

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION  
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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**Notes:** The Web site mentioned, one of many out there (plug "mountaintop removal" into a search engine then stand back), is a student project of the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications. Sources included articles by Erik Reece, University of Kentucky, in *Orion* magazine, <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/166/>; and by David W. Orr, Oberlin College, Ohio, in *American Scientist*, [http://www.americanscientist.org/template/BookReviewTypeDetail/assetid54057;jsessionid=-baacMGN5\\_Vwzql](http://www.americanscientist.org/template/BookReviewTypeDetail/assetid54057;jsessionid=-baacMGN5_Vwzql). All about Aldo Leopold: <http://www.aldoleopold.org/>. The football-field figure is based on American, not Canadian, football. (Alouettes! Woo! Woo! Qui!)

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**Q. Dear Twig: Is "mountaintop removal" what it sounds like it is?**

A.: Yes. It's done by certain mining companies in the **Appalachian Mountains**. The companies do it to get at **coal**. They dig out the coal. They truck it off to power plants to burn to make **electricity**.

The company starts by cutting down all the **trees** on top of the mountain. Then it blows up the **rocks** and the **soil**. Then it bulldozes this away.

After that: No more mountaintop. You can say that, yes, it's been "removed." See the result at Web sites like this one: <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/spring07/Bartlett/index.html>.

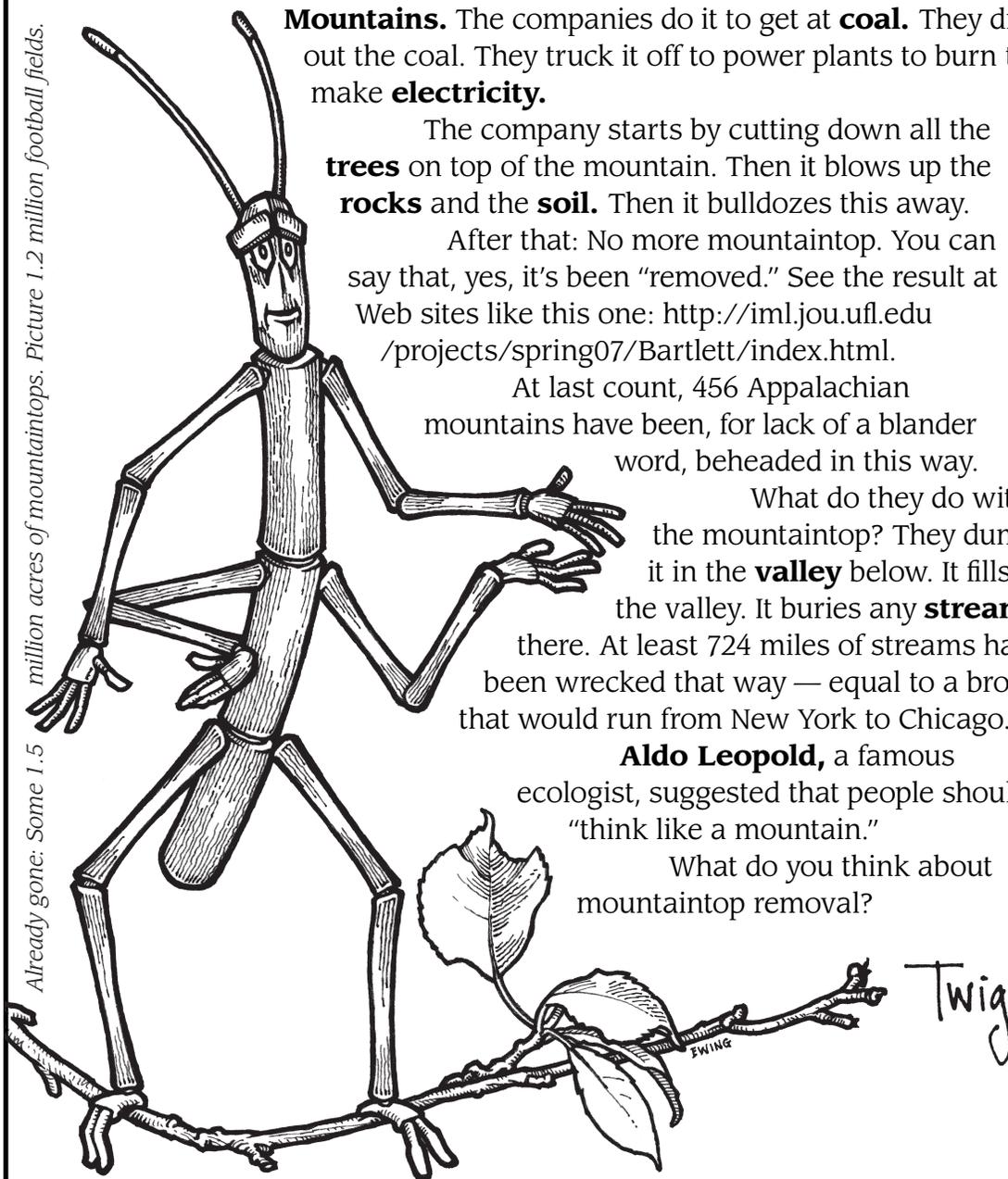
At last count, 456 Appalachian mountains have been, for lack of a blander word, beheaded in this way.

What do they do with the mountaintop? They dump it in the **valley** below. It fills in the valley. It buries any **streams** there. At least 724 miles of streams have been wrecked that way — equal to a brook that would run from New York to Chicago.

**Aldo Leopold**, a famous ecologist, suggested that people should "think like a mountain."

What do you think about mountaintop removal?

Already gone: Some 1.5 million acres of mountaintops. Picture 1.2 million football fields.



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center ([www.oardc.ohio-state.edu](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu)) and OSU Extension ([extension.osu.edu](http://extension.osu.edu)).