

Hi. I'm submitting the following testimony on behalf of Dan Smitherman, a Wyoming conservation representative with the Wilderness Society. Dan is a retired Marine Corps officer and former outfitter and wilderness guide in the Wyoming range and the Bridger-Teton and Gros Ventre wilderness areas. Coal has long been important to Wyoming. It has brought jobs, revenue, and power to many parts of the state. And the recent downturn in coal has been devastating to many communities and people who have seen formerly stable jobs go away. But fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas are commodities and subject to worldwide market conditions that are largely out of the hands of many. This is what we've seen here in Wyoming. As natural gas supply across the country has grown and its prices have dropped, coal is no longer the cheap energy source it once was, and the market and the financiers have recognized this. This is what we are seeing all over the country, and it has hit as hard here as it has anywhere. Unfortunately, people are looking for who to blame without offering any real solutions on how to fix this problem. Maybe coal is coming back; maybe it's not. But we shouldn't have a state economy and hundreds of thousands of jobs tied to a maybe. Right now it's estimated that we have 20 years of federal coal reserves already leased. It is an ideal time to take stock of where we are and where we want to go. We need to look to how we can adapt and diversify to ensure that boom and bust cycles don't affect individuals in the way that they have. We need a diverse economy, and that means looking to our public lands for value outside of coal, including renewable energy, recreation, and conservation. With reform of the federal coal program, what we have in front of us is an opportunity to really look at what we want the future to be. Wyoming has some of the most amazing places in this country. I know. I enjoy them all the time. Our public lands contain real value that we need to ensure that, when they are used for extraction, we are seeing the full value and our state and the American people are getting a fair share from their resources. We also need to make sure that companies reclaim their past mines before getting the opportunity to open up new mines. Cleaning up lands should not be the responsibility of the American people and reclamation means more jobs. Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments about the importance of our shared land and resources.