

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Jewell,

On May 8, 2015, the Federal District Court for the District of Colorado issued an order determining that the Office of Surface Mining (“OSM”) failed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) in 2007, when it issued a mine plan approval for the Colowyo Coal Mine. The Court gave OSM 120 days to prepare a new analysis and issue a new decision. If OSM does not complete the process in 120 days, the Court stated that it would vacate the mine plan, effectively shutting down the Mine.

We write to urge you to take all necessary and appropriate action to ensure the continued operation of the Colowyo Coal Mine, which is a critical component of northwest Colorado’s regional economy and has responsibly operated in the eight years since the mine plan approval was issued by your office. Coal produced by this mine, located in Moffat and Rio Blanco counties, is then used to generate power at the Craig station and is responsible for employing over 200 people with a payroll of around \$20 million dollars. Requested actions include urgently deploying sufficient personnel with the resources and expertise to complete the supplemental NEPA work within the 120 day window provided by the District Court.

Colowyo Coal Mine is a significant contributor to both of the counties’ economies. The adverse effects of shutting down this mine go beyond the jobs at the mine that would be lost. We surely do not need to impress upon your office the potentially devastating impact of reducing operations at two of the counties’ largest employers as well as one of the largest electricity providers in the western half of the state.

In addition, we strongly urge OSM to evaluate the propriety of an appeal. Without remarking on the reasoning of the Court contained within the decision itself, the result nonetheless creates adverse precedent with other suits pending, which would harm not only Colowyo and the town of Craig, but potentially numerous other mining operations and towns in other states as well. The federal government must vigorously defend the legality of its permitting actions, and leave policy debates over the role of coal to the legislative and rulemaking proceedings where those debates belong.

Respectfully,



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress