

Hello. My name is Casey Quinn. I'm with the Powder River Basin Resource Council. I'm here on behalf of L.J. Turner and his wife Karen. They can't be here today because of calving on their ranch near Wright, Wyoming. For nearly a century L.J. Turner and his family have run cattle and sheep over the rolling grassland of Campbell County. Born on land homesteaded in 1918 by his grandfather and father, L.J. manages herds of around 200 Red Angus cattle and 1,000 sheep. The expanse of grass and springs and streams allowed his herd to thrive. However, the rise of intensive mineral extraction over the course of the past few decades has had significant consequences for his livelihood, including closures of his family's customary grazing land, extinguished springs, early drying creeks and rivers. L.J. currently grazes livestock on 10,000 acres of private and public land, though his family historically ranched over three times that area. With the advent of the large strip mines just ten miles from his home, leases for 6,000 acres of public assigned to his family since 1930 have been turned over to coal mining operations. Coal company acquisitions of adjacent private lands have further reduced grazable area. Associated mine facilities also take their toll. For example, construction of mine road across L.J.'s last remaining public pasture over a recent summer grazing season required his displacement. Facing a paucity of local relocation options, he reasoned that contemporaneously reclaimed mines should be available. L.J. recalls being told that mine lands were de-grazable, and he offered to move his cattle there. The mine company instead offered him \$10,000 to relocate for the summer. The only suitable area he could find was 200 miles away in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and his compensation payment never materialized. Besides losing thousands of acres of land he and his family historically ranched, L.J. has watched scarce water resources dry up as the coal bed aquifers have been depressurized for mining. Springs that have fed streams and watered cattle no longer flow. As springs have dried up, so have the creeks and rivers that L.J. and his neighbors depend on. On a path near Porcupine Creek in close proximity to the mines, the drilling of exploratory borings eliminated the flow of minor springs that were useful for L.J.'s cattle while railroad construction covered over others. An anchor of the regional economy, agricultural operations like L.J. are plagued by uncertainty over the long-

term availability of adequate grass and water. Continued mine expansions in the near reclamation of lands in the State of Wyoming magnify this uncertainty. Less than one percent of disturbed acres have achieved final reclamation and bond release. One of the breakdowns in the implementation of our surface mining laws is the failure to force these companies to release mine lands and return them to agriculture production. L.J. hopes the Department of Interior will consider these issues and develop solutions to them during the scope of the programmatic coal review.