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PRESS STATEMENT

BLM's Coal Program Review Lacks Solutions

Coal Country Communities Deserve Action for Federal Coal Program Issues

WASHINGTON, D.C. – In response to the BLM's [comment summary report](#) on the federal coal program review released in late December, western grassroots organizations voice the need for prompt and long overdue action to improve the process of federal coal leasing and mining beyond just the acknowledgement of a broken system. Bob LeResche, a Board Member of Powder River Basin Resource Council and Western Organization of Resource Councils Board Vice-Chair from Clearmont, Wyoming speaks to this need:

“Interior’s new report does summarize the many problems with the federal coal program, but why isn’t Interior telling us how they’re going to fix the program? The report says it’s important to update policies to get a fair return for taxpayers and address carbon pollution from the burning of federal coal, and to deal with a long list of impacts to land, air, water and public health and safety. But what are Secretary Haaland and President Biden going to do about it? Those of us who live in western communities and states dependent on coal jobs and revenue have submitted countless sets of comments urging Interior to shift its focus to ensuring that mine sites are reclaimed, and to helping our region and its workers transition. We don’t need another report on the shelf. We need action.”

Background:

BLM’s report follows a series of actions over the past seven years to study the problems with the federal coal program. In the spring 2015, then Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell called for a review of the federal coal program and held listening sessions around the country. In early 2016, Secretary Jewell paused new federal coal leasing and BLM kicked off a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) review process to identify leasing and management reforms for the federal coal program. Following the change of Administration, then Secretary Ryan Zinke ended the leasing pause and halted the PEIS process. His action was challenged by ongoing litigation. In April 2021, Secretary Haaland reinitiated the BLM review of the federal coal program, resulting in a public comment period that ended in October. BLM’s December 2021 report summarizes the public comments received, but does not indicate how BLM will be

responding to the comments, whether additional public review or stakeholder engagement will occur, or what actions BLM will take to implement much-needed reforms.

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The [Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\)](#) is a network of grassroots organizations that span seven of the Western states with more than 18,000 members. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.

The [Powder River Basin Resource Council](#), founded in 1973, is a family agriculture and conservation organization in Wyoming. Resource Council members are family farmers and ranchers and concerned citizens who are committed to conservation of our unique land, mineral, water, and clean air resources.

[Northern Plains Resource Council](#) is a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group that organizes Montanans to protect our water quality, family farms and ranches, and unique quality of life.