

COMMENTS ON THE WEST BLACK THUNDER DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Ninety-two letters were received commenting on the West Black Thunder Draft Environmental Assessment. The commentors included a national Senator and the national Congressman from Wyoming, the Governor of Wyoming, eleven Wyoming Senators and Representatives, the Powder River Basin Resource Council, the Northern Arapaho Business Council, employees of the Black Thunder Mine, landowners whose land is located near the existing Black Thunder Mine, and other interested residents of northeastern Wyoming.

These letters have been numbered and are reprinted on the following pages. Responses to individual letters are indicated by number.

2
CRAIG THOMAS
MEMBER, AT LARGE

3420 (484)
WYUW 118907
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE
LEASING AND MINING OFFICE BUREAU
WASHINGTON, DC 20516
202 224-2271
OFFICE OFFICE
Room 4003 Federal Building
Casper, WY 82401-1948
(307) 281-4413
Room 2016 Federal Building
Casper, WY 82401-1833
(307) 773-1481

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 25, 1991

Mr. Tim Monroe
District Manager
1700 East "E" Street
Casper, Wyoming 82601

Good morning Tim...

I understand the Bureau of Land Management is accepting comment on a lease application for Thunder Basin Coal Company's Black Thunder Mine, and would like to take this opportunity to voice support for your coal leasing efforts in the Powder River Basin. It appears the BLM is following a process that allows leasing, while protecting significant interests. It's important to go forward with Wyoming's coal development, and, unless something shows the lease-by-application process is inadequate, I'm hopeful you can proceed with this, and other leases.

An adequate energy supply is of obvious importance to our country. It's important to Wyoming in terms of the jobs and tremendous economic benefits mining operations provide. Wyoming coal companies have shown a real interest in our state, and proven themselves good stewards of our environment.

Finally, it's in our nation's best interest to promote the production and use of Wyoming coal as much as possible. Growing concern over air pollution, and strong provisions of the Clean Air Act revisions we passed in the last Congress make it vital that low-sulfur Wyoming coal -- called "compliance coal" in the business -- be able to meet market demand in areas of the country working to reduce emissions.

Thank you for the work you're doing on the lease program. I'm hopeful you will be able to move forward with the Black Thunder lease and future coal leasing in the Powder River Basin.

Best regards,

Craig
Craig Thomas
Member of Congress

CT:bb

1
FIELD OFFICES
Casper 281-4413
Cody 332-2477
Cheyenne 772-2477
Coal 832-7131
Casper 882-7081
Laramie 764-3037
Toll Springs 383-8078

3420 (484) 4700
ALAN K. SIMPSON
WYOMING
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
ON ENERGY AND PUBLIC UTILITIES
WASHINGTON, DC 20540-5002
DIVISION OF PUBLIC WORKS
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20540-5002

November 22, 1991

Jim
James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, Wyoming 82601

Dear James:

This letter is written in response to the public comment notice for Thunder Basin Coal Company's lease-by-application (LBA) for additional coal reserves in the Powder River Basin. The purpose of this letter is to support not only Thunder Basin Coal Company's application, but to also support the lease-by-application process in general. This process enables existing mines to lease additional coal reserves, preserve important jobs in Wyoming, and sustain revenues to the State of Wyoming.

The fact that the State of Wyoming is currently the number one coal producing state is an important contribution to a nation that is so highly dependent on foreign imports to meet our energy demands. In addition, it is important that coal reserves of various thermal contents be available on the market as midwestern and eastern utilities determine how to comply with the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Now, more than ever, it is important that Wyoming coal be available for energy production and improved air quality nationwide.

It has been proven again and again that coal mining can successfully coexist with the natural environment in Wyoming. Leasing of additional coal reserves by the lease-by-application process is a proper and prudent policy that benefits Wyoming and the Federal Government. I support your continued efforts to proceed in a proper and thorough manner, to address all concerns, and ultimately, to issue the necessary leases.

With best regards,

Most sincerely,
Alan K. Simpson
Alan K. Simpson
United States Senator

AKS/lg

Response to Letters 1 and 2, from Senator Alan Simpson and Congressman Craig Thomas

The BLM realizes the importance of coal to the state of Wyoming and to the country, and believes that the lease by application process is resulting in an adequate evaluation of the impacts of additional leasing on the environment. The Senator's and Congressman's comments in support of the process will be taken into consideration in the Decision Record.

3



United States Forest Service
Department of Agriculture

Douglas Ranger District
Medicine Bow National Forest and
Thunder Basin National Grassland
809 South 9th Street
Douglas, Wyoming 82633

3-10(LB)
WYU 118207

Reply to: 2800

Date: November 27, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
USDI-Bureau of Land Management
Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am writing in response to the current controversy concerning the two recent BLM proposals on the Kerr-McGee and Thunder Basin Coal Co coal lease applications. We, on the Douglas District, support your concept of the [unclear]-application process and are willing to assist you in any way we can.

As you well know, the Forest Service has been involved with six of the operating coal mines in the Powder River Basin for well over a decade. Our relationship with these companies has been extremely professional. They have consistently proved themselves to be leaders in reclamation efforts. Many of them have gone far beyond legal requirements to research the methods and results of their work. I believe they are well aware of their role in reclamation of mined lands and are extremely conscious of environmental impacts of their planned operations. They are a pleasure to work with and I believe they are doing their best to conduct their business in accord with high environmental standards.

Sincerely,

Donald A. Heiser
DONALD A. HEISER
District Ranger

CASPER BLM	
DEC 2 1991	
ADM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	SL
AO	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp



Caring for the Land and Serving People

FS-4200-2817-821

4



United States Forest Service
Department of Agriculture

Rooky Mountain
Casper BLM

Medicine Bow National Forest
605 Skyline Drive
Laramie, WY 82070-6093

3-10(LB)
WYU 118207

DEC 20 1991

Reply to: 1950-4-2

Date:

DEC 18 1991

James W. Monroe
BLM, Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

In response to your request for public comments (Letter dated October 28, 1991), being a Cooperating Agency (40 CFR 1501.6), and in accordance with 40 CFR 1503.1, "Inviting comments," and 1503.2, "Duty to comment," I offer the following comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the West Black Thunder Coal Lease Application for your consideration.

The overall document appears to be well organized and clearly written, and reflects a concerted professional effort to meet the intent of NEPA and other Statutes, Regulations, and Plans.

This document provides an example of the high level of quality that can be achieved when agencies cooperate and work toward the common objective of managing the public lands that have been entrusted, while protecting and enhancing the resources of those lands for the benefit of all people.

We appreciate the opportunity to be involved in the development and final review of the analysis and documentation of this proposed action.

Donald G. Heath
DONALD G. HEATH
Forest Supervisor



Caring for the Land and Serving People

FS-4200-2817-821

Response to Letters 3 and 4, from the U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service is the surface management agency for lands in the proposed West Black Thunder tract which are part of the Thunder Basin National Grassland. The Decision Record on the West Black Thunder EA will be signed by the Forest Service as well as the BLM. Their concurrence on the process and on the EA is necessary for the process to continue.



MIKE SULLIVAN
GOVERNOR

STATE OF WYOMING
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
CHEYENNE 82002

December 4, 1991

Mr. James W. Monroe *JW*
BIM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

Agencies of the State of Wyoming have reviewed the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) for the West Black Thunder Coal Lease Application. Enclosed for your consideration and use are comments resulting from that review. By this letter, I will inform you that the official position of the State of Wyoming is one of support for the preferred alternative as described in the DEA. I will also clarify two points raised in the comment letter submitted by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD).

On page 2, item 2) of the WGFD letter, there occurs a discussion of mining impacts as they relate to "topographic diversity and conversion of a shrub-steppe community to a simpler grassland community." So there is no misinterpretation, the Wyoming shrub standard passed by the Wyoming Legislature last session is the controlling state policy with regard to reclamation shrub densities.

Item 3) on the same page discusses access needs for big game harvest in the mine area. Any additional access acquired through land purchase, lease or easement acquisition should be on a voluntary, willing buyer-willing seller basis. This comment should not be construed to indicate that the State of Wyoming suggests that approval of the lease application be conditioned upon additional access acquisition.

The State of Wyoming appreciates the opportunity to review the Draft EA. Please keep this office informed as to further developments.

With best regards, I am

Very truly yours,

Mike Sullivan

MS/rm
Enclosures
cc: State Review Agencies

Response to Letter 5, from the Governor of Wyoming

The BLM appreciates the involvement and support of the state in the current coal leasing effort. Comments by the Governor and state agencies have been incorporated in the environmental assessment to date, and will be considered in the Decision Record.

WYOMING
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT



December 2, 1991

EIS 6631
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Casper District Office
Draft Environmental Assessment
West Black Thunder Coal Lease
Application
SDN: 91-129
Campbell County

Mr. Rod Miller
State Planning Coordinator's Office
Herschler Building, 4th Floor East
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Dear Mr. Miller:

The staff of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department has reviewed the draft environmental assessment for the West Black Thunder Coal Lease Application. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

On 13 May, 1991, we received a scoping request for comments on the West Black Thunder Coal Lease. In a letter dated 23 May, 1991, we identified no essential wildlife issues based upon information provided in the request. A comprehensive wildlife study will be submitted in the amendment application which must be approved under the Wyoming State Coal Program to authorize mining within the lease area. Standard mitigation procedures are available to resolve most of the wildlife conflicts likely to develop on the lease area.

On 5 November, 1991, we received a draft environmental assessment for the West Black Thunder Lease Application. The BLM has identified four Alternatives. The preferred alternative is to issue the lease as a maintenance tract for an existing mine, in accordance with the 1989 decision to designate the Powder River Coal Production Region. The tract encompasses 3225 acres within and along the west boundary of the existing Black Thunder Mine. Option A would also add 280 acres of mineable reserves between the proposed lease and Highway 450, that would otherwise be bypassed.

The lease area is classified as winter/yearlong antelope range, unoccupied mule deer range (except for a corridor of yearlong habitat along Little Thunder Creek), and unoccupied elk range. One small sage grouse lek occurs in NE1/4 Sec 31, T43N, R72W. Eight ferruginous hawk nests and one

Headquarters: 1400 State Boulevard, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

Mr. Rod Miller
December 2, 1991
Page 2 - EIS 6631

golden eagle nest are located within the lease area. No habitat crucial to the survival of a threatened or endangered species occurs there, although bald eagles commonly winter in the vicinity. Habitat types include grassland, mixed sagebrush grassland, and sagebrush shrubland. Mining will disturb approximately 144 acres of playas with hydric soils. Topography is gently rolling to rolling.

After reviewing this draft environmental assessment, we have identified the following concerns:

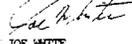
- 1) On page vi, the EA indicates the lease area occupies 3225 acres and an additional 280 acres may be added under Option A. On page 51, it is indicated 3725 acres will be disturbed within the lease area and an additional 400 acres would be disturbed under Option A. How can the area of affected surface exceed the lease area by so much? This discrepancy should be corrected.
- 2) The analysis of impacts to wildlife resources on page 55 is unsatisfactory. The BLM generally contends wildlife will displace from mining disturbance, with no significant population impacts. This assumption is not valid when viewed from a cumulative standpoint. Two unavoidable impacts of mining include a substantial reduction of topographic diversity and conversion of a shrub-steppe community to a simpler grassland community. Both alterations may have far reaching effects on the regional wildlife community. The EA should provide a discussion of the impact these topographic and vegetation alterations might have on regional biotic diversity and carrying capacity for wintering big game herds. The BLM should provide both site-specific and cumulative analyses.
- 3) There are currently eight coal mines operating within the Highlight Herd Unit which account for 12 percent of the occupied habitat. At least five additional sections of land associated with the West Black Thunder Coal Lease could potentially be withdrawn from rifle hunting. Closed surfaces become refuges which draw additional animals from surrounding areas where they might otherwise be accessible to hunters. This compromises the ability of the WGF to maintain herd objectives, which may lead to overpopulation, range over-utilization, and an increase in wildlife damage claims. To alleviate the cumulative impact of hunting closures, we recommend the following mitigation procedures:
 - a) Hunting should be allowed within the Black Thunder permit area throughout the life of the operation. Only the minimum area necessary for safety considerations should be closed.
 - b) The coal company, in cooperation with the BLM, USFS, and WGF, should lease additional lands within Hunt Area 24 to facilitate public access. Easements across private surfaces to previously inaccessible public lands should be given priority.

Mr. Rod Miller
December 2, 1991
Page 3 - EIS 6631

We have identified no other essential issues requiring analysis in this environmental assessment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,


JOE WHITE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JW:TC:as
cc: Game Division
Fish Division
HATS Division
USFWS

Response to letter 6, from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department

The Game and Fish Department identified three concerns with the Draft West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment.

