

TERI BLANTON: Howdy. So, my name is Teri Blanton. I'm from Kentucky. I'm actually from Harlan County, one of the counties that has the federal leasing with an adjoining county, Leslie County. Thank you for taking such a historic action, preparing a PEIS of the Federal Coal Leasing Program. This PEIS will be the Interior Department's first analysis of the program since the Reagan Administration, and it represents the first time the U.S. is examining the collective climate impact of all coal mine from public lands. Phasing out at this time issuing new permits is important, but in my state, Kentucky, there are already 9,400,000 tons leased with only 3,284,558 tons already mined. I think it would be in the best interest of our state to re-evaluate these agreements. Corporations that have mined in the past and that hold leases should be examined to see the effect that it is having on the surrounding area, not only the land and people, but the wildlife it sustains. Also, the low royalty payments paid do not accurately the true cost of coal when we examine the amounts of carbon released, the destruction of the forest land, lowering the cost of electricity production while not allowing a level playing field to develop more sustainable energy choices. A fair review of the Federal Coal Leasing Program will uncover the true cost of coal mining on public lands and in our communities, our health, our wallets, and our planet. Hopefully, the outcome will prove how out of step with our nation's commitment to act on climate and fails to account for the damage done to both local communities and the planet. The review should also re-examine the practice of self-bonding as well as under-bonding in light of recent bankruptcies of "too big to fail" corporations walking away from responsibilities of reclamation. And the practice of bond forfeitures where bonds do not adequately reflect cleanup. Full-cost bonding is desperately needed. The Interior Department's reforms could provide an opportunity for a fair and just transition for communities impacted by the nation's move away from coal. It is time that we protect our public lands, water, and wildlife for future generations and put the needs of our communities and workers first by providing resources for communities to shift to a more sustaining economy. I think that is what that says. Sustainable and prosperous economies. And create secure, good-paying jobs, and clean energy fields. Once again, I would like to request that you re-examine the existing permits and insist that they reflect the true cost of coal. Thank you.