

MR. VAN WEST: Good morning. My name is Rein Van West. And I'm the Board Chair of Western Colorado Congress, an affiliate of Western Organization of Resource Councils. We are a grassroots democratic organization on the Western Slope, dedicated to challenging injustice by organizing people to increase their power over decisions that affect their lives. We work together to create healthy, sustainable community social and economic justice and environmental stewardship. Now, we already know, and the BLM has already heard, the needed reforms since the previous pause with the Federal collation program. Yes, this program needs to be brought into the 21st century for a more fair return to the American public. Greater transparency in the leasing and royalty mechanisms and absolutely balanced protections for air, land, and water resources, as well as the global climate. Western Colorado Congress stands resolutely behind these desired and correct outcomes. But, we in Western Colorado have witnessed boom and bust economic economies before. Hard rock mining, uranium, oil shale. These have left many a small local community lurching to find their way. A number failing to do so. Certainly there's increasing recognition with recent events that the fate of the coal industry is similar and its decline inevitable. Are we going to, again, allow then the long-term economic disruption to these impacted communities? True, change will happen depending on how market forces and other factors play out. But, it's also clear coal isn't going to disappear for the time being. So, in addition to the aforementioned desirable outcomes, we need other with these BLM listening sessions be, for instance, a creative royalty formula which would principally benefit the impacted coal communities to help them build more diverse and resilient economies. This transition conversation needs to be held. Western Colorado Congress would like to thank the BLM for being bold and hosting these scoping sessions. Doubtless, and thankfully, the region and country is moving steadily forward with more clean energy. However, an improved and more transparent Federal Coal Leasing Program will help all of us plan better into the future. Thank you.