Concern 1: The Game and Fish Department refers to the discrepancy between the area of the lease shown on page vi and the projected area of disturbance shown on page 53. On page 53 of the draft EA, it states "It is estimated that about 3725 acres of soil resources would be disturbed in the proposed WBT lease area and adjacent disturbance areas under the proposed action." This area referred in this statement is the area of the lease, plus the additional area which will be disturbed in order to mine to the edge of the lease. That is the reason for the discrepancy between the size of the proposed lease and the estimated area of disturbance.

Concern 2: There are several agencies involved in the Federal Coal Management Process. The BLM is the Federal agency charged with the responsibility of leasing Federal coal. Once the coal is leased, the U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) has regulatory primacy over the reclamation of surface mining activities. In Wyoming, OSM has entered into an agreement with the state government to develop state specific guidelines and standards for the reclamation of coal mines. This program is administered by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality. The DEQ has developed the surface mining permitting process and set the standards and guidelines for these activities in this state.

As part of BLM's processing of Federal coal lease applications, we do perform a NEPA analysis and documentation prior to leasing. A principle concern in this step of the process is that we (BLM) do not foreclose any environmental management options that could and should be addressed at other points in the process by other agencies.

The Game and Fish letter raises specific concerns about treatment of topographic diversity and shrub composition in post-mining reclamation. Both of these issues are outside the realm of BLM's direct regulatory authority. They are dealt with by OSM and DEQ. As pointed out by the Governor in his comment letter, the standard passed by the Wyoming legislature is the controlling state policy with regard to reclamation shrub density.

The West Black Thunder EA considers topographic and vegetative impacts and this analysis does not indicate any substantial problem with meeting the state topographic and vegetative requirements. The BLM must deal with the regulations as they currently exist. The BLM is not currently challenging these standards, and does not currently plan to develop a new and separate agency position or evaluation standard regarding topographic diversity or shrub composition of revegetation in reclamation of surface mines areas.

With regard to the cumulative analysis, the cumulative impacts to wildlife are considered in the cumulative analysis section of the West Black Thunder EA. The BLM estimates that a small percentage of the available wildlife habitat in Campbell and Converse Counties is included in the already existing leases and in the proposed LBAs. If all the leased acreage and acreage

proposed for leasing is mined and reclaimed, most of the existing habitat in Campbell and Converse Counties will be unaffected by past, current, and future topographic and vegetative reclamation alterations.

Concern 3: The BLM feels this issue should not be a leasing issue. If the Game and Fish Department has concerns over problems with hunting access, it would be best if they deal directly with the companies and the landowners concerned. The Governor stated that the state of Wyoming is not suggesting that approval of the lease application be conditioned upon additional access acquisition.

*Office of Industrial Siting Administration*1ST FLOOR EAST HERSCHLER BUILDING CHEYENNE, WYOMING 82002 TELEPHONE: 307.777.7368
FAX: 307.777.6937

MEMORANDUM

TO: Rod Miller, Federal Lands Management Coordinator

FROM: Jay Meyer, Senior Economist

DATE: November 22, 1991

SUBJECT: DEA for West Black Thunder LBA (SIN 91-129)

I have reviewed the Draft Environmental Assessment for the West Black Thunder Coal Lease Application. I agree with the conclusions of the preferred alternative. Offering the West Black Thunder tract to Black Thunder Coal Company on a competitive lease would reduce the adverse social and economic impacts of mining the tract by extending the employment of current mine employees and eliminating the impacts associated with a new mine start. This alternative should be preferred especially in light of the proposed Rocky Butte new mine start and the new coal-fired power plant planned for Gillette by Black Hills Power and Light Company (BHP&L).

I would recommend that the impacts of the new power plant proposed by BHP&L be included in the discussion of cumulative impacts under Chapter IV, subsection E.4. BHP&L has submitted a Request for Waiver of Permit Application with the Industrial Siting Administration for the Nest Simpson Unit #2 30MW coal-fired power plant. We are willing to share information regarding this application with the BLM.

JAM

Response to letter 7, from the Office of Industrial Siting Administration

The Office of Industrial Siting Administration was contacted in response to this comment. That office is sending the BLM information on potential impacts to Gillette as a result of the proposed new power plant planned by Black Hills Power and Light, the proposed expansion of the Dry Fork Mine, and the proposed Rocky Butte new mine start, and that data will be considered in future actions, particularly in the final West Rocky Butte EIS.

Regarding the West Black Thunder lease itself, Mr. Jay Meyer indicated that the Industrial Siting Administration does not have concerns with impacts on Gillette as a result of the proposed action in the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment.

8
DIVISION OF PARKS
& CULTURAL RESOURCES

Wyoming
Department of Commerce

State Historic Preservation Office
1843 Carey Avenue
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002-0240
(307) 777-7697
FAX (307) 632-2748

November 6, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
Casper District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
1701 E Street
Casper, Wyoming 82601
ATTN: Jude Carino

COPY

RE: *Draft Environmental Assessment for the West Black Thunder Coal Lease Application (SHPO #0189FRC054)*

Dear Mr. Monroe:

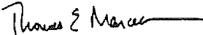
Fred Chapman of our staff has received information concerning the aforementioned DEA. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment.

Management of cultural resources on federal coal lease projects is conducted in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Advisory Council regulations 36CFR800. These regulations call for survey, evaluation and protection of significant historic and archeological sites prior to any disturbance. Provided the lead federal agency follows the procedures established in the regulations, we have no objections to the project. Specific comments on the project's effect on cultural resource sites will be provided to the BLM when we review the cultural resource documentation called for in 36CFR800.

On page 31, the DEA states that Native American consultation will take place before the final EA is issued. We strongly recommend that the BLM formally contact tribal governments as well as the appropriate tribal cultural resource consultants. The WSHPO maintains a current list of regional Native American contacts. If you require assistance in notifying tribal authorities, please let us know.

Please refer to SHPO project control number #0189FRC054 on any future correspondence dealing with this project. If you have any questions contact Fred Chapman at (307) 777-8530.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Marceau
Deputy SHPO

FOR: Dave Kathka, Ph.D., State Historic Preservation Officer

Mike Sullivan
Governor

R.D. "Max" Mustieff
Director
Department of Commerce



Response to letter 8, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office

A special mailing including copies of the draft West Black Thunder EA was made to Indian Tribes in the state and in the region requesting their comments concerning any religious or cultural areas within or near the West Black Thunder tract. The list of people included in the special mailing can be found in the mailing list preceding the comments in the EA.

Following the letters sent, the BLM received a request for additional information from Mr. Frances Brown, a member of the Wind River Arapaho Tribal Elders. The information he requested was sent, with a request for a response in thirty days. We did not receive further comments from Mr. Brown within the 30 day period (See Letter 24 and responses).



THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF WYOMING

BOX 3008 UNIVERSITY STATION • LARAMIE WYOMING 82071
(307) 766-2286 • FAX 307-766-2605

STATE GEOLOGIST - Gary B. Glass

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November 19, 1991

--MEMORANDUM--

TO: Rod Miller, Wyoming State Clearinghouse
FROM: Gary B. Glass, State Geologist
SUBJECT: Draft Environmental Assessment for West Black Thunder Coal Lease
Application (State Identifier 91-129)

Our only comment refers to page 53 where the DEA mentions "selenium". We suggest that all parties to this project coordinate with the State's selenium research team. A good contact would be Greg Smith at the Land Quality Division of DEQ.

Response to Letter 9, the Geological Survey of Wyoming.

Mr. Greg Smith with the DEQ Land Quality Division was contacted concerning this topic, and the information he provided is incorporated in the Final EA. The Geological Survey of Wyoming's help on this issue is appreciated.

Public Service Commission
 700 W. 21ST STREET CHEYENNE, WYOMING 82002
 (307) 777-7427
 FAX (307) 777-4700

MEMORANDUM
 GIL TUCKER
 CHAIRMAN
 JOHN R. "BOB" BENTON
 DEPUTY CHAIRMAN
 STEVE BILLESCHER
 COMMISSIONER

ALAN J. BLUMBERG
 CHIEF COUNSEL AND
 COMMISSION SECRETARY
 STEPHEN W. GIBBY
 ADMINISTRATOR

TO: ROD MILLER, FEDERAL LANDS COORDINATOR
 STATE PLANNING COORDINATOR'S OFFICE

FROM: JON JACQUOT, CHIEF ENGINEER
 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION *Jon J. Jacquot*

DATE: NOVEMBER 26, 1991

RE: DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE WEST
 BLACK THUNDER COAL LEASE APPLICATION

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter. The Public Service Commission requests that no unreasonable restrictions be placed on the provision of utility service or on the construction of utility and pipeline facilities as a result of this coal lease.

The Commission further requests that when utility and pipeline facilities must be moved to accommodate the mining of coal on this lease, the operator of the lease be required to pay for the movement of those facilities. If the operator of the lease does not pay for the movement of those facilities, the general rate paying public must absorb the cost to the utilities for such movement.

If you should have any questions regarding these comments, please let me know.

II

/sb



3420 LSA
 WY 118907

November 12, 1991
 Mr. James Monroe
 BLM Casper District Office
 1701 East "E" Street
 Casper, WY 82601

RE: Federal Coal Lease Application WYWI 18907
 Dear Mr. Monroe:

I support the lease-by-application process that is currently being utilized by Thunder Coal Company and other mines in the Powder River Basin. The coal mines in the State of Wyoming have created good jobs (both primary and secondary) and have been an extremely valuable contributor to the Wyoming economy. It is also important to add that mining has been performed in an environmentally sensitive manner and the reclamation efforts have been exemplary. It is important that there be a process by which coal companies, such as Thunder Basin Coal Company, can obtain additional coal reserves, thereby preserving not only the operations and the jobs they provide, but also to extend the important economic contributions to the State of Wyoming.

Sincerely,
Boyd L. Eddins
 Senator Boyd L. Eddins
 Vice-President

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SENATOR MICHAEL J. BURKE
 Natrona County
 213 Capitol Building
 900 W. 8th Street
 Casper, Wyoming 82601-1825
 307-255-3299
 307-255-8172 FAX
 Committees:
 Judicial
 1989 and Federal Relations

November 19, 1991

MR. JAMES MONROE
 BLM Casper District Office
 1701 East "E" Street
 Casper, WY 82601

re: Federal Coal Lease Application WYWI18907
 West Black Thunder

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This is to express my support of the BLM's Coal Lease-by-Application process, in general, and of Thunder Basin Coal Company's current application, in particular. I do so because of Wyoming's compelling interest in preserving the opportunity for the coal industry to thrive here and because of the ARCO Companies' exemplary corporate citizenship.

The Wyoming Coal Industry's contributions are experienced positively by the State itself and by every community therein. It is vital, therefore, to the State, and to its communities, that that the mines have a process whereby they can obtain additional coal reserves. I consider the lease-by-application process appropriate.

My experience of the ARCO Companies' corporate citizenship dates to the mid-1970s when the community of Wright was being planned and developed. As Gillette City Attorney at that time, I became persuaded that ARCO's is a World Class Act. I have every reason to believe that this corporate ethic continues to be advanced by Thunder Basin Coal Company.

I urge approval of the referenced application. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Very Truly Yours,
Michael J. Burke
 Michael J. Burke
 Wyoming Senate

*Not reviewed
 11/21/91
 Jon*



SENATOR TERRY L. GUICE
 Hanna County
 213 State Capitol
 Cheyenne Wyoming 82002
 Committees:
 Judicial
 Natural Resources
 Revenue
 Wyoming Business and
 Economic Development

November 19, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
 BLM Casper District Office
 1701 East "E" Street
 Casper, Wyoming 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

Wyoming is facing difficult times, but one of the bright spots in Wyoming's future is the continued success of the state's coal industry. It is my understanding that your office is currently accepting public comments on Federal Coal Lease Application WYWI18907. Please accept this as a letter of support, not only for this particular application, but for the lease-by-application process in general.

It is important to the people of Wyoming that industry have the ability and opportunity to invest in Wyoming, particularly those companies who are willing to stringently protect the state's environment. The economic contribution these companies have made to Wyoming have been immense, but more importantly they have demonstrated their ability to insure environmental protection.

The record clearly shows that the balance of business and protection of the environment can go hand in hand and benefit the people and wildlife of Wyoming alike. With this in mind I strongly encourage the BLM to move forward and continue the lease-by-application process here in Wyoming.

