides catalytic support to organizations and businesses that want to invest in solar. The fund has already proven to be a job creator, bringing over six megawatts of solar power onto the grid so far.

What is Appalachian Voices doing to ensure federal funds are going to Appalachian communities that need them the most?

We are working hard to make sure Appalachian communities that need these funds are able to access them. We're pushing Congress to provide support for communities that have few resources to devote to applying for and navigating federal grants to ensure this funding reaches those who need it most. We're engaging with agencies to make the grant process easier to navigate, and we're helping communities through the grant process. We will continue to work hard and connect with lawmakers, agencies, local officials and community leaders to unlock the vast resources available to Appalachia.

Outside of funding, what other ways do you help Appalachian communities in the region's transition away from the coal industry?

Our New Economy Program is deeply invested in the Southwest Virginia coalfield communities. We partner closely with several groups to support the transition away from the coal industry. Additionally, we work with communities to help them to become more resilient to climate change and the extreme weather events whose impacts are worsened by the environmental destruction caused by decades of mountaintop removal and strip mining in the region.

How have you engaged with Congress and the administration to bring opportunity and resources to the region?

Appalachian Voices has worked very hard to build relationships within the federal government so that when we see folks in our communities struggling to navigate the complicated federal funding process, we can serve as a bridge to the agencies administering the funding. We keep the impacts of the coal industry in Appalachia front and center for lawmakers. This has resulted in significant wins like the expansion and permanent funding of black lung benefits for miners and their families and the creation of incentives for clean energy. Finally, we work with legislators to make sure they understand the needs of Appalachian communities, which has resulted in several congressional visits to the region.

What are Appalachian Voices' federal engagement priorities in the coming year?

We won historic investments in Appalachia through the bipartisan infrastructure law and Inflation Reduction Act, and we are going to do everything we can to protect those investments. We will continue to advocate for families suffering from black lung disease, ensuring they can easily access benefits owed to them. We are engaging with agencies and legislators on the dangers of gas pipelines. We will also continue to engage lawmakers to address the scale of mine reclamation needed nationally and hold coal companies accountable.



Appalachian Voices is rated a four-star charity by Charity Navigator. We put every dollar you invest to good use by keeping our administrative and fundraising costs low in order to maximize our impact.



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