

Federal Coal Review Testimony  
Department of Interior  
Amanda Jahshan  
Grand Junction, CO  
June 23, 2016

Good morning. My name is Amanda Jahshan and I work for the Natural Resources Defense Council in Montana. I work, in part, to address the impacts of fossil fuel development on public lands.

We appreciate the Department's review of the Federal Coal Program, and we look forward to reforms that promote the public interest and create a fair return for the American public.

While the Nixon and Reagan Administrations both initiated similar reviews, outdated policies and existing industry-friendly loopholes had already cost taxpayers and state governments more than \$30 billion in royalties as of 2012.

It's easy to see how things have gotten out of hand by looking at what we currently charge mining companies for coal from our public lands—88 cents per ton in Wyoming, 23 cents per ton here in Colorado, 52 cents per ton in Utah, and a whopping 12 cents per ton back home in Montana.

It's not just about lost revenue, although you'd be hard-pressed to find a state that couldn't use a little more money for things like schools and road improvements. Coal companies are actually passing on additional costs to some communities in the form of environmental degradation, wildlife impacts, and health threats.

Reforms are needed to create better planning and review mechanisms to account for the impacts of coal mining on our communities, wildlife, and environment. Improvements to the program should close existing loopholes in coal royalty valuation and weight environmental and social impacts of coal mining appropriately.

The solar industry now employs over 200 thousand people—vastly more than the coal industry. Reforms should also better reflect these kinds of changes that we are seeing our nation make regarding where and how we should get our energy to secure a more sustainable future for generations that follow. To that end, we need to ensure that clean, inexpensive energy sources are able to compete instead of focusing on flooding the market with subsidized coal sold at cut-rate prices.

It's time to modernize our federal coal program and ensure that energy development on public lands safeguards our taxpayers, our diverse economy, our wildlife, and our environment.

Thank you.