I appreciate your consideration for my letter. If I may provide any additional information or if you would like to visit regarding this subject, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Terry L. Guice
 Terry L. Guice
 Wyoming Senator

CASPER BLM
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 PRA
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TLG/ms

*Reviewed
 11/21/91
 Jon*

Wyoming State Legislature

213 Capitol Building Cheyenne Wyoming 82002 Telephone 307-777-1881



3411(LB4)
WY118907

SENATOR JERRY A. DIXON
WYOMING COUNTY
21 South Summit
Newcastle, Wyoming 82701
Committees:
Transportation and Highways
Labor and Federal Relations

November 20, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907

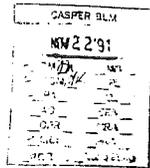
Dear Mr. Monroe:

As the coal mines in the Powder River Basin have touched every community in the State of Wyoming, I am pleased to write in support of Thunder Basin Coal Company's application for additional reserves. The economic contribution of the mining industry will be relied upon by the State of Wyoming for many years to come. It is important that the coal mines have a process by which to obtain additional reserves so that the operations and the jobs they provide will be extended.

As a neighbor to Campbell County, I have had the opportunity to see the mines over the past number of years. It is evident that the mines have had impressive results in the reclamation efforts. The mines have successfully demonstrated that the environmental quality in the State of Wyoming can be protected.

Sincerely,

Jerry Dixon
Senator Jerry Dixon
Majority Floor Leader



JD:ag

Wyoming State Legislature

213 State Capitol Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002 Telephone 307-777-1881



SENATOR KELLY F. MADER
CAMPBELL/JOHNSON COUNTIES
113 East 3rd Street, Suite 1
Casper, Wyoming 82601
307-566-7700 Fax 307-562-3399
Committees:
Appropriations, Chairman
State Chamber
American Legislative
Exchange Council

November 21, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" St.
Casper, Wyoming 82601

RE: Federal Coal Lease
Application WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe:

Having represented the Powder River Basin for nine years, I know the economics and the issues of the region. The coal mines in particular have established an enviable record of positive economic impact which has been balanced by an exemplary record of environmental protection and enhancement. Both are points that the environmentalists conveniently forget in their opposition to this lease and others.

I know of what I speak. My ranch adjoins the Exxon Carter Sawhide Mine. I live within a couple of miles of the UMI Eagle Butte Mine, the Phillippe Orr Fork Mine and the Shell Buckskin Mine. They have been good neighbors and, by the way, I do not own any coal lands or coal interests nor have I ever.

As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I also know the ramifications of curtailing the expansion of our coal industry. Presently nearly 25 percent of Wyoming's income comes from the Powder River Basin. The state's and the nation's financial difficulties will only be exacerbated by the delay of this or any lease.

It is important that we recognize the difference between true environmental protection and economic pillage in the name of environmental protection.

I am strongly in support of Thunder Basin Coal Company's lease application and lease-by-application in general. I urge your expeditious approval.

Sincerely,

Kelly F. Mader
Kelly F. Mader, Senator
Casper/Johnson Counties

Wyoming State Legislature

213 Capitol Building Cheyenne Wyoming 82002 Telephone 307-777-1881



3410(LB4)
WY118907

SENATOR OTIMER TRUE
President
WYOMING COUNTY
P.O. Box 2390
Casper, Wyoming 82602
Committees:
Rules and Procedures, Chairman
Management Council
Select Committee on
Legislative Process

November 25, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, Wyoming 82601

Re: Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe:

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the minerals industry to the future of Wyoming. By almost any measure, the coal industry in the Powder River Basin has developed and produced this resource in an environmentally sound manner to the benefit of Wyoming residents and the nation as a whole. As a result, I want to clearly express my support for the Thunder Basin Coal Company's coal lease application as well as the other applications filed under the lease-by-application process.

Thank you for your favorable consideration of my views on this very important coal lease application.

Very truly yours,

Otmer True
Otmer True

OT/tas

Wyoming State Legislature

213 State Capitol Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002 Telephone 307-777-1881



SENATOR JOHN PERRY
CAMPBELL/JOHNSON COUNTIES
113 East 3rd Street, Suite 1
Casper, Wyoming 82601
307-566-8955
Fax 307-564-9936
Committees:
Agriculture, Chairman
Government Reorganization
Council, Vice Chairman

91050-6

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Re: Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe:

As you are probably aware, the State of Wyoming is very dependent upon the mineral industry, including the coal mines, for revenues and jobs. The result is that we enjoy low property taxes, no state income tax and very low sales tax. It is important that existing mines, such as Thunder Basin Coal Company's Black Thunder Mine, have a mechanism by which they can obtain additional coal reserves in order to preserve jobs and maintain operations well into the future. I am therefore writing to support Thunder Basin Coal Company's application, as well as the lease-by-application process in general.

While it is important that we support the mining industry in the State of Wyoming, it is also important that our environmental quality be preserved. I believe the coal mines have successfully demonstrated that mining and preservation of the environment can proceed hand in hand.

Sincerely,

John Perry
John Perry
Senator, Campbell and
Johnson Counties

November 14, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe:

In response to the public comment notice for the West Black Thunder coal lease application, I am pleased to submit this letter of support. As mines in the powder River Basin begin to mature, it is important that the coal mines have a mechanism by which they can obtain new coal reserves and preserve their future. This is an important factor when considering the importance of good jobs in the State of Wyoming and the fact that the economic contribution of the mines are felt throughout the State.

It is equally important to note that the mines have successfully incorporated environmental sensitivity into their daily operations. The reclamation at the mines is truly exemplary.

Sincerely,

Representative John Marton



REPRESENTATIVE E. A. DICK WALLIS
3rd District
2700 Broadway
Cheyenne, WY 82001
Committee:
Agriculture Chairman

Nov. 14, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I wish to submit these comments in support of Thunder Basin Coal Company's coal lease application.

I have lived in Campbell County for 34 years. I have watched the orderly development of the coal mining industry in my county from the very beginning of the coal "boom". I can tell you that this County and the entire State of Wyoming have benefited greatly as a result of the development.

I know from first hand experience that the mines can operate safely and are very successful in protecting the environment. The industry makes many valuable contributions both in economic and in community service considerations.

As a State Legislator I am very aware of the valuable contributions the coal mines have made to the State of Wyoming and I might add that every community in Wyoming enjoys benefits because of coal mining.

I support and encourage the lease-by-application process that is being used by Thunder Basin Coal Company and the other coal mines in the Powder River Basin.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Dick Wallis
State Representative, Campbell County

November 25, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY. 82601

RE: Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe:

As a long time rancher and a Wyoming State Representative from Campbell County, I would like to extend my support of Thunder Basin Coal Company's coal lease application, as well as supporting the maintenance lease process in general. I have been in Campbell County throughout the development of the coal industry, and have seen Gillette and Wright grow in response to the growth. This growth has been very positive and beneficial to our residents.

The coal industry has been a strong partner with both Campbell County and the State of Wyoming. The industry employs our citizens and provides substantial revenues to Campbell County as well as the State of Wyoming. It is important that these companies have the ability to maintain their operations and the jobs that they provide. The mines have successfully demonstrated that they can operate within Wyoming law and that they can operate in an environmentally sensitive fashion. I encourage the BLM to continue its efforts in leasing additional coal reserves in Campbell County.

Sincerely,

John J. Hines
Representative John Hines



REPRESENTATIVE ELL O. SEBOUT
Franklin County
P.O. Box 111
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001
Committees:
Corporations, Elections and
Political Subdivisions
Natural Resources and
Economic Development

November 27, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe:

As a member of the Wyoming House of Representatives and member of the House Revenue Committee, I would like to offer my support for Thunder Basin Coal Company's coal lease application. I would also like to support the lease-by-application process. We are fortunate in the State of Wyoming to be blessed with an abundant supply of minerals. The result of mineral production in Wyoming is that we have no State income tax, as well as low property and sales taxes. We need to encourage the existing coal mining operations in the State of Wyoming to continue to invest in Wyoming and employ our citizens. I live in Fremont County and have seen first hand how the loss of jobs can impact a community and its economy. By allowing the existing coal sites to obtain additional reserves through the lease by application process, we can preserve those important jobs well into the future.

I feel the state has closely monitored the leasing process to ensure that the correct procedure is clearly followed. The lease-by-application process provides a sound mechanism to ensure that all aspects are adequately addressed and that maximum competitive bidding is achieved for our coal reserves. It is my belief that this process as being applied to the Thunder Basin Coal Company's application is sound and should be continued.

Sincerely,

Ell O. Sebout

EDB/ksb

cc: Alan Edwards

Response to Letters 11 through 21, from members of the Wyoming Legislature

The BLM appreciates the concerns of the Wyoming legislators in maintaining jobs, coal production, and the quality of the environment in the state of Wyoming. These comments will be taken into account in the preparation of the Decision Record.

3420 L84
WYD 118907



CITY OF GILLETTE

P. O. BOX 3003 - GILLETTE, WYOMING 82717-3003
PHONE (307) 686-5200

November 20, 1991

James Monroe
District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Casper District
1701 East E. Street
Casper, WY 82601

NOV 24 1991

91111 27

Dear Mr. Monroe:

On the behalf of the City of Gillette, I wish to formally express the City's support for Federal Coal Lease Application WY 118907 and titled the West Black Thunder Coal Lease.

We have reviewed the Environmental Assessment for Thunder Basin Coal Company's application and feel that the granting of this lease will have a beneficial long term effect on the economy of Gillette and Campbell County. The proposed lease will add approximately 13 years to the life of the mine and result in recovery of approximately 400 million tons of additional coal.

The maintenance of long term employment will result in projected additional payroll of \$23.5 million per year carrying well into the next century. Without this lease, employment at the Black Thunder Mine could begin to decline as early as 1996.

In addition, an estimated tax revenue of \$250 million in mineral royalties would be paid, of which one-half comes back to the State of Wyoming and a substantial portion of that returns to the local economy.

The Black Thunder Mine has won numerous awards for excellence and achievement in reclamation and environmental protection including a special Merit Recognition Award from the National Environmental Awards Council in 1990.

In summary, we at the City of Gillette, feel that the granting of this permit is vital to the economic health of our City and region and urge its approval by the Federal Agencies responsible.

Sincerely,

E. J. Collins
Mayor

DS/EJC/b

ds:91.135

3420 L84
WYD 118907

Town of Wright
P.O. Box 70
Wright, Wyoming 82732
(307) 464-1666

CASPER BLM	
DEC 4 1991	
— OM —	— MH —
— ADM —	— FL —
— PA —	— SL —
— AD —	— BRA —
— OPR —	— NRA —
— LRR —	— PRA —
— RGR —	— Lead Resp —

December 3, 1991

James Monroe
District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Casper District
1701 East E. Street
Casper WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

On behalf of the Town of Wright, I wish to formally express the Town's support for the Thunder Basin Coal Company West Black Thunder Coal lease application. (See attached Resolution 5-91)

We feel that the granting of this lease would extend the life of Black Thunder Mine up to thirteen years and have a beneficial long term effect on the economy of the Town of Wright and Campbell County. Approximately 13 years would be added to the life of the mine.

The maintenance of long term employment would result in projected payroll of \$23.5 million per year carrying into the next century. Without this lease the employment at the Black Thunder Mine could begin to decline as early as 1996. The additional tax revenue of mineral royalties that would come back to the State of Wyoming and the local economy would be approximately \$125 million.

Black Thunder Mine has a tract record of strong community support of the Town of Wright and was instrumental in building Wright. It has won numerous awards for excellence and achievement in reclamation and environmental protection.

Therefore, the Town of Wright feels that the granting of this permit is vital to the economic health of the Town of Wright and Campbell County and urge its approval by the Federal Agency responsible.

Sincerely,

Joe Robidoux, Mayor
Town of Wright

Enclosure

JRdr

Response to Letters 22 and 23, from the cities of Gillette and Wright, Wyoming

The cities of Gillette and Wright, Wyoming will experience the greatest impacts if the West Black Thunder LBA is issued and also will experience the greatest impacts if the lease is not issued. The comments of these cities are important in evaluating the West Black Thunder EA, and their support of the process is important. These comments have been considered in the Final Environmental Assessment and will be taken into account in the Decision Record.

Northern Arapaho Business Council
 P. O. Box 398
 Ft. Washburn, Wyoming 82514
 Phone 332-8120 332-5008 307-456-3481
 CASPER 82401



DEC 16 '91

ADM	MIN
ADM	ADM
PA	SI
AO	BPA
OPR	NPA
LRR	PPA
RGR	Land Resp

December 1991
 Mr. James W. Monroe and Ms. Nancy Doeiger
 U.S. Bureau of Land Management
 Casper District Office
 1701 East 'E' Street
 Casper, Wyoming 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe, Ms. Nancy Doeiger, et al.

