For twenty five years giant steamshovels have been clawing their way across the beautiful hills of Southern Ohio, unearthing shallow veins of coal and leaving a scene of utter devastation. The strip mines, which are dug instead of deep mines when the coal is close to the surface, bring about in their wake a stark and almost worthless wasteland of steep soil banks whose overturned earth is so acidic weeds can barely grow on it. Rivers and streams become red with sulphuric acid pollutions. Public health hazards are created by uncontrolled clouds of coal dust and carbon monoxide fumes. Property damage caused by blasting goes uncompensated. Many of the mining interests seem to be in almost total disregard of the local laws, property rights, safety, and health of the nearby residents.

Although a few of the coal companies attempt to renew and reclaim the land they have strip mined, the ones who have made so much damage seem to be able to continue their activities without much opposition. Since the coal companies bring in most of the income in many of these counties, most public officials seem hesitant to prosecute or even confront them. Residents of the area who depend directly or indirectly upon the mines also seem hesitant to complain about the coal companies actions. Conservationists and outraged people all over the world form the only real opposition to the coal miners.

Montage will talk to these conservationists, as well as local citizens, elected officials, and mine representatives. The film will also show the damaged, as well as the reclaimed areas of Southern Ohio.

Joe Boynton will produce this examination of the practical and moral implication of strip mining. Linda Sugarman is associate producer and Dennis Goulden is unit manager and cinematographer.

Linda Sugarman

Distribution

Neal Van Ellis  John Nance  Bill Leeds
Gene Bohi  Les Biebl  Dennis Goulden
Joe Varholy  Bob Miller  Dick Mrzenga
Jim Lyle  Comm/Serv  Gary Robinson
Jack Dorr  Virginia Foxworth  Howard Schwartz
Dick Trembath  Phil Cope  Jon Boynton
Ilze Kalnins  Cliff Ford  Joel Albert