

OFFICE

500 S. Gillette Avenue, Suite 1100
Gillette, Wyoming 82716
(307) 682-7283
(307) 687-6325 FAX
www.campbellcountyyw.gov



Sandra Beeman
Executive Director of Administration

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Kelley McCreery, Chairman
Jim Ford
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Scott Clem
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May 6, 2025

The Honorable Harriet Hageman
Wyoming Congresswoman
Washington DC Office
1227 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Email: trinity.lewis@mail.house.gov

RE: Letter of Support for Subtitle C – Federal Lands Section 80302 in the House Committee on Natural Resource Reconciliation Bill

Dear Congresswoman Hageman:

On behalf of the Campbell County Board of Commissioners (County), thank you for your steadfast leadership in working to “right-a-wrong” specific to the Biden Administration’s decision to withdraw the Powder River Basin (PRB) Coal Development Potential Area (CDPA) from future coal leasing. Campbell County’s economic viability is highly dependent on the ability to produce, market, and deliver mineral and energy products to consumers not only in the County but within the State and across the country and our ability to continue with a viable federal coal leasing program plays a significant role in that process.

As the House Natural Resource Committee undertakes the mark up of the Reconciliation Bill, the County fully supports yours and the Committee’s efforts to “Prohibit the Implementation of the Buffalo Wyoming Field Office Resource Management Plan” [Sec 80302] specific to a “no future coal leasing” decision. We must strive towards a durable solution to these fallacious decisions by the Biden Administration that are based more on political agendas versus the need to maintain our national security of which reliable, affordable energy is a basic necessity for every citizen living in the United States.

As you are well aware, it is clear that the Biden Administration unleashed a barrage of anti-fossil fuel directives, which supported a “no coal leasing” agenda. On several fronts, the Administration worked to suffocate the hydrocarbon industry and any future it may have by issuing policies and regulations that stifled coal, oil and gas leasing and production. These misguided directives will not support increased needs in energy consumption when hydrocarbon fuels still support a significant percentage of the nation’s electricity

nor does will it allow for advanced technologies to move forward if the feedstock is eliminated from access and future use. The previous Administration's goals were erroneous and must be overturned.

To emphasize the impact of this decision, Campbell County is unique as our lands are comprised of approximately 83% *private surface* and an estimated 87.5% *federal minerals*. We are also an energy rich area with an estimated forty percent (40%) of the nation's BTU's being produced from the surface coal mines located in the area. Coal production is not only critical to our county, state and school systems but also for the nation in meeting energy demands. Continued coal produced from Wyoming mines and especially the CDPA is essential to meet not only thermal coal baseload electric grid generation needs in this country but also for the advancement of non-thermal uses of coal to assist in securing the domestic supply chain.

Campbell County has participated for decades as a cooperating agency with the Buffalo BLM Office on most projects that require a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and specifically, the County has been active in every planning decision affecting coal leasing allocations as those decisions have a significant impact on our residents, businesses and communities.

To emphasize this point and for your convenience, the County has also provided you with a copy of our "Protest of the BLM Decision regarding the Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Buffalo Field Office, Wyoming" filed jointly by Campbell, Converse and Johnson Counties in June of 2024. Specifically, the protest letter provides detailed information regarding the reasons why this BLM Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) Record of Decision (ROD) should be rescinded or prohibited from being implemented. Some highlights from the protest include:

- **BLM Incorrectly Identified the Preferred Alternative as Alternative A (No Leasing)** -- The County strongly opposes BLMs identified preferred alternative as Alternative A (No Leasing) and contend that the federal agency did not adequately provide compelling evidence to choose a "no coal leasing" alternative. The County fully supported Alternative B (No Action).
- **BLM Failed to Adequately Consider a Formal Withdrawal by Congress of Coal Leasing in the PRB** -- The County contends that BLMs decision to remove the Coal Development Potential Area (CDPA) for any future leasing is flawed and the federal agency must pursue a formal withdrawal under FLPMA Section 204(c), which requires congressional approval and not just a Plan Amendment to the Buffalo RMP.
- **Failure of BLM to Adequately Consider Thermal Uses of Coal** -- The County understands that the need for the nation's energy security and a strong economy is a priority and will demand that electricity remain reliable and affordable, requiring the use of coal-fired power.
- **Failure of BLM to Adequately Consider Non-thermal Uses of Coal** -- The BLM should consider in greater detail advancements in coal development, technology improvements, and new products derived from coal, which include but are not limited to, CCUS, carbon capture and storage (CCS),

carbon fiber, coal-to-products and extracting Critical Minerals (CM) and Rare Earth Elements (REE). The County maintains that new technology is being discovered every day and can change quickly and it is imprudent to eliminate the feedstock before we truly understand the market conditions for thermal and non-thermal uses of coal.

