

## PREFACE

This statement represents an analysis of broad cumulative impacts on the environment of coal resource development in the Eastern Powder River Coal Basin of Wyoming and analyses of specific impacts of pending applications before the Federal Government.

A number of companies holding leases on federally owned coal deposits in the Gillette-Douglas, Wyoming, area have submitted proposed mining and reclamation plans for their respective leaseholds to the U.S. Geological Survey for approval in accordance with existing federal law and regulations. Some of these plans cover totally new mines to be opened; others cover expansion of present mines onto existing federal leaseholds. A number of similar submissions of mining and reclamation plans on other leaseholds in this area can be anticipated in the near future.

Burlington Northern Inc. and Chicago and North Western Transportation Company have jointly applied to the Interstate Commerce Commission for a certificate of public convenience and necessity authorizing the construction and operation of a new railroad which would link an existing line near Douglas, Wyoming, with one near Gillette, Wyoming, thereby providing a transportation facility which could be utilized by anticipated mining activity. Short spur lines to the various mines would also be required in some cases.

Federal land holdings in the area require authorizations by the Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, or the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, for the occupancy or use of federal lands.

Other related activities will follow, should the federal approval actions ensue, many of which may or may not require additional federal authorizations. For example, development of electric powerlines, mine mouth power generating facilities, coal gasification plants, water supplies for various operations, roadway and other communication facilities, new residence and business communities and increased facilities of all kinds in existing communities may occur.

The four federal agencies have determined that approval of the pending applications would collectively constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the quality of human environment. Therefore, the agencies have determined that to protect the public interests most effectively and to meet their individual responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 most efficiently, they should jointly undertake the preparation of a single environmental impact statement which would consider not only the impacts of the several proposals but also the collective, cumulative impacts, primary and secondary, of the development of the coal resource in the area.

Further, to meet the intent of the Act in the most productive fashion, it is necessary to examine the general geographic area of the proposed and potential actions. The geographic area for basic consideration is that part of the Powder River Coal Basin in Wyoming lying generally eastward from the Powder River to the outcrop line of the coal resource and from somewhat north of Gillette to a point somewhat south of Douglas. The area deliniation is based in part on present and anticipated levels of mining activity, differing quality of the coal resource, different physical arrangement of the coal beds, somewhat different mining techniques required and differing physical reclamation requirements. Those considerations having a broader scope of geographic impact such as social conditions, economic factors, atmospheric influence, water resources, and

recreation uses are treated on a larger regional basis than the primary study area. This statement discusses the existing environment, evaluates the collective impact of the proposed actions and, insofar as now possible, the impacts of potential future coal mining within the geographic area described above. This statement also examines in detail certain proposed activities for which federal actions are required.