

Good afternoon. My name is Brenda Lindlief Hal, and I'm here on behalf of the National Wildlife Federation. I'd like to start by thanking the Bureau of Land Management for the opportunity to be here and speak today. I'd also thank Secretary Jewell for recognizing the critical importance of concerns raised during last summer's listening sessions on the federal coal leasing program, for pausing the current antiquated coal leasing system in order to address citizens' concerns and for making the opportunity to speak out for meaningful reform possible. Coal mining on federal lands occurs on some of the West's most fragile and important fish wildlife habitats. Strip mining threatens our public land, water, wildlife, and our way of life throughout the West. As trustees for these life-sustaining public resources, it is incumbent upon our government to make meaningful reforms to the coal leasing program to protect these resources. The recent epidemic of coal company bankruptcies underscores the need for reform. Coal companies have promised to be good stewards and reclaim public lands but have left taxpayers facing the prospect of having to pick up the tab for reclamation, have left workers without jobs and benefits and have left wildlife habitats fragmented and uninhabitable. Until sweeping reforms addressing our concerns are in place National Wildlife Federation requests no new coal leases on our federal lands. We respectfully request that the BLM, the OSM, ONRR work in concert and for now that there be no new leases until coal companies are held fully accountable for complete reclamation of federal lands they have mined. No new leases until self-bonding is banned and surety bonds are in place to ensure complete reclamation. No new leases until we are assured of a fair return to taxpayers for the lease of federal coal and that there be transparency in the leasing process and that royalties are commensurate with the true costs of leasing coal. Not only are bankrupt coal companies walking away from their promises to reclaim our public land, they're walking away from wildlife protections, from workers, and destroying the hunting and fishing economies of the West. Now more than ever, it's imperative that we make investments in the clean energy, not just for present generations but for those to come. Our fish and wildlife depend on it. Our workers depend on it. Our hunting and fishing economies and way of life depend on it.