



AppalachianVoices

2019-2020 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

FIGHTING FRACKED-GAS PIPELINES - P. 2

**Advancing
environmental justice**
in the face of the
Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Challenging
the Mountain Valley Pipeline
with communities
and in federal court

Refuting
the case for
MVP Southgate

ADVANCING EQUITABLE CLEAN ENERGY - P. 3

Defeating
Duke Energy's
ratepayer ripoff
in North Carolina

Blocking
Dominion Energy
from charging Virginians for
unnecessary
fossil fuel investments

Building
a movement for a
democratic
Tennessee Valley Authority

BUILDING A NEW APPALACHIAN ECONOMY - P. 4

Changing
state energy laws
to unlock
solar opportunity

Securing funding
for innovative mine reclamation,
including Southwest Virginia's
first large solar farm

Aiding
Central Appalachia's first
"SolSmart" communities

ADDRESSING COAL'S TOXIC LEGACY - P. 5

Achieving
complete coal ash cleanup
in North Carolina

Extending
black lung benefits
amid a resurgence
in Central Appalachia

Prioritizing
workers and
the environment
as coal declines

A YEAR OF MAJOR PROGRESS, AND THE WORK AHEAD

June 2020

Reflecting on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for your role in the unprecedented impact that you, Appalachian Voices' friends and supporters, have helped us achieve.

We began 2019 with an ambitious new strategic plan that reflects the fundamental importance of environmental and economic justice in our region's transition to clean energy and an ecologically sound economy. In developing this vision for our work, we drew on our decades of experience defending Appalachia from the harms of an exploitative energy system and on our abiding belief that a far more just and vibrant future is attainable.

As one hugely consequential decade came to a close, we also understood that the decade fast approaching was sure to be no less historic — with rapid technological change remaking our energy landscape, a pivotal presidential election this year, and time running out to avert the worst impacts of climate change. On all of our minds as we share this report with you is the national outpouring of grief and outrage over the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, among other unconscionable instances of racist violence, and over the continual injustices of systemic racism.

The reverberating demands for racial justice and a pandemic disproportionately harming communities of color further expose the stark inequities that pervade our society, including those embedded in the ways we produce, consume, and pay for energy. From the burden that rising energy costs place on rural and low-income families — and the lack of access to local clean energy solutions that would alleviate that burden — to the health risks of living close to coal mines, power plants, or other polluting facilities, the problems we work to address were deep even before they became entangled with the human cost of this crisis.

This decade must be one of renewal, a recovery designed for shared prosperity and racial equity. While fossil fuel interests and their allies in elected office would be content to continue in their old ways, we plan to seize this moment to change course by holding polluters accountable, preventing new investments in dirty energy, and promoting local energy and economic solutions where they are most needed.

Standing together in the unforgiving light of a pandemic we are able to see enduring problems anew. Our only choice is to forge ahead and build the better future we know is possible.



Tom

Tom Cormons
Executive Director



Kate

Kate Boyle
Deputy Executive Director

On page 6, learn how Appalachian Voices is taking action in response to the coronavirus pandemic:

- **Opposing coal industry bailouts on the backs of workers**
- **Reinforcing the need for a just economic transition**
- **Stopping utility shutoffs, spotlighting energy burden**



“From the earliest days, Appalachian Voices came to Buckingham to help us protect the Union Hill community from some of the most hazardous fracked-gas infrastructure planned for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.” — Lakshmi Fjord, Friends of Buckingham | Charlottesville, Va.

Fighting Fracked-gas Pipelines

Appalachian Voices is deploying grassroots power, policy advocacy, and legal challenges to prevent investments in dirty energy.

Lacking key permits, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline remains stalled. **Appalachian Voices continues to fight this multi-billion-dollar boondoggle alongside local allies and our legal partners.** In early 2020, judges rejected a permit for the pipeline compressor station planned for the historic black community of Union Hill, Va., writing that “environmental justice is not merely a box to be checked.” Support for Union Hill highlighted the need for laws that prioritize environmental justice. **We worked with allies to secure passage of the Virginia Environmental Justice Act, which creates a legal framework to guarantee environmental justice shapes policy outcomes.**

The Mountain Valley Pipeline also faced a series of roadblocks last year, as citizen enforcement exposed a flood of violations and courts rejected unlawful permits. **When we challenged the validity of a permit required under the Endangered Species Act, federal agencies restarted their analysis of the pipeline’s threats to imperiled Appalachian species. In response to our coalition’s request, a federal court put the permit on hold, leading to a shutdown of construction along the entire route as long as the issue remains unresolved.**

We took our fight to MVP Southgate, a proposed extension of the Mountain Valley Pipeline into North Carolina, engaging community members in the earliest stages of the permitting process. After we scrutinized the project’s draft environmental impact statement, regulators directed MVP Southgate to address water quality concerns raised in our comments. An independent analysis we contracted on the project concluded developers have not provided “convincing evidence of a need for MVP Southgate,” but rather ignored the availability of lower-cost alternatives to new pipeline infrastructure.



