Talking Points: Federal Coal Program PEIS

Climate Change

- Federal coal is responsible for enormous amounts of carbon pollution that feeds climate change, threatening our environment and the quality of life for all of us. Science clearly shows that to prevent truly catastrophic climate change, we need to mine and burn less coal, and we need to begin an orderly transition away from mining and burning coal now.
- We, the people of the United States, own federal coal reserves in the western United States. Our government needs to help find and enact solutions to addressing climate change, not continue to contribute to the problem and make it worse and worse.
- Federal (that is, publicly owned) coal is a significant contributing cause of climate change impacts that western communities are already experiencing, including increased severe weather, droughts, reduced snowpack, diminishing glaciers in the mountains, and more and more severe wildfires.
- The broken and outdated federal coal program not only threatens our public lands, wildlife, air, and water, but it also props up a dirty energy source that has huge health impacts, especially focused on low income communities in other parts of our country where western coal is shipped and burned.

Reclamation

- Our public lands, undeveloped open landscapes, wildlife, air, and water are precious resources, and will only become more precious over time. Public land, air and water should be clean and accessible to all.
- Coal companies should not be allowed to lease new publicly owned coal before they have cleaned up the lands they have already mined.
- Coal companies should not be allowed to self bond, but should be required to carry adequate real insurance that will cover the cost of reclamation if a coal company goes bankrupt. Taxpayers must be protected so we don’t end up having to pay for hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up coal mines.

Just Transition

- Reforms to the coal leasing program must include strong programs to help workers and communities that are most affected by the transition away from coal find new economic opportunities.
- These programs must include identified funding sources.

Taxpayer/Transparency

Coal companies are taking full advantage of tax loopholes and giveaways under the current old and outdated coal lease program, with no accountability. This comes at the direct expense of taxpayers and our land, water, air, and wildlife.
• Coal companies have been dodging royalty payments owed to US taxpayers and western states for years, to the tune of $1 billion per year.

• Currently, the federal government sells public coal for less than one dollar per ton. It's time to stop these giveaways and ensure a fair return to the public when our coal is sold. Average sale prices for public coal in Wyoming from 2000-2014 was 88¢ a ton.

• Companies have avoided public outrage largely because the current program is opaque and there is no public input. The Department of Interior must make transparency and public input a key component of a reformed program, so that taxpayers don't continue to get the short end of the stick.

• Raising the royalty rate for public coal to more accurately reflect the true value of the coal and take into account the true, full costs of mining and burning coal will more fairly compensate American citizens, who own the coal, for the true cost of mining and burning it to our land, water, air, wildlife, and climate.