The Arapaho Tribe, in response to your West Black Thunder Draft Environmental Assessment inquiry letter dated 15 November 1991, would like to be in a position to answer your initial inquiry, however, at this time we need more accurate information before proceeding.

As you are probably aware, this area is part of what is traditional Arapaho lands, and should include a number of sites that would be definitely of Arapaho origin.

Particularly, we could use a map of 1:100,000 scale showing where the mine and buffer zone will be in conjunction with particularly site 48CA1780, and a more complete copy of your archeological/cultural survey reports). The archeological reports especially pertaining to sites 48CA1780, 481729, 48CA1474, 48CA2481, 48CA 401+402, 48FA91-32, 48PA91-32-P2/H6, PA91-32-P3, and a copy or summary of the 1982 Chapman/Miller Report. The 48CA1780 site having a large circle and being a habitation location fits Arapaho tradition, and we would like much information on that site as possible, especially a photograph of the circle and surrounding area.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call or write.

Sincerely,

 Francis Brown
 Home Phone (mornings) (307) 856-4556
 Member, Arapaho Wind River Traditional Elders
 P. O. Box 601
 Riverton, Wyoming 82501
 Copy: Wyoming SHPO, Tom Marceau

Response to Letter 24

3420 (LB)
 WY118907

JAN 17 1992

Certified Mail - Return Receipt Requested

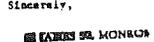
Mr. Francis Brown
 Member, Arapaho Wind River Traditional Elders
 P.O. Box 601
 Riverton, WY 82501

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you for your letter of December 2, 1991 requesting additional information regarding cultural resources associated with the West Black Thunder Draft Environmental Assessment. As per your request we are sending you a 1:100,000 scale map showing the existing mine, the application area, buffer zone, and site 48 CA1780. We are also enclosing a copy of the USGS 7.5 minute topographic maps covering the same area with all cultural resources plotted on them. Finally, we are enclosing copies of all sites forms requested and a summary of the 1982 Chapman/Miller report.

The above site location information we are sending should be treated as confidential as this type of information is not given to members of the public. However, because this area is part of traditional Arapaho lands and some cultural resources could be of Arapaho origin, we are sending you all of our information. We respectfully ask that you also treat this as confidential information and not disseminate it for general public consumption.

We hope that the enclosed information will give you the needed information to comment on the proposed environmental assessment. Finally we request that you provide any comments you may have within 30 days of receipt of this information. Should you have any questions or need any further information please feel free to contact Nancy Doeiger at (307) 161-7600.

Sincerely,

 JAMES W. MONROE
 District Manager

Enclosure

Additional response to Letter 24, from the Northern Arapaho Business Council

No further response has been received from the Arapahos following their receipt of the information Mr. Frances Brown requested. Any further requests from the Arapaho tribe will be accommodated if possible.



POWDER RIVER BASIN RESOURCE COUNCIL

23 North Scott • Sheridan WY 82801 • (307) 672-5809

CASPER BLM	
DATE	11 91
BY	MM
ADM	FL
PA	SL
AD	BA
OPR	NRA
LAS	PRA
RO	Lead Reso

December 9, 1991

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East E Street
Casper, WY 82601RE: Draft Environmental Assessment for the West Black Thunder
Coal Lease Application (EA # WY061-2-004)

Dear Mr. Monroe:

The following comments are respectfully submitted on behalf of the Powder River Basin Resource Council (PRBRC), the Wyoming Outdoor Council (WOC) and the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club.

NEED AND ALTERNATIVES:

- Alternative No. 1, the action proposed by the BLM, appears to be in conflict with the intent of the Lease by Application process. LBA's are intended to maintain existing levels of production, not expand production. Yet, Black Thunder Mine has applied for revision to expand permitted production for at least three years by approximately 6 million tons annually. This represents a 20 percent increase over current levels production. How does this permit for increased production comply with the current LBA process? Why hasn't the BLM discussed BLM's proposed permitted increase in production?
- Within the alternative proposed by BLM under Option B, is the semblance of an attempt to initiate some competitive bidding by dividing the proposed tract into two tracts. Apparently, Shell Mining has expressed some interest in this portion of the tract. What are the reasons for the BLM not selecting an option that would enhance competition? Competitive bidding and fair return for public resources is one of the two primary concerns in the current round of leasing in the Powder River Basin. It is also a matter than has been of great concern in congressional and DOI investigations over the past decade.
- Additionally, why hasn't the BLM considered as one alternative an

1

the most long lasting and potentially the most threatening. The most recent assessment of water resources in the regional is the CHIA (USGS, 1988) cited in the EA. On pages 156-157, this report strongly recommends further study of potential postmining water quality problems.

- The postmining water quality problem is especially troublesome because of the potential for a longterm and widespread migration of contamination well beyond the proximity of the mine. The EA estimates decades to perhaps centuries before groundwater equilibrium is reestablished, and longer before contamination is leached from the spoils. This contamination then migrates offsite, potentially threatening existing wells or coming to the surface. Yet, there is no discussion of potential impacts to water users and no mitigation plan appears to be in effect to protect future water users. What mitigation is the BLM proposing to minimize this identified problem in the EA?
- The EA notes that water level declines in the coal aquifer would extend one mile further to the west and that drawdowns in the overburden aquifer would also be extending further to the west. The EA also says that the spoil aquifer will cover a larger area if the tract is mined and more time will be required for water levels to recover. How much more time?
- On page 48 the EA states that a regional study of cumulative impacts of coal mining found that the median concentrations of dissolved solid and sulfates were found to be larger in water from spoil aquifers. Was this information based on a regional study of cumulative impacts in the Powder River Basin? How long do you expect that it will take for water quality to return to a pre-mining condition? How many wells will be potentially impacted? What mitigation measures are suggested?
- The EA also states on page 49 that drawdowns will exceed forty feet and cumulative effects are expected from the Jacobs Ranch mine and the North Rochelle mines. What cumulative effects are expected? How do you propose mitigating these cumulative effects?
- On page 50 the EA states that 13 water wells are identified as being impacted. What impacts are expected and what mitigation is suggested to minimize or eliminate these impacts?
- A significant future problem which was only very briefly addressed on page 53 is the potential for the exposure of harmful levels of selenium to plants and animals. What cumulative studies have been undertaken regarding the potential selenium impacts and problems at mines in the Powder River Basin? What mitigation measures to minimize selenium contamination are being proposed?

3

entirely different tract configuration that would enhance competitive bidding for the coal resources in this area?

- Alternative No. 1 Option A, the preferred alternative of the BLM fails to fully evaluate the consequences of this action. The close proximity to Wyoming HWY 450 could present problems during blasting or high winds. The EA notes that prevailing winds are from the NW, but significant southwesterly winds occur in this area, especially during the dry summer months. While significant levels of traffic over this road are to and from the adjacent mines, this is also a through route between Newcastle and Wright and other destinations. The EA should assess the consequences of potential disruptions of traffic along Hwy 450, especially emergency traffic. It should be remembered that while the opening of Black Thunder and Jacobs Ranch Mines was largely responsible for the completion of Hwy 450, it is still a public highway and is not there solely for the benefit of the mining industry.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- It is again our position that a comprehensive environmental impact study of the region is needed in light of the leasing and development of over 1 billion tons of coal. This is certainly a significant action and the regulations promulgated under NEPA require an EIS.

While a wide range of environmental impacts are of concern, hydrological impacts are of particular concern due to the very longterm problems that can result from mining.
- The EA relies heavily on information obtained from the monitoring program conducted by the Gillette Area Groundwater Monitoring Organization (GAGMO). GAGMO is essentially a network of various monitoring efforts conducted by the mining industry. While there is no reason to consider all this information suspect, it is also not prudent to rely too heavily on this data without independent verification. The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality does not rely on GAGMO for the monitoring data because some wells are not reporting accurate data. Additionally, GAGMO has not monitored wells in the Fort Union Formation and recently voted not to monitor those wells.
- With the high level of mineral development in the Powder River Basin, including coal, oil and gas, and uranium development, it is surprising that BLM has not done more to establish groundwater monitoring capabilities to assess drawdowns and impacts on water quality. Certainly DOI, BLM and USGS could and should be more actively assessing these impacts on a continuous basis.
- The EA barely address the issue of postmining impacts on groundwater quality even though these impacts are quite likely

2

- The potential for selenium to contaminate surface water is also an issue of concern. Has the BLM considered this issue? What other impacts or changes might occur to surface water quality? What mitigation is proposed to minimize these impacts?

- In regards to water level declines in the Fort Union Formation what documentation is relied upon to support that statement that "these declines are most likely attributable to withdrawal at subdivisions and trailer parks in and near the city of Gillette." Are there any other water users of wells drilled in the Fort Union Formation near the Black Thunder, Jacobs Ranch or Rochelle mines?

CONCLUSION

The methodology that the BLM is pursuing in addressing these LBA's is unacceptable. With six LBA's pending, developing six separate environmental assessments will probably take more time and effort than preparing a single cumulative environmental impact statement. It would seem logical to have prepared one comprehensive statement addressing the Jacobs Ranch, West Black Thunder and Rochelle-North Antelope LBA's since they are proximate. Addressing these leases separately in a scatter-gun approach hampers rational analysis of the implications of the action and breeds mistrust of the process.

Thank you for your consideration and review of these comments. We look forward to reviewing the final EA.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dana Walters
Powder River Basin Resource Councilcc: Dan Heilig, Wyoming Outdoor Council
Connie Wilbert, Wyoming Chapter of Sierra Club

4

Response to Letter 25, from the Powder River Basin Resource Council, the Wyoming Outdoor Council, and the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club. Numbers in the response refer to numbered paragraphs in the comment letter.

A number of the issues mentioned in Powder River Basin Resource Council's comments are discussed in greater detail in the final EA.

The purpose of the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment is to evaluate the potential impacts of leasing the coal. It is part of the decision process evaluating whether the coal should be leased or not.

The most likely outcome of leasing the coal is that it will be mined. Therefore, the Environmental Assessment must evaluate whether there are significant impacts to the environment which will occur as a result of mining the coal in the West Black Tract and if they can be mitigated. This evaluation is based on analyses prepared for four previous EISs. Impacts which were not addressed in the previous EISs, but which have been identified during more than ten years of mining must also be considered, along with their mitigation.

The purpose of the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment is not to define specific mitigation measures which will be taken to prevent specific impacts when the coal is mined. That type of analysis is done in the Permit Application Package and EIS which will be prepared under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) if the coal is leased and a mining permit is applied for. That is the next step in the process.

NEED AND ALTERNATIVES

1.) A discussion of Black Thunder's permitted production levels and temporary permit request should have been included in the West Black Thunder Draft EA, and has been included in the final. Thunder Basin Coal Co. has applied for and received an Air Quality Permit which allows up to 36 million tons of production for the years 1991, 1992, and 1993 only. This permit will allow them to produce more than their previously permitted 30 million tons. The increase applies to existing Black Thunder reserves and not to coal from the West Black Thunder tract. The Black Thunder Mine has been producing at close to their previously permitted level during the last few years. According to the company, this increase would have been requested if they had not applied for the West Black Thunder Tract, because the temporary increase allows them the flexibility to market coal for test burns or to secure new contracts to replace some long-term contracts which will be expiring in the next few years.