“This was a David versus Goliath scenario. We had everything to lose and Duke Energy had everything to gain. By God’s grace, we were able to find a shiny stone called Energy Justice NC and stave off this attempt to harm North Carolinians.” – Bobby Jones, Down East Coal Ash Coalition | Goldsboro, N.C.


As we reduce our region’s dependence on fossil fuels, we must create an energy system that makes clean energy accessible and affordable for all.

Advancing Equitable Clean Energy

We launched the Energy Justice NC coalition in early 2019 with other environmental and social justice groups to build the community power necessary to defeat Duke Energy’s agenda. **Appalachian Voices mobilized our base to oppose legislation that would have sharply increased energy costs and rigged the regulatory process in Duke’s favor for years to come.** As lawmakers debated the bill, we analyzed years of the monopoly utility’s political contributions and exposed how it targeted campaign donations to build support for its interests. Under intense public pressure and with no path forward, Duke’s allies withdrew the bill in October.

At a critical moment, Appalachian Voices and our allies are revolutionizing the politics of energy in Virginia. **We co-founded the Virginia Energy Reform Coalition to promote electric utility accountability and policies that fairly value resources like solar and energy efficiency.** With this partnership, we exposed the insidious power Dominion Energy wields over our democracy, paving the way to **breakthroughs during the 2020 General Assembly session that prohibit utilities from charging ratepayers for spending on fossil fuels when cleaner energy alternatives are more cost-effective and that begin to restore regulators’ oversight authority after years of rollbacks.**

By bringing Tennesseans together, we began to form a new vision for public power and ensure the Tennessee Valley Authority heeds calls for cleaner energy. We also supported community allies demanding a voice in utility decisions that affect their livelihoods and local economies. Along with residents near TVA’s Bull Run power plant, we promoted plans for the facility’s closure that reflect local priorities, including the safe removal of coal ash. **And with member-owners of Powell Valley Electric Cooperative, we campaigned for board meetings to be opened to the public, among other accountability reforms.**



“The SolSmart program allowed the Town of St. Paul to be proactive in planning for the future energy demands of our residents and businesses. Appalachian Voices was a great partner to work with through this process. This was a truly regional approach, and one that will have positive long-lasting ecological and economic impacts on Southwest Virginia.”
— Josh Sawyers, Town Council Member | St. Paul, Va.

Building a New Appalachian Economy

We are directing local, state, and federal efforts toward ecologically sound development and bringing beneficial projects to fruition.

We spurred solar opportunity and demand in Southwest Virginia through new laws that establish programs for non-utility-owned projects and help homeowners and businesses cost-effectively go solar. Through convening the Solar Workgroup of Southwest Virginia, Appalachian Voices has underscored the importance of including Virginia’s coal-bearing counties in clean energy policy decisions. **The reforms we achieved remove policy barriers erected by utility monopolies that have held back clean energy’s potential to generate local wealth and hindered the Solar Workgroup’s efforts to promote solar projects on schools, businesses, and nonprofits.**

Working with Virginia-based Sun Tribe Solar, **Appalachian Voices helped secure a \$500,000 federal grant for the first large solar project in Southwest Virginia on a former surface coal mine. We’ve now secured more than \$2 million in state and federal funding for specific coal-impacted land revitalization projects.** As we build support in Congress for the RECLAIM Act to direct an additional \$1 billion to the restoration of post-mined land over the next five years, we are assisting a growing network of stakeholders throughout Appalachia to make certain that federal and state programs support a truly just transition.

We motivated localities in Southwest Virginia to support solar growth by streamlining zoning and permitting processes and developing resources for their communities. **Last summer, these eight city and county governments became the first in the Central Appalachian region to be designated as “SolSmart” by the U.S. Department of Energy.** Using funding from the GO Virginia economic development initiative, we are analyzing regional markets and sharing best practices with Southwest Virginia’s SolSmart communities to maximize the local benefits of investments in large solar projects.



“It’s been a long fight but we got to where we are today thanks to Appalachian Voices and countless others who fought alongside us to demand a true coal ash cleanup plan for all of North Carolina.”

