

Warren King, Wilderness Society, Grand Junction

BLM has a multiple use mandate. And as an agency they are faced with the difficult task of balancing a number of competing interests, including, recreation, grazing, coal and oil and gas development. However, for some time now, certain uses have been prioritized and supported above others, specifically, coal development.

The coal leasing program has not been substantially updated in over 30 years. This has resulted in a number of issues including, a loss of revenue to taxpayers from royalties, a lack of transparency and competition in leasing, and market oversupply. As currently structured and implemented, the leasing program has provided the coal industry with all of the advantages a private enterprise needs to flourish.

Despite this assistance, coal is becoming a less important part of our national energy portfolio. In fact, in April 2010 44% of our electricity generation came from coal, in April 2016, 29%. Despite what some may claim, this is not due to increased or overly burdensome regulation, but primarily due to larger market forces, namely cheap natural gas and decreasing international demand from countries like China.

I do not believe that our reliance on coal will disappear overnight, but I do recognize that we as a nation are transitioning away from it as an energy source. And with that in mind, need to review the way we manage coal on federal lands to account for this changing landscape.

While I realize that we are all here today to discuss the reform of the federal coal leasing program, I think it is equally important to acknowledge that this is just one piece of a much larger conversation. What we are really letting BLM know is what we believe the role of our public lands should be and how we want these shared lands to be managed.

Here in Grand Junction, we know the value and importance of public lands, especially in the context of our local economy. It seems like now more than ever, terms like "economic diversification" and "sustainable economy" ^{have} work their way into our everyday conversations as we realize that we must transition away from a

community that relies on extractive industries which are notoriously unpredictable. Our proximity to public lands has and will continue to play a huge role as our community undergoes this economic transition and begins to promote tourism and recreation.

And how those lands are managed will determine the success of this initiative moving forward. Not only that, but their management can dramatically impact other essential values that make this a place people want to live work and play. Their management impacts things like public health, air and water quality.

Public lands already are and can be an even greater contributor to our local economy. According to a recent study, quiet recreation on BLM lands in 2014 resulted in \$275 million in spending and 3,412 jobs in Colorado.

All of this is to say, we must support BLM in their efforts to reform the federal coal leasing program. We must adapt our federal regulations to the new energy environment as we transition away for coal, while ensuring that the leasing and production that continues is done in a fair, efficient and effective manner. This sort of management of our public lands is in line with and supports the overall economic vision of the Grand Valley.

Thank you for your time.

Again,