



Protecting Wildlife for our children's future



Salt Lake City Coal PEIS Hearing, May 19, 2016

Good morning. My name is Sarah Bates, and I'm attending this hearing on behalf of the National Wildlife Federation.

I appreciate that Secretary Jewell recognized important issues raised in last summer's listening sessions on the federal coal leasing program and provided this opportunity to consider meaningful reform. This hearing and the others underway around the nation will provide valuable opportunities for citizens to express their concerns and weigh in with productive options for program reform.

Coal mining on federal lands occurs in some of the West's most fragile and important fish and wildlife habitat—the source for billions of dollars in revenue from hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. As trustee for these valuable public resources, it is incumbent upon our government to make meaningful reforms to the federal coal leasing program to ensure that these remain available for the benefit of present and future generations.

The recent epidemic of coal company bankruptcies underscores the need for reform: Coal companies have promised to be good stewards and reclaim our public lands, but have instead left taxpayers facing the prospect of having to pick up the tab for reclamation, have left workers without jobs and benefits, and have left wildlife habitat fragmented and uninhabitable—compromising the valuable hunting and fishing economies of the West.

Until we see comprehensive reforms addressing these concerns, the National Wildlife Federation requests that there be no new coal leases on federal lands.

We respectfully request that the BLM and the Department of Interior work together to make these changes:

- No new leases until coal companies are held accountable for complete reclamation of federal lands they have mined.
- No new leases until self-bonding is banned and surety bonds are in place to ensure complete reclamation.
- No new leases until we are assured of a fair return to taxpayers for the lease of federal coal, transparency in the leasing process, and royalties commensurate with the true costs of leasing federal coal—including mitigating the impacts of mining on wildlife and their habitat.

It is time to modernize our federal coal leasing program and ensure that energy development on our public lands continues in a way that protects our lands, water, and wildlife for generations to come.

Thank you.