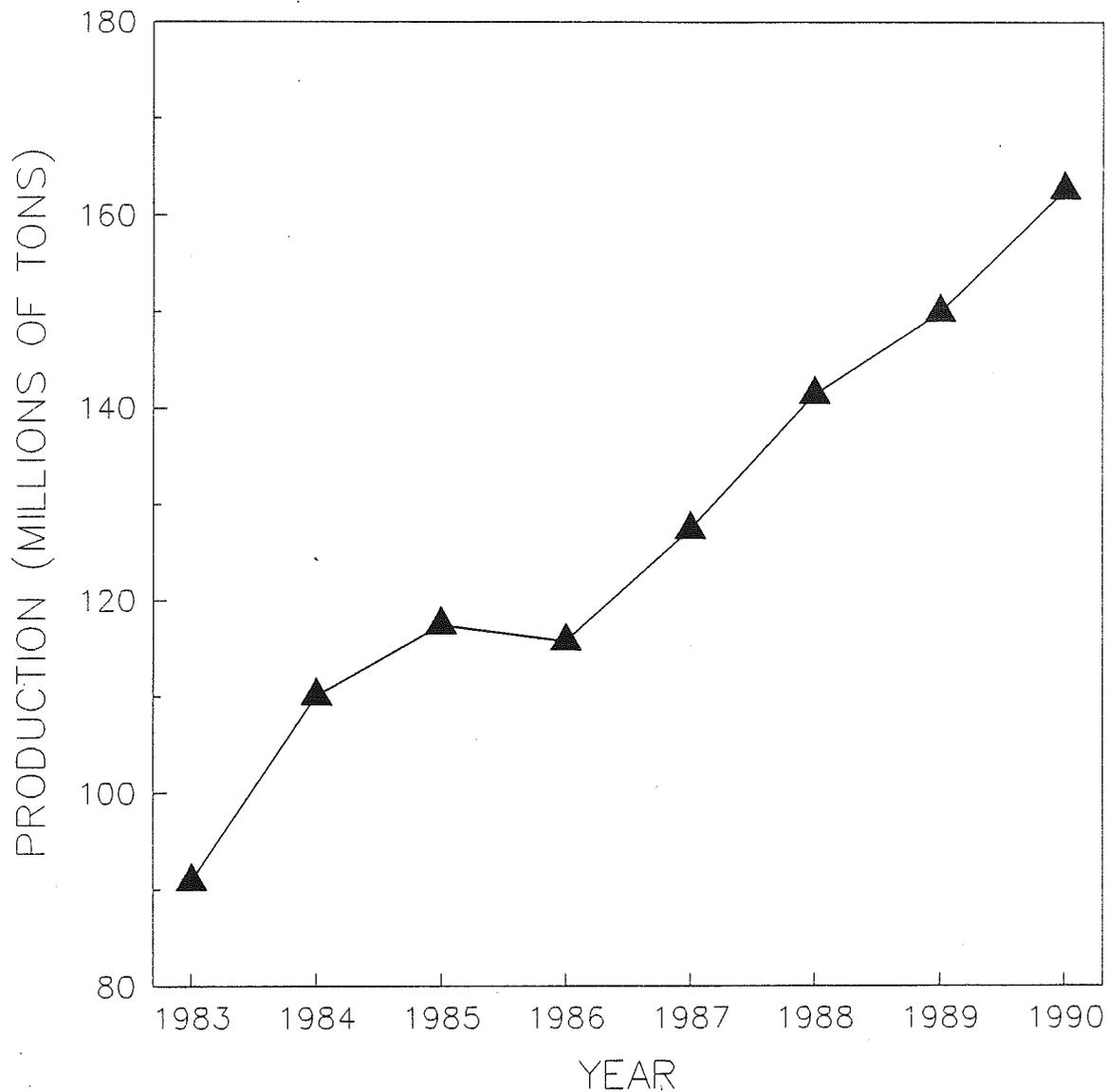
It should be noted that coal production increased steadily in the Powder River Basin from 1983 to 1990, without leasing (Figure 1), and was expected to continue increasing, even without new leasing or the Clean Air Act of 1990.

According to the Powder River Regional Coal Team Operational Guidelines, approved in their final form in August, 1991, "if the application is either for (1) a tract that would

ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF COAL

Campbell and Converse Counties

Wyoming



Source: Wyoming Geo-Notes No. 32, Table 6;
November 1991;
Published by the Geological Survey of Wyoming

FIGURE 1

increase permitted production levels or (2) increase production beyond existing production facilities or (3) is for a tract that would be mined by a new mining operation", the RCT will "determine if the RCT should recommend recertifying the Powder River Coal Production Region" (Paragraph VII. A.). On September 6, 1991, the RCT determined they would not recertify after reviewing all the existing lease applications, including the West Black Thunder application. The Thunder Basin Coal Company made a presentation at that meeting, at the request of the RCT. Therefore, any requirements for the new LBA process have been met.

2.) Shell Mining has expressed interest in a portion of the lands included in the West Black Thunder Tract. That interest was expressed in the form of obtaining an exploration license for an area which overlapped part of the West Black Thunder Tract. The exploration license allowed them to drill holes within the area covered by the exploration license for the purpose of gathering data on coal thickness and quality in that area. Shell Mining has the option of filing for a lease by application if they do have an interest in acquiring that acreage. To date, they have not done so. In the absence of an overlapping application, dividing the tract into two parts would make it less competitive, as two smaller tracts would be less attractive and less valuable for a bidder interested in acquiring a lease for a potential new start mine. The BLM concluded that, in the absence of an overlapping lease application, dividing the lease into two tracts would not enhance competitive bidding and would potentially reduce the value of the tract to a bidder interested in starting a new mine.

BLM prepares detailed evaluations to determine the value of the coal to assure that the government receives at least the fair market value of the coal, regardless of how many bidders there are. The lease will not be issued if there is not a bid which at least meets the Fair Market Value of the tract, regardless of how many bidders there are.

3.) The BLM has considered a somewhat different tract configuration, as the BLM added acreage to the West Black Thunder Tract in section 7, in order to prevent a potential bypass situation. The tract is bounded by the existing Black Thunder lease on the east. To the west, the coal is generally deeper, and becomes more difficult and less economic to mine, and therefore lower in value. Extending the lease to the north or south would add to the distance which the coal would have to be transported to mine facilities prior to shipping, which would increase both mining expense and impacts (traffic and/or facilities). Also, Highway 450 bounds the northern end of the lease application area, and extending the mine north of the highway would cause additional disruption, impact and expense.

4.) This has been expanded in the final EA. Blasting and dust control are regulated, and blasting and dust control plans which mitigate impacts to the public must be approved prior to mining. The effects of blasting and dust control are monitored on a daily basis at the Black Thunder Mine.

The ability to control blasting and dust related problems was demonstrated by Black Thunder in the early 1980's, when they did have operations on both sides of Highway 450. Potential blasting or dust related problems were effectively mitigated at that time, although mining took place near the highway, and haul roads were located under the highway.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

5.) NEPA does not require re-analysis of activities and impacts which have been analyzed and found to be acceptable in previous environmental documents. The BLM has determined that the leasing of coal as applied for in the LBAs to date will not result in levels of mining or in levels of impacts which exceed the levels which were analyzed in three previously prepared regional Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) which were finalized, and in a fourth EIS, where analyses of mining were prepared although the EIS was never finalized. Impacts which have occurred as a result of mining have not reached, let alone exceeded, impacts predicted and found to be acceptable in those previous EISs. The results of studies which have been published in the years since the preparation of the last EA have been incorporated into the EA. These additional studies do not indicate that there are additional unmitigatable impacts which were not considered in the previous EISs. More importantly, these studies show that monitoring and research into potential problems are continuing, that impacts are not exceeding those which were previously predicted, and that the process is working. As new information creates new questions, new studies and new monitoring are being done on a continuing basis to improve mining and reclamation processes.

The 1 billion tons of coal you cite is the estimated total recoverable coal for the pending LBAs in the Powder River Basin. As you are aware, these LBAs range from 57 MM tons for West Rocky Butte to 433 MM tons at West Black Thunder and may be offered individually over the next few years. In contrast, the 1981 EIS looked at the sale of 2.35 billion tons in two sales for seven new mines and eight maintenance tracts. At the current rate of coal production in the Powder River Basin, one billion tons is about six years of supply.

6.) As a result of PRBRC's comment, the DEQ was contacted by the BLM to explain any concerns they have with GAGMO data.

GAGMO is a voluntary organization which was formed to **report** the data which is gathered by the monitoring which is required by federal and state law. There is no requirement that the mines (or anyone else) compile and report this data.

According to the DEQ, while the reporting of the data can sometimes be inaccurate, the actual monitoring data which are reported by the companies to the DEQ, from which the GAGMO report is taken, are accurate. DEQ has a monitoring program for each mine which is developed as part of the mine permitting process. The data DEQ uses are from the wells identified in these plans. DEQ has quality assurance procedures which are in effect on this data.

DEQ uses the GAGMO report as a preliminary review of the monitoring effort. They don't use it for more than that because they have the actual data the report was compiled from in their files. In the West Black Thunder EA, BLM uses the GAGMO report as evidence that monitoring to date indicates that impacts on the aquifers being mined are within the impacts which were previously predicted and found to be acceptable. The BLM believes that the data in the GAGMO report is accurate for that purpose, based on discussions with the DEQ.

Regarding lower Fort Union wells, the decision made by GAGMO was not to include

Fort Union wells in the GAGMO report. This decision is primarily a financial one. The Fort Union Formation lies below the coal, and is not being removed or otherwise disturbed as a result of mining activity. The mines must obtain a permit from the State Engineer to use Fort Union water, just like any other water user in the state must obtain a permit to use groundwater from any aquifer. There are not water monitoring requirements for aquifers which are not being mined. However, the mines do report water levels from Fort Union wells to the State Engineer on a yearly basis.

7.) The Wyoming State Engineer's Office has primacy on groundwater management in the state of Wyoming, and the State Engineer does have groundwater monitoring wells around the state. The DEQ oversees the water monitoring program for coal mining. The BLM, USGS, and OSM do work with both these agencies on Wyoming water issues. There are a number of publications on past and ongoing studies on groundwater in the Powder River Basin which demonstrate that this is true. These publications include: "Investigations of Possible Effects of Surface Coal Mining on Hydrology and Landscape Stability in Part of the Powder River Structural Basin, Northeastern Wyoming", by Bloyd, et al., (USGS Water Resources Investigations Report 86-4329); the 1988 CHIA, by Martin et al. (USGS Water-Resources Investigations Report 88-4046), prepared in cooperation with the Wyoming DEQ, and the Office of Surface Mining; "Ground-Water-Flow Systems in the Powder River Structural Basin, Wyoming and Montana", published in 1990 (USGS Water-Resources Investigations Report 85-4229); and "Evaluation of Ground-Water Level Changes near Gillette, Northeastern Wyoming, by M.A. Crist, published in 1991 (U.S.G.S. Water-Resources Investigations Report 88-4196).

8.) The CHIA also states that, while surface coal mining will initially degrade ground-water quality in the area of mining, "In general, the chemical quality of current (1986) and future water from the spoil aquifers will meet the State standard for livestock" (p.92). It also says that column leach tests indicate that the elevated levels of dissolved solids and select constituents caused by coal mining will decrease with time (p.92).

More than 50 monitoring wells have been completed in backfill areas by the mining companies, and these wells are monitoring water levels and water quality in the backfill. The monitoring data from these wells has been and will be used to evaluate the long term effects of coal mining on water quality in the actual spoil piles to determine if the laboratory column leach tests correctly predicted the actual situation.

9.) There is a potential that there will be a migration of water from the spoils piles to unmined Wasatch aquifers and the Wyodak-Anderson coal aquifer, however, as stated in the CHIA, in general, the level of "contamination" of the water from the spoils piles is not expected to change the suitability of the water for use by livestock (p.92). That is the current major use of that water. Both the Wasatch aquifers and the Wyodak Anderson coal aquifer are generally high in dissolved solids in the premining state, as shown in Table 4 of the CHIA. The aquifers in the Wasatch, and the Wyodak-Anderson coal aquifer are the only aquifers which are being removed by mining and replaced by spoil piles, and therefore are the aquifers which will be affected by migration of water from the spoils piles.

10.) The time required for recovery of equilibrium water levels is of the same order of

magnitude as for the original mine area: tens to hundreds of years. The existing backfill monitoring wells already contain water, and this recharge has occurred in less than 10 years.

11.) The regional study referred to is the CHIA. As expressed in the CHIA, the time required for the water to return to a pre-mining condition will be longer than the time required to re-establish equilibrium, which is 10s to 100s of years. In general, however, there will be water available which is suitable for existing uses before the spoil aquifer returns to a premining condition. As a result, no mitigation will be required in most cases. If mitigation is required in specific cases, then supply wells can be completed in other aquifers. SMCRA, Section 717, requires that coal operators replace water supplies diminished by surface coal mines. SMCRA regulations apply to leased coal, and are administered by the OSM and, in Wyoming, by the DEQ.

12.) The cumulative effects are not expected to be significantly different from those shown in Figure 10 in the draft EA (Figure 11 in the final), which was taken from the GAGMO report. The effects shown in Figure 11 are based on computer modeling which includes cumulative impacts as a result of contiguous mines. If the tract is leased, the permit application package will include a more exact prediction of the expected water level declines resulting from mining the West Black Thunder Tract. This prediction will be based on groundwater modeling techniques, and will include cumulative effects to be expected as a result of the existence of the Jacobs Ranch Mine (north of the Black Thunder Mine), and the North Rochelle mine (south of the Black Thunder Mine). Mitigation for any wells affected by this drawdown is covered by SMCRA, and is explained above.

