**COAL in KENTUCKY - PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE**

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At one time Coal and Kentucky were almost synonymous as the state led the nation in production in 1990. In Western Kentucky, coal mining began in the early 1800s and expanded tremendously with the expansion of railroads into both East and West Kentucky. As the US industrial capacity expanded hundreds of thousands of people came to the Appalachian Mountains to work the mines in Eastern Kentucky including many immigrants fleeing wars and famines in Europe plus tens of thousands of African Americans from the south seeking a better life. Coal camps sprung up throughout the coal fields with ones in the mountains by necessity having to be self-sufficient communities that depended on one thing, COAL.

With the decline of coal in recent decades Kentucky coal fields communities turn their eyes to other economic opportunities, such as tourism to help fill the void left by closed mines, especially in Eastern Kentucky. There are numerous attractions throughout the region that already exist. The Kentucky Coal Heritage Trail is designed to become the link between these attractions and sites giving tourists or those that are looking for their heritage numerous places to visit while in Kentucky.

But what of the future? Coal is a finite resource, yet the US still has more coal left than any other country in the world. As the world turns away from fossil fuels as a driver of climate change what does the future hold? What are the real alternatives?

Much research has been done in recent decades to find alternative uses, from gasification to liquefaction to Rare Earth Recovery from coal wastes. This presentation includes reflections on the last century of mining in Kentucky and the world, focusing on what has happened in the last few decades, with a bit of historical context and a look at what the future may hold.