— David Hairston, community leader and Appalachian Voices’ board member | Walnut Cove, N.C.

We must also end attempts to prop up coal and instead hold fossil fuel companies accountable for the damage done to communities and the environment.

Addressing Coal’s Toxic Legacy

Appalachian Voices and our allies achieved a milestone in our decade-long fight to force Duke Energy to clean up millions of tons of coal ash waste stored in unsafe pits near North Carolina’s waterways. After successfully defending an April 2019 order by the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality that required Duke Energy to move its remaining coal ash away from waterways to lined landfills, **our coalition joined the state agency in a settlement that mandates Duke to excavate nearly 80 million tons of coal ash at sites across the state — the largest coal ash cleanup effort in the nation.**

We partnered with Black Lung Association chapters to educate policymakers about the resurgence of the disease in Appalachia and get victims the benefits they deserve. After Congress allowed the tax on coal that supports the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund to lapse in early 2019, **we helped bring 150 coal miners and family members to Washington, D.C., where they called on congressional leaders to reinstate the tax.** The budget Congress passed in the final days of 2019 extended the tax by one year, **giving tens of thousands of miners and their families urgent but limited relief as we build support for a long-term extension.**

We raised the alarm about rampant violations at mines operated by the bankrupt company Blackjewel and reclamation failures of companies owned by the family of West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice. In doing so, we demonstrated the inadequacy of state bond pools intended to cover the cost of mine reclamation when companies fail. **We motivated seven Southwest Virginia localities to pass resolutions calling on Congress to reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Land Fund** to address the multi-billion-dollar backlog in cleanup costs for old mines that dot our region.

RESPONDING TO THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

The coronavirus pandemic has demanded our vigilance and unfaltering commitment to the communities we serve. Here are a few ways we're responding.

Opposing coal industry bailouts on the backs of workers

We urged Congress to reject the coal lobby's attempts to exploit federal assistance to American families and businesses. In March, we alerted the media to the National Mining Association's (NMA) effort to slash the tax rate coal companies pay into the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund and cut fees that go toward the Abandoned Mine Land Fund. Our outreach led to coverage by the Associated Press, The Washington Post, Politico, and other outlets. In the following days, members of the House Natural Resources Committee called on congressional leaders to "reject the NMA's wish-list and focus federal resources on the workers, families, and communities that are being hardest hit."



Photo: Earl Dotter



Reinforcing the need for a just economic transition

As Congress began exploring options for relief and recovery, we engaged lawmakers about the immediate and long-term needs of coal-impacted regions. We collaborated with the Just Transition Fund and other leading transition advocates on a letter to Congress, raising priorities such as funding for rural health care services including black lung clinics and for economic development agencies like the Appalachian Regional Commission. We continue to urge Congress to invest in coal-impacted areas so they can withstand this crisis and build economies that are no longer subject to the boom-bust cycles of extractive industries.

Stopping utility shutoffs, spotlighting energy burden

Beginning in March, we urged utilities, state leaders, and regulators to prohibit power shutoffs and protect the many families that already struggle to afford their energy bills. A week after our letter to North Carolina officials, Gov. Roy Cooper banned shutoffs for 60 days. We motivated the governor in May to extend the moratorium as the crisis continued. We also called on the Tennessee Valley Public Power Association to improve upon the patchwork response of local utilities and ensure all customers get the same level of relief. As Virginia's moratorium was set to expire in June, we successfully petitioned regulators to extend and strengthen it. Throughout our efforts, we've spotlighted the need for lasting solutions to the burden that unjust energy policies created long before the pandemic.

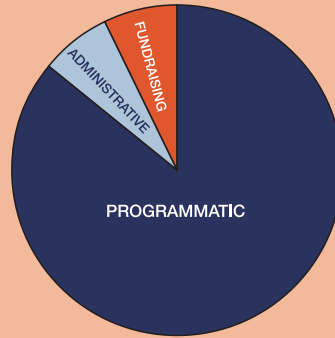


Photo: Tommy Embers

YOUR 2019 IMPACT

2019 Expenses

Programmatic:	\$2,251,717	→	86.0%
Fundraising:	\$192,571	→	7.4%
Administrative:	\$172,728	→	6.6%
Total:	\$2,617,016		



Total Raised: \$2,551,036¹

55%



Major donors²:
\$1,411,436

41%



Grants:
\$1,045,259

3%



Memberships:
\$67,093

1%



**In-kind &
Other Donations:**
\$27,248

2019 Total Donors:

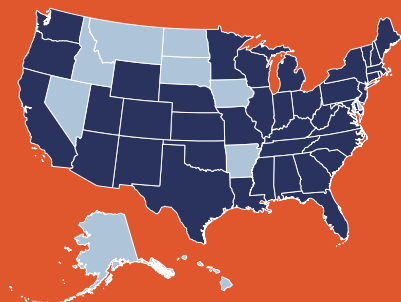
1,117

Number of Volunteers:

418

Number of Mountain Protectors³:

75



Donors in **40** States

Your contributions power our work and make our progress possible. Thank you for standing with us.