13.) The impacts to these wells could range from a lowering of water levels to destruction of the wells, depending on their location. Mitigation could range from lowering the pump to replacement of the well, depending on the degree of well impact. This mitigation comes under the jurisdiction of SMCRA and is therefore addressed by the OSM and the DEQ in the permitting stage of the process.

14.) The Wyoming Mining Association and the Wyoming DEQ are jointly studying the nature and effects of selenium in the mine backfill and in undisturbed ground. They are considering topics such as the presence and fate of selenium in undisturbed ground and in the backfill, the availability of selenium to plants, and the effects of selenium on target species. The goal is to determine appropriate criteria for handling selenium.

Naturally high levels of selenium do occur locally in the Powder River Basin. Mitigation measures for minimizing selenium contamination if high selenium levels are encountered are already in place and being used. They consist of stipulations which designate special handling of the affected spoil material. This is also discussed in the final EA. Specific stipulations for minimizing potential selenium contamination are applied during the permitting stage.

15.) The potential for selenium to contaminate surface water is minimized by the spoil handling practices for spoils which contain higher selenium levels. These spoils are placed in a way that surface runoff over the spoils does not occur, and groundwater solute transport off site is minimized. The BLM is not aware of any documented cases of selenium problems related

to plants or animals in the Powder River Basin as a result of coal mining and reclamation after more than 10 years of mining. If the PRBRC has data which demonstrates that plant or animal related selenium problems have occurred due to mining, the BLM will take them into consideration.

16.) Water level declines in the Fort Union in the Gillette were attributed to withdrawals at subdivisions and trailer parks by the CHIA, p. 30. The information in the CHIA was attributed to Marvin Crist. This conclusion also is stated in "Evaluation of Ground-Water Level Changes Near Gillette", Northeastern Wyoming, by Marvin Crist, U.S.G.S. Water-Resources Investigations Report 88-4196, published is 1991.

The BLM is aware of only one user of lower Fort Union water user in the vicinity of the Jacobs Ranch and Black Thunder Mines, and that is the city of Wright. According to the State Engineer, Wright has four wells which are deeper than 1000 feet, and they are the only licensed water wells deeper than 1000 feet in a 100 square mile area surrounding Wright. Wright's wells are more than 10 miles away from any of the mine wells. As a result of the distance between the Wright wells and the mine wells and the discontinuity of sands in the lower Fort Union, no impacts to Wright's wells are anticipated as a result of the mine's using lower Fort Union water.

As stated previously, the lower Fort Union aquifers are not being disturbed by mining. Also, recharge is still occurring to these aquifers from outcrops east of the mines which are also not being disturbed by mining. Calculations shown in the West Black Thunder final EA indicate that the amount of recharge to the Tullock aquifer east of the West Black Thunder mine is greater than the amount being used by the mine.

CONCLUSION

The BLM maintains that the actual impacts associated with 10+ years of mining are within impacts considered, analyzed, and found to be acceptable in four previous regional EISs. Furthermore, there are no documented incidences of impacts related to mining which have not been mitigated and which were not considered in the previous EISs or in the current EAs. Therefore, there is not a need to prepare a regional EIS at this time.

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3420(LBA)
WY 118907

Mr. James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East E Street
Casper, WY 82601

6339 Clareton Hwy HCR-83
Gillatte, WY 82716
November 27, 1991

Dear Sir:

In regard to Thunder Basin Coal Company's lease application, I am writing this letter in support of their obtaining the West Black Thunder Tract.

I have lived on a ranch near the Black Thunder Coal lease for 35 years. I was here long before there was any mineral development and have been through the evolution of the oil, uranium, and coal business in Caspell County.

I am very favorably impressed by the measures taken by the personnel of the Thunder Basin Coal Company and Atlantic Richfield to take responsible action for the preservation of the environment and actually improve the area mined and reclaimed.

The Town of Wright has been almost entirely conceived, promoted, and subsidized by the Thunder Basin Coal Company for the comfort and well being of their employees and other residents of southern Caspell County. In every case, that I am aware of, the company has been the leader in promoting good housing, medical care, and transportation for the people affected by the mining of coal in southern Caspell County. I would like to see them have the opportunity to lease and develop the West Black Thunder Tract. They have proven themselves to be good neighbors, responsible business people, and environmentalists beyond the call of duty.

I wonder what kind of problems the county would have had by now if some other company had been allotted the permit to mine this area.

Sincerely,

Paul R. Stuart

Paul R. Stuart

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3420(LBA)
WY 118907

Charles E. Emery Jr.
3108 Clareton Hwy
Gillatte, Wyo 82716

Dec 15, 1991

Mr James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East E St.
Casper, Wyo 82601

Dear Mr Monroe,
In regard to Federal coal lease application WY 118907 I am very much in favor of this lease. I have a small ranch east of this site and have not had any adverse effects from the mining of coal in this area. I have observed this reclamation work and find it impressive. The financial impact the additional lease would have on the area and the state as a whole far outweigh any objection environmentalists may bring up.

Respectfully submitted
Charles E. Emery Jr.

Response to Letters 28 and 29, from the President and Regulatory Affairs Manager of the Thunder Basin Coal Company

The BLM appreciates the concerns of the Thunder Basin Coal Company, as well as the they have provided during the preparation of the draft and final Environmental Assessments. These comments will be taken into account in the preparation of the Decision Record.

Discussion of Letters 30 through 92

The following comment letters were received in support of the West Black Thunder lease application from employees of the Thunder Basin Coal Co., contractors who work with the Thunder Basin Coal Company, people who do not work in the coal industry, but whose jobs are affected by the state of the coal industry, and other interested citizens of northeastern Wyoming. In general the following letters reference the importance of coal mining to the state and to the country, and the commitment of Thunder Basin Coal Company to the state and the local communities, as well as their commitment to the environment, as demonstrated by their past mining and reclamation record and the awards they have received in recognition of that record.

The BLM considers the importance of coal to the nation and to Wyoming an important factor in making the decision as to whether the coal should be leased or not. The BLM also believes that the operation of the mines in the Powder River Basin to date has demonstrated that the impacts of leasing and mining coal can be and are being mitigated, and that the system will continue to work under the lease by application process.

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November 15, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: Federal Coal Lease Application WYW118907

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This letter is written in response to the public comment notice on the West Black Thunder tract under application by Thunder Basin Coal Company.

So far in my career, I've had the opportunity to work in all phases (research & development, exploration, construction and production) of the mining industry. My career has now come full circle, as I'm a member of the Environmental Department at Thunder Basin Coal Company. The final (reclamation) phase of the mining process is by far the most fulfilling. Our reclamation goals are to preserve/return pre-mining wildlife habitat and domestic habitat to the same or better usefulness in post-mining. The goals have and are being achieved as evidenced by our receipt of several prestigious state and national awards.

I'm proud to be a part of Thunder Basin's Environmental Team. We don't perform reclamation just because it's required—we are an "environmentally-conscious" company concerned about the preservation of our past, present and future rangeland and natural resources. I'm equally proud to be a resident of Wyoming, a state which enjoys low property taxes and no state income tax. My children are fortunate to live and be educated in Campbell County.

In support of my future with Thunder Basin Coal Company and the lease-by-application process in general, I sincerely hope additional coal reserves can be obtained through our application.

Sincerely,

Sua Hillia
Sua Hillia
Environmental Assistant
Regulatory Affairs Department

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Soda
Butte
Services, Inc.

November 18, 1991

Mr. James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: West Black Thunder Draft Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Monroe:

As a resident of northeastern Wyoming, I am writing in support of the West Black Thunder maintenance tract lease applied for by Thunder Basin Coal Company. I am a native of Wyoming and have worked directly for or been affiliated with coal mining activities in this region and throughout the United States for the past eleven years.

Most recently, our company, like many other service companies in the region, has had the opportunity to provide contract services to Thunder Basin Coal Company. As such, I have seen first hand their commitment to the environment, the surrounding communities and the conscientiousness of their people.

It is my view that acceptance of the West Black Thunder maintenance tract lease would provide a number of benefits. The primary of which would be to extend the life of a proven successful mining operation for an additional 13 years. This would not only provide stability of jobs for the region's largest mine and one of the largest employers, but would continue the contribution of millions of dollars of revenue to the State of Wyoming and the Federal government in royalties and taxes into the future.

The West Black Thunder maintenance tract lease would serve as a logical extension of the existing Black Thunder mine. By doing so, the impacts to the surrounding area would be minimized by continuing operations of a proven mining operation and utilization of existing facilities.

Engineering, Consulting & Exploration
P.O. Box 319, Laramie, Wyoming 82070
307/644-2434

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November 19, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am writing this letter in support of the coal lease sale to Thunder Basin Coal Company. I am an employee of the company and I work in the Regulatory Affairs Department preparing many of the permit applications needed by the company. I have first hand knowledge of the effort and concern Thunder Basin places on environmental matters. There are three major points I would like to make outside of the fact that I would like my job to continue long into the future.

My first point is concerning energy independence of the United States. Black Thunder and all the mines in the basin provide a very substantial base for electrical generating capacity in the United States. This means less electrical energy needs to be imported from outside of the United States in the form of oil or natural gas or electricity. The fact that it has a low sulfur content is an additional benefit in helping to reduce the generation of "acid rain". If the sales of the additional coal is not allowed to take place, we as a nation will have to either cut back on our lifestyle or import additional energy and place ourselves at risk. This would not be of benefit to anyone.

My second point is concerning the "power" exercised by environmental groups. Prior to coming into the Powder River Basin, I was working in the uranium industry in New Mexico. The domestic uranium industry is almost nonexistent because of the emotional tactics used by environmental groups on an uninformed population. I do not want to see the coal industry face the same fate. Environmental groups have the right to their opinions but the tactics of creating fear and sensationalism to scare the citizenry is not appropriate.

When we were permitting the Black Thunder Mine in 1990 and 1991 with the Land Quality Division of the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, the Powder River Basin Resource Council (PRBRC) filed an objection to the issuance of our permit at the very last moment. This did not allow us time to resolve the issue in the public comment period. The issuance of the permit was delayed for approximately three weeks because of the objection. What the PRBRC did was totally within the framework of the regulations but it was

Mr. James W. Monroe
November 18, 1991
Page 2

In conclusion, I once again wish to express my support of the West Black Thunder maintenance tract lease and the lease-by-application process in general. This process should benefit us all in continuing the successful and environmentally sound mining operations while contributing economic support to this region and the State of Wyoming.

Sincerely,
Steve L. Hampton
Steve L. Hampton
Vice President

Mr. James Monroe
November 19, 1991
Page 2

also calculated to cause the greatest disruption possible. All I am asking for is professional objectivity in your review of all comments and possible objections.

Finally, Thunder Basin Coal Company is the generator of a great deal of tax revenues for the federal and state governments. If the rate of coal production is reduced, as it would be if additional reserves are not acquired, the taxes generated would also be reduced. With the revenue deficits now being faced by both the federal and state governments, now is not the time to be restricting the generation of the tax revenues.

Thunder Basin Coal Company is concerned about the environment and wants to be a good corporate citizen. We do work very hard to meet and go beyond the regulations in protecting the environment. I am proud to be working for such a company. Please allow us to continue mining coal in Campbell County far into the future.

Sincerely,

Dean L. Roberts
Dean L. Roberts

Dean L. Roberts
P.O. Box 983
Wright, WY 82732

Mr. James Monroe
November 18, 1991
Page 2

4. The EA states the WBT coal will extend the life of the Black Thunder Mine by up to 13 years. Given the current state of Wyoming's finances, it is critical we provide support to an industry which is one of the few steady revenue producers left.

In closing, I believe the EA adequately addresses the environmental impacts that may result from leasing and mining the WBT maintenance tract. Again, I wish to sound my support for the leasing process and for the WBT lease in particular.

