

The Department of the interior and BLM public comment meeting on the coal lease moratorium.

My name is Nicholas Nielsen. I am a resident of Utah. I have a Bachelor's of Science in engineering from the University of Utah and have chosen to pursue a respectable career in the coal industry to support my family. I support an action in favor of promoting coal production or a "No Action" alternative where the current program continues to issue coal leases as is. These coal leases are critical for affordable electricity and the companies mining them are the lifeblood of communities.

Changing the mechanism to decide which coal leases and how it is leased would be detrimental. If the goal of this EIS is to better the coal program, it will find that leases should be available as mining companies find them economically viable. The leasing process is already lengthy and time sensitive if limited further coal companies will financially not be able to withstand outage or be willing to invest the capital for leases. Is this the ultimate goal of this EIS? This will result in no royalty payments and no return to the taxpayers. On the other hand, if companies were incentivized and a royalty reduction was applied, mining companies could further maximize reserves by mining challenging areas and provide more return for taxpayers.

In the Notice from the BLM on page 9 it gives an example of when a similar moratorium was put in place. It started in 1973 and was lifted in 1981. Continued concern ultimately drove another moratorium that wasn't lifted until 1987. This example created a legacy that hindered the coal industry for 14 years. Will this moratorium leave an unsettled legacy that will effect an industry and communities for over a decade? Is the justification for a three-year moratorium omitting to consider the lengthy timelines already in place?

In the Notice from the BLM it is stated a number of times that the program needs to be altered so that it "is consistent with the Nations Goals". How are the nations goals defined? Are these goals considering any of the pro coal opinion or is it all driven by the agenda of the Obama administration? The notice and information on the EIS puts a large emphasis on restricting and limiting coal, but little consideration to helping it. This EIS seems bias and that is concerning for someone like me who is young in their career and many electrical bills ahead. This bias along with the anti-coal movement portrays coal companies to not care about the environment. What makes a coal company? Ultimately there is an owner who assumes financial reliability, but employees make up a coal company. Employees are people who live in the areas the mines are located. So who better to take stewardship for the local environment than those who live there. For example, the mine I work at discharges into my drinking water. At the mine level, I am one who can potentially work on projects dealing with that water. My children drink that water. People who are part of these companies help come up with plans and programs to eliminate issues. Is the EIS going to take into consideration the programs, plans, and costs that mining companies have in place to support environmental sustainability or are they just looking to justify an added cost?

Again I am in support of promoting the mining of federal leases or at a minimum a no action.