

CONTROLLING ACCESS TO THE PRESS

SUNRISE COAL'S LATEST DECEPTION

Citizens seeking to protect their water resources from being wasted by coal mining activities learned that Sunrise has tried to prevent our elected officials from talking to the local press, thereby limiting citizens' access to public information. This attempt was revealed in documents provided in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Village of Homer.

Documents released by the Village of Homer on May 21 expose an email dated April 13, 2012 from Suzanne Jaworowski, Director of Communications for Sunrise Coal directed to Mayor David Lucas, Village of Homer. In that email Jaworowski states:

“If you receive any inquiry from the press please direct them to me. It's important that we not discuss any aspect of the project in public before our permit is secure. I'm sure you understand the challenges it can bring up. I'll call you later and we can discuss a plan for dealing with the press.”

Coal mining corporations often attempt to whitewash the impacts of mining and processing coal on human health, drinking water, clean air and communities – the most important resources cherished by residents. Mining and washing coal is a dirty business that releases harmful salts, and heavy metals such as arsenic, lead, selenium and mercury which ultimately foul local wells and village water supplies.

Sunrise Coal, as it leased coal rights, systematically avoided informing landowners about the impacts from mining on the surface interests of residents. “It became clear in late 2009 when leasing began, that Sunrise Coal wanted to hide the reality of mining from residents. Feedback from leasing interviews documented the pattern. Transparency was missing” states Charles Goodall, local farmer and member of Stand Up To Coal.

During that period of leasing, Sunrise publicly issued a steady stream of reassurances apparently meant to pacify a relatively uniformed public. Important among these assertions is that 300 jobs will be created. “That is far different that saying that 300 local people will be hired. These assertions can best be characterized as deceptive,” continued Goodall, who also noted that none of Sunrise's promises are legally enforceable.

Now that a substantial acreage of coal has been leased and Sunrise states that it wants to open a mine, the reality of mining and processing coal is upon residents. Ironically the formerly silent Sunrise has turned aggressive as it begins to propose surface facilities and coal waste disposal pits that would degrade the quality of life in the area. “It is safe to assume that residents and farmers who leased coal rights did not intend to give their water away, did not intend to permit their water to be contaminated with coal slurry, did not realize that their communities would suffer, and did not want to subject their rich

valuable farmland to subsidence. With full transparency they might not have leased.”
said Sue Smith of rural Homer.

“Now surface property values are in jeopardy and residents are essentially held hostage in their homeland. This should not happen in America in 2012,” observed Goodall.”