- **Failure of BLM to Adequately Consider Potential Export Opportunities** -- The United States must pursue all options for marketing our energy products overseas should the market show a demand and the federal government must work with all impacted states to secure production, transportation and infrastructure opportunities domestically. The County supports all efforts to identify opportunities to promote and allow for the exportation of coal.
- **BLM Failed to Adequately Consider New Carbon Capture Technologies in Social Cost of Carbon (SCC) Analysis** -- The County does not support the use of metrics such as the SCC to be applied to the production of coal. The SCC assumes that all hydrocarbon fuels will be combusted with no carbon mitigation nor with the utilization of CCUS/CCS. The Biden Administrations directive of applying a SCC tax is onerous and not scientifically supported.
- **BLM Inappropriately Analyzed Environmental Justice Effects within the Counties** -- The County cannot state clearly enough the importance of our ability to access federal lands to drive vibrant economic communities. The County challenges BLMs premise for determining block census tracks identified in Campbell County. In its current form, the BLM's Environmental Justice analysis in the FSEIS is arbitrary and capricious.
- **BLM Failed to Adequately Consider Impacts of a No Leasing Decision** -- Economic impacts do matter. Access to federally administered lands and resources are critical to ensure the socioeconomic well-being of our communities. Any curtailment of access to public lands will directly impact the viability of the County and the State.
 - According to the Wyoming Mining Association, in 2023, the financial contribution of coal mining to state and local governments in the form of taxes, royalties and fees was over \$654.3 million. Wyoming's share of federal mineral royalties – royalties paid on mining the leased federal coal - was over \$216 million (out of \$397 collected).
 - The no-leasing alternative will have very real impacts on families in Wyoming. The coal industry employs over 5,111 individuals directly (4,492 in the PRB) with a payroll of nearly \$500 million, and over 2,000 contractors. The average coal mining job pays over \$83 thousand per year, well above the state average of \$53 thousand. And every coal mining job supports another 2-3 jobs in the service and supply industry.
 - Funding derived from mineral development constitutes a significant portion of revenue used to pay for essential services, including roads, fire protection, courthouses and judicial systems, libraries, landfills, hospitals, law enforcement, airports, recreation, public health, and senior citizen centers. Any curtailment of leasing and development activity significantly

impacts the socio-economics of the communities and eliminates a critical funding stream for not just Campbell County, but all counties, the State of Wyoming and its residents, which will cause reductions to budgets for human services, education, infrastructure and law enforcement along with numerous other programs and services.

- The coal industry also significantly bolsters the region's assessed valuation. In Fiscal Year 2023, the assessed valuation for coal in Campbell County stands at approximately \$2.4 billion, driven by a production volume of 237 million tons. Moreover, the combined assessed valuation for coal, oil, and gas for Fiscal Year 2023 surpasses \$4.1 billion.
- BLM significantly undervalued the mineral contributions to the counties and state in the socioeconomic section by the exclusion of bonus bids and AML fees nor did they evaluate the environmental impacts that the no future coal leasing decision would have on disbursements to state and national programs. Further, the federal agency did not sufficiently analyze for the effects that funding and revenue decreases would have on local services, programs and communities. The BLM failed to adequately include an in-depth analysis on where those funding streams will be recovered if mineral leasing and development is eliminated long-term.

- **BLM Failed to Adequately Consider Consistency with County Natural Resource Management Plans** – The BLM failed to provide a thorough consistency review with the County's Natural Resource Management Plans and explain why they could not be as consistent with local plans as allowed by law.
- **BLM Failed to Sufficiently Notify and Disclose to the Cooperating Agencies and the Effectuated Landowners of their True Intentions to Withdraw the CDPA from Coal Leasing** – The BLM failed to provide any analysis or to quantify the impacts that a no leasing of federal coal decision would have on adjacent or surrounding mineral leases. The BLM intentionally did not disclose to the cooperators that they intended to modify their position from supporting a dual preferred alternative (Alternative A – No Leasing and Alternative C – limited leasing) in the Draft Supplement Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) to a No Leasing Alternative (Alternative A) as the preferred alternative in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) and therefore the final agency decision. The federal agency remained silent on their decision until the FSEIS was issued and the 30-day clock for protesting was noticed.
- **BLM Failed to Adequately Respond to Counties Comments** – The BLM did not respond directly to concerns that a detailed explanation was needed for removing the CDPA from future coal leasing. In addition, the BLM's decision to actually adopt a no leasing alternative as its preferred alternative is inconsistent with longstanding policy and its prior statements which acknowledged that eliminating all federal coal leasing from the project area was inconsistent with its multiple use mandate under FLPMA.

Congresswoman, the County appreciates all of your hard work on this critical issue and we stand ready to assist you in any way we can to prohibit the implementation of the Buffalo BLM RMPA and ROD which eliminates future coal leasing in the PRB. We urge the House Natural Resource Committee to move forward with Subtitle C Section 80302 as a vital first step in supporting our County and States' custom, culture and economic foundation along with ensuring federal agencies uphold their statutory authority.

Should you have questions or require additional information, do not hesitate to contact me via email at (kelly.mccreery@campbellcountyyw.gov) or our natural resource policy advisor Dru Palmer at 307-388-2709 or via email at (dru@wyoming.com).

Sincerely,



Kelley McCreery, Chairman
Board of Campbell County Commissioners

CC: The Honorable Governor Mark Gordon
The Honorable United States Senator John Barrasso
The Honorable United States Senator Cynthia Lummis
Jeremiah Reiman, Wyoming County Commission Association

Attachment: Protest of the BLM Decision regarding the Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Buffalo Field Office, Wyoming filed by the Boards of Commissions for Converse, Converse and Johnson Counties, Wyoming dated June 17, 2024