

MR. TYSON: Hello. My name is James Tyson. I'm a Colorado native. A bit of an [indiscernible] nerd. And I'm here to talk to day on behalf of the Colorado Wildlife Federation.

Thank you for taking the time to be here, for undertaking this long overdue review of the Federal Coal Leasing Program and inviting us to take part in this important process.

Coal companies have an obligation to the communities they operate in and serve, as well as the people they employ. Noncompetitive leasing and coal companies taking advantage of self-bonding are actions that have consequences, including a serious lack of funding necessary to properly remediate the impacts of these mines. If left unchecked, this will continue to plague these longstanding communities well into the future. The BLM and coal extraction [indiscernible] must be held accountable when reclamation planning or implementation fails to restore, to the extent possible, wildlife and habitat that has been displaced.

If handled properly, this accountability can be extremely positive step forward for leasees and the BLM while bolstering Colorado's economy through direct job creation and remediation and sustaining or augmenting the substantial outdoor recreation segment of the economy.

Self-bonding has allowed some of the country's largest coal companies to avoid putting aside cash, bonds, or other securities to cover future mine cleanup costs. Instead, self-bonding allows the company to use its own assets as collateral.

Being that 26 coal companies have declared bankruptcy over the past few years, and over half of Colorado coal companies are self-bonded. This presents major concerns when considering the future of the lands on which they operate and the communities supported by their jobs. Federal regulations require that a company pass a test of financial strength to qualify for self-bonding. But, companies are being approved despite their questionable status.

While the total, while the total reclamation bond to be supplied may be determined by the State Office of Surface Mining, the Federal Government should avoid leasing minerals that result in either permanent damage or expenses for taxpayers.

With 40 percent of coalmining coal coming off of

Federal land, it is important that we ensure there be adequate funding to restore fish and wildlife habitat and that restoration be completed to the satisfaction of the taxpayer.

Recreation in Colorado directly contributes 34.5 billion in consumer spending and 313,000 jobs. Habitat and the outdoor recreational opportunities that surround us is the primary reason for this spending the number of jobs it creates.

Public lands are an extraordinarily valuable asset, and they must be protected. Finally, we must look forward as a society and realize that the energy landscape is changing rapidly.

If the BLM acts now, they can properly demonstrate their responsibility to the American people, the workers who have relied on jobs in the energy sector, and bolster the recreation economy through transparency, responsible leasing, and [indiscernible] mediation.

Thank you, again, for your time. And we hope that you will do what is best for the American taxpayer and the jobs that support them.