

JAMES ROBERT BURTON: How are you all today? Good to go? Good. My name is James Burton. I live in Birmingham, Alabama. My family on my father's side is originally from Walker County, which is a community of a lot of coal mining. Birmingham and the Birmingham region is an awesome part of the Southern Appalachian Region. And Birmingham is part of urban Appalachia. It is a community that is 80 percent black, brown, and Latino, and, according to the U.S. Census, is 30 percent in poverty. But if you ask our Board of Education, it is 60 percent poverty. We are a community that has been heavily impacted by coal. We are a city that was built for the coal industry in the late 1800's based on the back of primarily black convict labor, thus, as you can see, the history of coal in our community and continuing a cycle of poverty in our city. I work for an organization called Magic City Agriculture Project. I'm not here directly in representation for the organization, but everything as I speak today I bring with me those values of my organization that we work towards and strive towards every day. We are an organization that primarily focuses on helping cash poor communities, and obviously this is post-industrial coal communities building green economies, cooperative green economies. And one of the things we do is building community land trusts. So, our organization is, obviously, very involved in working around land management. And something I want to note, which is something we work towards, is what happens with that land stewardship. And for us one of those main focuses is building things like green agricultural, sustainable agricultural as well as energy economies. And that is something I would ask that you all would take into consideration of what your focus around land management is. I'm also a patient with cystic fibrosis, and I live in a city that has the twelfth worst air pollution in the country. And most of that air pollution comes from coal-fired power plants. Those coal-fired power plants are owned by Alabama Power. Fifty percent of Alabama Power's energy comes from coal. Fifty percent of that coal comes from the Powder River Basin, and so a lot of their coal is mined from lands that you all work on. Ever since I moved to Birmingham, I have had about four times worse health than before, and, according to my doctors, is about twenty percent of my health condition. And I think all of these health issues are something that needs to be considered when you all work to decide your policies on what the price of leasing is. So, I ask you three things. The first is a moratorium of federal coal leasing programs, and in that time doing extensive programmatic environmental impact study looking at the entire life cycle of coal from mines to coal ash landfills such as that in Uniontown, which we work with. And if that can't be done just and fair, then I believe the program needs to end, the Federal Coal Leasing Program needs to end as a whole. A second is to state out the program. And the third is to support more programs on your all's land to build green economies, including things such as non-timber forest products, which can be similar to your all's Firewood Permit Program with working to create minimal cost to the user and root diggers to build a great large green economy. Thank you.