

## **Public Comments from the EIS Scoping Process Concerning Groundwater**

As a result of the public outreach efforts of the EIS scoping process, 641 different people provided comments at the public meetings and 95 comment letters were received.

Comments described economic and social impact concerns; policy and regulatory review issues; EIS process questions; and a broad range of environmental impacts associated with mountaintop mining/valley fill operations. The twelve comments that pertained to impacts on groundwater are presented below.

*“Flattening a mountaintop and filling a valley will cause unknown changes to the hydrologic cycle. We don’t know if valley fills cause increased flooding or increased drought. No one knows if a filled valley will recharge groundwater at the same rate than if its left with its original topography and plant cover.”*

*“Entire aquifers have disappeared with the heavy mechanization of the coal industry. Our region once had wonderful and productive artesian wells, absolutely everywhere throughout the region.”*

*“There has been no scientific study done addressing how this type of work effects the health of the aquifer. By eliminating these ephemeral and perennial streams, and their associated wetlands, there must be direct effects on the seasonal recharging of the aquifer.”*

*“We were informed by a DEP geologist that our well water had a very high sodium content. The origin of the sodium was traced up to the mouth of Beech Fork which directly feeds from the coal prep plant and the mountaintop mine operation.... We would like to see further studies done to help determine the cause of this problem and hopefully keep it from happening in the future.”*

*“From what I have seen in my 28 years of mining experience, the valley fills created due to surface mining makes the downstream more productive for aquatic life because the valley fills act as water reservoirs and provides a reliable stream of water downstream - without valley fill the stream might dry up in extremely dry weather.”*

*“Blasting methods utilized at MTR sites include the use of large amounts of ammonium nitrate and diesel fuel. There is scant data on the effects of these chemicals on springs, wells, or other water resources.”*

*“The drinking water hazard due to nitrates from the use of ammonium nitrate blasting should be studied and appropriate recommendations considered in the study report.”*

*“Please pay particular attention to the fact that much of southern WV is already underlain by extensive deep mines, which may lead to a greater risk of blasting damage to groundwater flow and quality, over a larger region.”*

*“Research is needed into the effects of MTR blasting on groundwater hydrology and quality...This problem is only exasperated by the fact that many of the MTR areas are underlain with extensive old mine works. In addition, this same region is peppered with thousands of active natural gas wells. Does MTR blasting have any negative effects on natural gas wells?”*

*“The Fish and Wildlife (Service) estimates that 31% of the Mud River headwaters are currently filled! How much is too much, what are the cumulative effects on water quality, aquifer recharge, and surface water flow.”*

*“Does hazardous waste & petroleum product storage and/or spills effect ground or surface water?”*

*“The EIS should determine to what extent hazardous materials, tank farms, dumps, etc., may pollute ground or surface water.”*