Sincerely,

Patrick T. Tyrrell
Patrick T. Tyrrell, P.E.
Gillette, Wyoming

Tyrrell
Ethel Anderson
Gillette, WY 82710

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November 18, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: West Black Thunder Draft Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am writing in support of the lease-by-application process and in particular the West Black Thunder (WBT) maintenance tract lease applied for by Thunder Basin Coal Company (TBCC). I am a professional hydrologist and an employee of TBCC and as such have a strong interest in the lease. Please accept the following comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for WBT:

1. I believe the EA is the proper assessment mechanism for WBT. There have been at least 16 other EIS's or EA's prepared relating to Black Thunder Mine or the Powder River Basin coal resource (not counting documents specific to other mines). Neither coal production rates nor environmental impacts have been as great as originally thought. Thus, the expense of preparing an EIS for the region, as some suggest, would be an indefensible waste of taxpayer money at a time when it can be ill afforded.
2. The EA states that approximately 56 million gallons of water from the sub-coal Ft. Union formation (Tullock member) is used at Black Thunder Mine. Several groups have said that simply because the mine(s) use water from the Ft. Union, for recognized domestic and industrial uses, a huge study should be performed to assess the effects of that pumpage on the aquifer. To be sure, 56 million gallons is about the irrigation requirement of 90 acres of alfalfa over a growing season. If that's all it takes to trigger a major research project, then we should also exhaustively study every aquifer beneath every farm or ranch in this state that uses wells for irrigation. Is this a compelling reason to spend our tax money?
3. TBCC's track record for reclamation (recipient of at least eight reclamation-related awards since 1987) indicates the Company's commitment to leaving the land suitable for equal or higher use. TBCC has committed physical resources and thousands of dollars to the studies of selenium in the environment; pioneered Golden Eagle relocation techniques; performed grazing demonstrations to show the production capability of reclaimed land; and refined methods for increasing vegetation species diversity and shrub density on reclaimed land. From the foregoing, it is obvious TBCC is not planning to mine the land and walk away. The environmental conscience of the Company is strong, but sadly because we are "industry", it is also easy to ignore.

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Mrs. JoAnn Mourich
P.O. Box 457
Wright, WY 82732
November 17, 1991

Mr. James W. Monroe
Casper District Office
Bureau of Land Management
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe

WEST BLACK THUNDER ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The present state and federal environmental controls are functioning commendably in controlling land, water, and air quality in the state of Wyoming. Our environment is a valuable asset to our state, and our land and resources must be preserved for future generations. The Bureau of Land Management's careful assessment is necessary to keep in alignment with our environment.

The Thunder Basin Coal Company recently requested an additional Federal coal lease west of the existing Black Thunder Mine, which will extend the life of this mine an additional 13 years. The granting of this lease will allow Campbell County and the state of Wyoming to continue to benefit from its mineral wealth in the future as well as now. The present mine plan indicates a decrease in production after 1996 with a closure in 2017, which results in declining employment affecting not only employees at the mine, but also the support jobs created for each full-time position at Thunder Basin Coal Company. This company's annual payroll of \$22.5 million greatly impacts the towns of Wright and Gillette.

As we all know, Campbell County's mineral royalties are invaluable to the federal government and the state of Wyoming. This new coal lease will generate \$250 million in royalties with Wyoming receiving approximately 50 percent.

The employees of Thunder Basin Coal Company take pride in their mining and reclamation of the land. Their many environmental awards demonstrate the value that is placed on preserving the wildlife and land of our great state. I strongly agree with a positive recommendation of the environmental assessment of this lease, which adequately covers the proposed action. As an interested party, I will carefully track the progress of this process. I expect you, Mr. Monroe, to voice my opinion in this matter.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Mourich
JoAnn Mourich

Mrs. JoAnn Mourich
P.O. Box 457
Wright, WY 82732

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November 20, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I would like to take this opportunity to voice my support of Thunder Basin Coal Company's (TBCC) proposed West Black Thunder Lease by Application (LBA). The benefits to Campbell County and the State of Wyoming by your issuance of this LBA far outweigh the minor impacts associated with the Black Thunder mining operation. TBCC contributes greatly to the local and state economies in the form of salaries, taxes, and Federal royalties (half of which are returned to the State of Wyoming).

The number of jobs at the mine, those in support of the mining operation (contractors and vendors) as well as those in the community that would be directly affected by denial of the proposed LBA. The West Black Thunder LBA would extend the life of the Black Thunder Mine by up to 13 years. If the LBA was not issued, these jobs and the associated money entering into the local and state coffers could stop at the end of the current lease as mining ceases and workers of all types leave the area to find jobs.

TBCC has an excellent history of reclamation efforts as evidenced by their being awarded the Wyoming Excellence in Surface Mining and Reclamation First Place Award in 1987, 1988, and 1989 and Honorable Mention in 1987 and 1990. Mining impacts to the areas ground water environment have also been found to be much less than predicted by premining models.

With the above in mind, I would strongly support the issuance of the West Black Thunder LBA as an extension of the Black Thunder Mine.

Sincerely,

Martin W. Stearns

Martin W. Stearns
6602 Katrina Avenue
Gillette, WY 82716

CLT@ANR.BLM.GOV

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November 26, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: West Black Thunder Maintenance Tract Lease Application

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This letter is in response to the public comment notice on Thunder Basin Coal Company's (TBCC) West Black Thunder maintenance tract lease application. As a proud employee of TBCC I would like to communicate some observations regarding TBCC's commitment to the environment and its employees.

I joined TBCC's Environmental Team in June of 1990. Since that time I have observed the total dedication of TBCC in guaranteeing that the post-mining environmental quality is equal to or above that of pre-mining. I continue to be overwhelmed by the caliber of reclamation which has become the standard of excellence in the environmentally responsible corporate citizen. This policy is illustrated daily from corporate management to field personnel.

In addition to its strides in the environmental field, TBCC also provides superior jobs for the citizens of Wyoming and continues to be a major contributor to the States economy.

Considering the above factors, I genuinely hope that the West Black Thunder tract lease application will be approved.

Sincerely,

Bonita K. Short

Bonita K. Short
Environmental Engineer
Gillette, Wyoming

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RGR	Lead Resp

1114 E. 9TH Street
Gillette Wyo. 82716
November 22, 1991

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, Wyo. 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This letter is in regard to the federal coal lease application for West Black Thunder by Thunder Basin Coal Co. I am an employee of Black Thunder concerned about the future of my job; also, I would like to point out facts which should be considered as good stewardship of public lands. My respect and knowledge of land management stems from being raised on a ranch where values of production and preservation work together. The office of the Bureau of Land Management is entrusted to administer these lands in the best interest of the American public for present as well as future generations.

During the past twelve years of working in pit operations, Black Thunder Mine has grown from production levels of ten million to thirty million tons of coal per year. The nature of my job provides a chance to observe first-hand the effects of mining on the environment and wildlife. These qualities are two areas most visually noticeable and must be maintained or improved to preserve the integrity of the land. Quality of this semi-arid land appear vastly improved when reclamation efforts have concluded. The land is more productive in terms of natural habitat in regard to the amount and quality of grasses, shrubs and other native species which now grow. Successful reclamation of the land also leads to improved habitat for wildlife in this area. The numbers of deer, antelope, elk, eagles, hawks, fox, and many other animals to numerous to mention continue to flourish and grow.

As administrator of lands for the American public, your position must be to provide the greatest return today without jeopardizing the integrity of the land for future generations. The

presence of coal on this isolated and otherwise obscure tract of land provides you with the challenge of not only providing a sizable income by leasing the land for the coal reserves, but also, improving the quality of this land for future generations. Coal which fuels generators that provide this nation with electricity is at the mature stage of usefulness. This natural resource will propel America and the world into the next century; however, future generations at some point in time will find an alternate source of power to provide electricity. Strict laws enacted by the State of Wyoming in conjunction with federal laws will assure present and future generations of quality public land. I encourage the approval of this application which is in the best interest of all citizens. Please find attached a list of awards supporting environmental responsibility.

Sincerely,

Ralph Olsen
Ralph Olsen

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November 29, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: West Black Thunder Draft Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I'm writing to you in support of the West Black Thunder (WBT) maintenance tract lease that Thunder Basin Coal Company (TBCC) has applied for. I've been employed by TBCC as a revegetation specialist for over eight (8) years and take great pride in the exemplary reclamation achieved at the Black Thunder Mine (BTM).

As an employee I take great interest in the fact that the WBT coal lease could extend the life of the BTM up to thirteen (13) years while providing a tremendous amount of revenue to the state of Wyoming and the federal government.

In summary, I believe the WBT environmental assessment more than adequately addresses the environmental impacts that could result from leasing and mining the WBT maintenance tract.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Moore
Robert L. Moore
Gillette, Wyoming

CASPER/BLM/PT/24

11-27-91
3420(LBA)
WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe,

I am writing to you in support of the proposed sale of the West Black Thunder Coal Lease. Thunder Basin Coal Company (TBCC) is a leader in the Powder River Basin not only in production but in environmental concerns. As you are probably aware, TBCC has over the years been awarded many environmental awards. Because of these efforts, we at the mine enjoy the presence of Eagles, Antelope, Deer, Elk and many other birds and animals. Only through commitment and hard work are we able to achieve such success.

I am proud to work for TBCC and am proud of our accomplishments over the years. TBCC is a responsible corporate citizen and is committed to doing things right. Again, this only happens with commitment and hard work.

This lease could make a difference in the future of many of the nearly 500 people employed at the mine now. I want to see TBCC grow, and along with it, the state and local community. For this to happen, West Black Thunder must become a reality. I urge you to support this sale, not because of my views, but because of TBCC's track record over the years.

Sincerely,

Jim Van Emmerik
Jim Van Emmerik

CASPER BLM	
DEC 02 '91	
COM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	SL
AO	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

3420(LBA)
WY118907

CASPER BLM	
DEC 02 '91	
COM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	SL
AO	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

November 27, 1991

Mr. James M. Monroe:

As a concerned employee of Thunder Basin Coal Company, I am compelled to voice my opinion regarding the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment. I am very much in favor of the release of this tract; not only because it will have an impact as to my immediate employment at Black Thunder Mine, but also impact many other employees and secondary jobs within Campbell County.

I am very proud to mention, and it is also on record, the very fine track record of Thunder Basin Coal Company in co-existing of operations to the environment.

Your favorable consideration will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dave Shrum
Dave Shrum

DS/bl

WY118907
3420(LBA)

CASPER BLM	
DEC 02 '91	
COM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	SL
AO	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

Fred Schmitz # POB 223 # Wright, Wyoming 82722
November 28, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Re: Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907

Mr. Monroe, I resolutely urge the approval of the Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907. This Approval just makes good common social, economic and environmental sense.

Since you are aware of the positive social and economic contributions the Thunder Basin Coal Company makes to the citizens of Wyoming and the Nation, I would like to give you some first-hand insight to the environmental issue.

The men and women who operate the mining and processing equipment at the Black Thunder and Coal Creek mines know and practice the connection between their daily work activities and environmental preservation. They conduct their work to eliminate or minimize dust generation, preserve water quality and usage, and produce the best reclaimed land possible. This is accomplished while producing substantial quantities of excellent quality coal, safely.

It appears as though the Powder River Basin has sustained more environmental scrutiny than any mining district on the globe. More environmental assessments at this time, which would stall BLM approval of WY118907, are unnecessary. Further, your lease-by-application process is appropriate for the extractive industries. It ultimately contains price to consumers of the nation.

Mr. Monroe, I urge this approval as a citizen of the city of Wright, Campbell County and Wyoming, and as a concerned employee of the Thunder Basin Coal Company. Please consider me a resource if you require popular support.

Enjoy a good day and continued success.

Sincerely,

Fred Schmitz
Fred Schmitz

3420(LBA)
WY0118907

CASPER BLM	
DEC 02 91	
DM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	ES
AO	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

Mr James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I would like you to know that I strongly support the lease of West Black Thunder to the Thunder Basin Coal Company.

Thunder Basin Coal Company has proven that mining operation can successfully coexist with the environment.

Sincerely,

Cheryl M. Monroe

3420(LBA)
WY0118907

CASPER BLM	
DEC 03 91	
DM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	ES
AO	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

6802 Sleepy Hollow Blvd.
Gillette, WY 82716

November 29, 1991

Mr. James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: Lease Application

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am writing this letter to you and your staff at the Bureau of Land Management asking for your support on the upcoming lease application for Thunder Basin Coal Company. This request by Thunder Basin Coal for the West Black Thunder lease will have a major impact on the future for the Black Thunder Mine.

I have worked for Thunder Basin Coal Co. for approximately six years along with eight years at two other Powder Basin coal companies. I have, through the years since I came here in 1977, seen substantial growth in Campbell County. This growth was abled by the B.L.M. granting federal land for the use of extracting coal. Many families, including my own, have established roots in Campbell County. These roots were initially set because of the appealing wages and salaries. But as my family and I have grown with the expansion in Campbell County, we now call this home. Without the additional leases, not only for Thunder Basin but for all the operators, someday we or our children may not enjoy the employment opportunities that we presently have.

I ask you to grant Thunder Basin Coal Company the West Black Thunder lease, for the future of the Black Thunder Mine and Campbell County.

Sincerely,

Robert A. McCreary

Robert A. McCreary

RAM/td

3420(LBA)
WY0118907

CASPER BLM	
DEC 03 91	
DM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	ES
AO	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

December 1, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am an employee of Thunder Basin Coal Company, and I am writing to support the West Black Thunder coal lease sale to our company.

