

For immediate release: 5/16/2024

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PRESS RELEASE

Biden Administration to End Coal Leasing in Powder River Basin

Billings, MT – This morning, the Biden administration announced that it will end federal coal leasing in the Powder River Basin – the largest coal-producing region in the United States. The decision represents a historic shift in federal management of coal in the region, recognizing the environmental and health impacts on coalfield communities and acknowledging that the market has shifted away from coal toward cleaner and more affordable energy sources.

The Bureau of Land Management released a final environmental impact statement for two Powder River Basin resource management plans, Buffalo and Miles City, finding that there would be significant impacts to our climate, human health, and the environment from continuing to lease the region’s approximately 6 billion tons of low-grade, highly polluting coal. BLM selected a “no future coal leasing alternative,” through which existing mines can develop already-leased reserves but cannot expand with publicly-owned coal reserves.

“Coal has powered our nation for many decades, but technology, economics and markets are changing radically. BLM’s announcement recognizes that coal’s era is ending, and it’s time to focus on supporting our communities through the transition away from coal, investing in workers, and moving to heal our lands, waters and climate as we enter a bright clean energy future,” said **Paula Antoine, Western Organization of Resource Councils Board Chair, from Winner, S. Dak.**

“As someone who lives near some of the largest coal mines in the nation, I’m thankful for the leadership from the BLM in finally addressing the long-standing negative impacts that federal coal leasing has had on the Powder River Basin,” said **Lynne Huskinson, retired coal miner and board member of Powder River Basin Resource Council and Western Organization of Resource Councils from Gillette, Wyo.** “For decades, mining has affected public health, our local land, air, and water, and the global climate. We look forward to BLM working with state and local partners to ensure a just economic transition for the Powder River Basin as we move toward a clean energy future.”

“The BLM released a common sense plan that reflects the reality of today’s coal markets,” **said Mark Fix, a Miles City, Mont. rancher and member of Northern Plains Resource Council.** “Coal companies in this region already have decades of coal locked up under leases, and it’s hard to imagine they’ll find buyers that far into the future given the competition from more affordable energy sources. This plan protects taxpayers from wasting publicly-owned resources on lowball leases to subsidize an industry in decline. It’s time we take a clear-eyed look at the future and start investing in a transition away from coal.”

In 2022, in response to a challenge from conservation groups, including Western Organization of Resource Councils, a federal judge [found that the two resource management plans failed to address the public health consequences](#) of allowing massive amounts of coal, oil, and gas production from public lands and minerals in the Powder River Basin over 20 years. The court ordered BLM to redo its environmental analysis.

In the ruling, U.S. District Judge Brian Morris found that BLM failed to comply with a previous court order directing the agency to account for the environmental and human health impacts of burning publicly owned coal. The judge also held that BLM failed to consider alternatives that would limit or end new coal leasing in the Powder River Basin in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

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[*Northern Plains Resource Council*](#) is a grassroots conservation and family agriculture group that organizes Montanans to protect our water quality, family farms and ranches, and unique quality of life.

[*The Powder River Basin Resource Council*](#), founded in 1973, is a family agriculture and conservation organization in Wyoming. Resource Council members are family farmers and ranchers and concerned citizens who are committed to conservation of our unique land, mineral, water, and clean air resources.

[*The Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\)*](#) is a network of nine grassroots organizations in seven Western states with 22,750 members, many of them ranchers and farmers committed to common-sense reform in agriculture, oil and gas development, coal mine reclamation, and rural economic development. Headquartered in Billings, Mont., WORC also has an office in Washington, D.C.