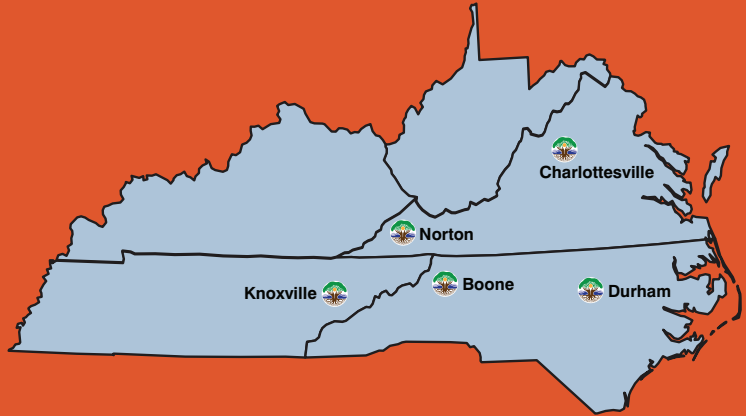
AppVoices.org/donate

¹Does not include revenue of \$43,236 from other sources

²Donors contributing \$250 or more

³Donors who contribute monthly

Founded in 1997, Appalachian Voices brings people together to protect the land, air, and water of Central and Southern Appalachia and advance a just transition to a generative and equitable clean energy economy.



Your support has helped Appalachian Voices become a powerful force for change. We now have a staff of more than 30 professionals representing centuries of combined experience in five offices across three states.



Appalachian Voices Staff

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 Kate Boyle, *Deputy Executive Director*
 Matt Wasson, *Director of Programs*

Advancement Team

Leigh Kirchner
 Gaye LaCasce
 Brian Sewell
 Maggie Stokes

Operations Team

Shay Boyd
 Jeff Deal
 Meredith Shelton
 Maya Viknius

Communications Team

Jimmy Davidson
 Jamie Goodman
 Cat McCue
 Molly Moore
 Kevin Ridder

Central Appalachian Program Staff

Chelsea Barnes
 Austin Counts
 Willie Dodson
 Matt Hepler
 Thom Kay
 Erin Savage
 Adam Wells

North Carolina Program Staff

Amy Adams

Ridge Graham
 Josh McClenney
 Rory McIlmoil

Tennessee Program Staff

Brianna Knisley
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Virginia Program Staff

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Tracey Wright — Appalachian Voices Board Member

"I am forever grateful to the friend of mine who nominated me for a position on Appalachian Voices' Board of Directors. Through my service on the board, I've witnessed the incredible work this organization does on a daily basis, how they tailor their tactics for specific areas of the region they serve, how they build coalitions and partnerships, and how they help raise the voices of those whose voices have gone unheard."

Austin Counts — AmeriCorps VISTA (2018-2020)

"I wanted to make a difference for my home in the coalfields of Southwest Virginia. That's how I found myself gravitating toward Appalachian Voices. My time as Appalachian Voices' Southwest Virginia Solar VISTA has allowed me to talk about bringing solar energy to the coalfields with students, teachers, local officials, residents, and at conferences across the state. Two years later, I don't think my time as a VISTA could have been better used, and now I get to continue that work as Appalachian Voices' New Economy Field Coordinator."



Bill Kornrich — Volunteer, Hancock County, Tenn.

"Appalachian Voices has provided valuable resources and staff time in organizational development for our group of rural electric cooperative member-owners, helping us to access funds for our educational campaigns and putting us in contact with other grassroots organizations in the Southeast working to increase transparency and promote social justice in their electric cooperatives."



AppalachianVoices

AppalachianVoices.org

BOONE

589 West King Street
Boone, NC 28607
828.262.1500

CHARLOTTESVILLE

812 East High Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902
434.293.6373

DURHAM

2302 Chapel Hill Road
Durham, NC 27707
919.748.3141

KNOXVILLE

2507 Mineral Springs
Ave. Suite D
Knoxville, TN 37917
865.291.0083 ext. 700

NORTON

816 Park Avenue NW
Norton, VA 24273
276.679.1691

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