I feel Thunder Basin, as well as all of the other coal companies in the Powder River Basin, do an excellent job of protecting the environment. The mining industry in our area can be very proud of the way we do reclamation, protect topsoil, protect ground water, etc. Compared to other mining areas and to other industries, we are very conscientious about protecting all aspects of the environment.

This coal sale will help the U.S. continue to provide most of its electricity from energy within our own country and not be dependent upon foreign sources of energy for the generation of our electrical needs. This sale will also provide additional revenue for the BLM, the State of Wyoming and Campbell County as well as providing more jobs.

I am particularly interested in the jobs that it will provide through the 1990's and beyond.

Please allow Thunder Basin to purchase the West Black Thunder coal tract allowing us to mine coal providing jobs and tax revenue well into the future.

Sincerely,

Marvin Sarro

Marvin Sarro

3420(LBA)
WY0118907

CASPER BLM	
DEC 03 91	
DM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	ES
AO	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

2DEC91

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Sir:

I would like to state that my wife and family strongly support the leasing process for West Black Thunder.

I am an employee of Thunder Basin Coal Company and other than ensuring my job and the jobs of other employees, this lease will generate a great deal of future income for the State of Wyoming and the community.

Sincerely,

Douglas B. McClintock
Debra A. McClintock

8161 Chukar Drive
Gillette, WY
82716

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY
82601

CASPER BLM	
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Dear Mr. Monroe,

I am writing in support of the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment. I write as a citizen of Campbell County and as an employee and Manager of Engineering of Thunder Basin Coal Company.

I have been involved in the discussions and planning for the maintenance lease concept that evolved over two years ago. Today, we stand approximately five years from a production decline at the Black Thunder Mine if the current reserve base is not increased. The maintenance lease concept fundamentally allows coal mines to plan reserve additions in concert with their customer's, the utility's, planning horizons. This planning process provides continuity to the communities, the work forces, and the businesses of the region. This process is prudent for all concerned.

I am proud to be an employee of Thunder Basin Coal Company because the CEO of our parent company, ARCO, has stated that we must work from the same side of the table as the regulators, environmental groups, neighbors, and all others who may have conflict with the interests of Thunder Basin Coal Company. This Environmental Assessment has tried to answer all the known issues from these groups. Thunder Basin Coal Company will continue to work from the same side of the table with these groups.

The lease sale for West Black Thunder should proceed on schedule. It is an action that is in the best interest of the people of Campbell County and Wyoming.

Sincerely,
Kenneth R. Miller
Kenneth R. Miller

November 29, 1991

Mr. James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

CASPER BLM	
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<input type="checkbox"/> RGR	<input type="checkbox"/> Lead Ramp

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am sending this letter to express my support for the lease of the West Black Thunder coal tract to Thunder Basin Coal Company.

The State of Wyoming and all Wyoming people will benefit from the lease. By extending the life of the Black Thunder Mine many jobs will be maintained and new jobs will be created.

Thunder Basin Coal Co. has an annual payroll of approximately \$22.5 million and for every full time position at the mine, at least one secondary job is created.

In these times of financial shortcomings the State of Wyoming is experiencing, it makes good sense to allow the lease to be granted as the state will receive one half of the royalties generated. This amount will be on order of \$125 million.

I believe some of the groups opposing the sale of this lease have interests other than environmental protection. Thunder Basin Coal Co. has received numerous state and national awards for its reclamation efforts. It is obvious, when viewing the reclaimed lands, that the land is much better than its original condition, therefore one has to believe the opposing groups have motives that will harm the State of Wyoming and its people.

There are many other ways that Thunder Basin Coal Co. has demonstrated that it is a respected corporate citizen. The company has shown strong community support by donating money and materials to schools and charitable organizations in Campbell, Crook and Weston counties. Thunder Basin Coal Co. has maintained an excellent working relationship with the ranching community through effective and regular communication. It has also worked with and supported various community emergency agencies such as ambulance services and fire departments.

It is my hope that you will grant the lease sale to Thunder Basin Coal Co. Thank you for considering my opinion.

Sincerely,
Albert A. Blakeman
Albert A. Blakeman
AAB/td

Mr. James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East E Street
Casper, Wyoming 82601

CASPER BLM	
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Mr. James Monroe:

I am writing this letter to show my support for the West Black Thunder Lease that Black Thunder is trying to obtain.

West Black Thunder will extend the life of the mine by up to 13 years which will continue to employ people, create secondary jobs and pump millions of royalty dollars into Wyoming economy.

Thunder Basin's strong environmental track record, coupled with employee pride, has me convinced that Black Thunder will continue not only as a top producer but also continue to obtain awards for their environmental excellence.

Black Thunder is a role model in today's mining industry and it shows in all areas that they encounter. Again, for the reasons stated above, I support the West Black Thunder Lease.

Sincerely,
Wade Silvertson
Wade Silvertson

December 3, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY. 82601

re: Federal Coal Application WY0118907
West Black Thunder

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This is to express my support of the BLM's Coal Lease-by-Application process. Especially in view of Thunder Basin Coal Company's interest in West Black Thunder.

It is with pride that I, as an employee, of TBCC see the contributions that we make to the people of Campbell County, both on a personal and a monetary level. Tax dollars are very important to the city, county, state and federal governments.

We are proud of the effort and concerns of our fellow workers in the environmental goals set by our company. It is evident when looking at the accomplishments in this area that the environment is of great concern to all of us at TBCC.

This lease would extend the life of the mine considerably. Thereby enabling many people to attain a satisfactory life-style without detriment to the land on which we depend.

I urge you to confirm approval of the referenced application.

Sincerely Yours,
William S. Babcock
William S. Babcock
Mine Operation Supervisor

CASPER BLM	
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<input type="checkbox"/> RGR	<input type="checkbox"/> Lead Ramp

December 3, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY. 82601

re: Federal Coal Application WYU118907
West Black Thunder

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This is to express my support of the BLM's Coal Lease-by Application process. Especially in view of Thunder Basin Coal Company's interest in West Black Thunder.

It is with pride that I, as an employee, of TBCC see the contributions that we make to the people of Campbell County, both on a personal and a monetary level. Tax dollars are very important to the city, county, state and federal governments.

We are proud of the effort and concerns of our fellow workers in the environmental goals set by our company. It is evident when looking at the accomplishments in this area that the environment is of great concern to all of us at TBCC.

This lease would extend the life of the mine considerably. Thereby enabling many people to attain a satisfactory life-style without detriment to the land on which we depend.

I urge you to confirm approval of the referenced application.

Sincerely Yours,
Roger O. Johnson
Roger O. Johnson
Mine Operation Supervisor

CASPER BLM	
DEC 04 91	
OM	MN
ADM	FL
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AD	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Ramp

December 3, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY. 82601

re: Federal Coal Application WYU118907
West Black Thunder

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This is to express my support of the BLM's Coal Lease-by Application process. Especially in view of Thunder Basin Coal Company's interest in West Black Thunder.

It is with pride that I, as an employee, of TBCC see the contributions that we make to the people of Campbell County, both on a personal and a monetary level. Tax dollars are very important to the city, county, state and federal governments.

We are proud of the effort and concerns of our fellow workers in the environmental goals set by our company. It is evident when looking at the accomplishments in this area that the environment is of great concern to all of us at TBCC.

This lease would extend the life of the mine considerably. Thereby enabling many people to attain a satisfactory life-style without detriment to the land on which we depend.

I urge you to confirm approval of the referenced application.

Sincerely Yours,
Linda D. Ditch
Linda D. Ditch
Clerk

CASPER BLM	
DEC 04 91	
OM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	SL
AD	BRA
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Ramp

Attn: James M. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office

As an employee of Deep Coal at Black Thunder Mine I would like to take this opportunity to write my support of the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment. I believe you are aware of Black Thunder's environmental achievements and awards for those achievements. Our wildlife habitat development and revegetation programs certainly enhance the wildlife in the area. It is a joy to see the abundant numbers of animals on the mine site.

It should be very clear that there is a deep commitment to preserve the environment by Black Thunder and our employees. Please recognize this letter as being in support of the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment Issue.

Sincerely yours,
Debra J. Monroe

Terry Stinson
Maintenance Supervisor

Thunder Basin Coal Company
Post Office Box 408
Wright, Wyoming 82593
Telephone 307 328 1300



Dec. 1 1991

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am in favor of Black Thunder coal expanding. The project is essential to Hilette and the surrounding area. Campbell County is a coal industry and with out coal there would be no Campbell County. I am not employed by the coal companies but my job would be affected.

Sincerely,
Barbara Hallermann
Barbara Hallermann

1720 W. Warlow
Apt. 107
Hilette, WY 82716
307-687-1132

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444118907

CASPER BLM	
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RGR	Lead Resp

To James W. Monroe,

I am in favor of West Black Thunder Expansion. It will certainly help me & my friends keep their jobs. Also I feel that they should be required to put in some fish ponds in the Areas where Coal is removed.

Thank you
 Rodney Ewe Land
 608 W. Dennis Dr.
 C-Wetite, WY. 82716

P.S. I don't work for any coal mine.

Merrill Schofield
 Thunder Basin Coal Company
 1701 East E Street
 Casper, WY 82601



James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office

As an employee of ARCO Coal for the past 10 years at their Black Thunder Mine, I would like to take time to write in support of the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment Issue. I believe that you are fully aware of the environmental achievements and awards that we have received for our accomplishments in Wildlife Habitat Development and our innovative revegetation programs over the past several years.

I was fortunate enough to be operation supervisor in charge of "Construction and Reclamation of Reservoir 26-52-1" as well as "Construction of Rockpied Habitat for small mammals and reptiles" along the North Platte reclamation project. I take much personal pride in Black Thunder Mine for receiving First Place and Honorable Mention awards for these two projects.

ARCO Coal has made it very clear that their commitment and dedication to the protection of an environment is very high on their priority list and will continue to be so for many years to come.

I am also a 14 year resident of Wright and have been involved in various community programs. The support our community receives from Thunder Basin Coal Company has always been excellent!

Please recognize this as a letter of support of the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment Issue.

Sincerely Yours
 M. Schofield

3420(LBA)
444118907

CASPER BLM	
DEC 04 '91	
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OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

December 3, 1991

Steven R. Lewis
 1413 E. 12th #2
 Gillette, WY 82716

Mr. James Monroe
 BLM Casper District Office
 1701 East E St.
 Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe,

I am writing this letter with regard to the West Black Thunder environmental assessment.

As a concerned Wyoming citizen and Thunder Basin Coal Company employee, I see the West Black Thunder lease to be of great importance not only to the future of my employer, but also Wyoming's economic future.

The present Black Thunder Mine coal production forecast shows a decline in production in this decade, and a mine closure in or near the year 2017. Estimates indicate that the West Black Thunder lease would extend the life of the Black Thunder Mine by approximately 13 years.

There are several reasons why an extended mine life for the Black Thunder Mine is in the best interest of Wyoming.

Currently, our mine employs over 500 people of northeast Wyoming, and at least one secondary support job is created for each full-time position at Black Thunder. As you can see, the longevity of the Black Thunder Mine is imperative to the employment future for a large number of Wyoming citizens.

Aside from being a solid Wyoming employer, the Black Thunder Mine is a strong Wyoming corporate citizen. I am proud to work for a company that is conscious of the importance of our environment, and so widely recognized for environmental reclamation. It is truly a good feeling to work with a company that can draw natural resources from our earth without destroying it.

Also, the Black Thunder Mine provides a great deal of economic strength for our state in the forms of income, state royalties, and general commerce.

For these reasons, sir, I urge you to look favorably upon the West Black Thunder lease.

Sincerely,
 Steven R. Lewis

3420(LBA)
444118907

CASPER BLM	
DEC 04 '91	
DM	MN
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OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

James W. Monroe
 BLM Casper District Office
 1701 East E Street
 Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe

As an employee of Thunder Basin Coal Company I have first hand knowledge of the mining process. I am well aware of how deeply committed to protecting the environment and supporting the community that Thunder Basin Coal Company is during its daily mining activities. These statements may seem bold and prejudiced by the fact I am employed by Thunder Basin Coal Company. Until you consider the track record of community involvement, numerous environmental awards received by the company and the tax base support provided by the mining activities. With this in mind I request your support for approval of the west black thunder coal lease.

Sincerely: Douglas A. Zealand
 Douglas A. Zealand
 322 Willow Creek Dr.
 Wright, WY 82732

2420(LB4)
WY1118907

Dear Sir: I would like to voice my support for the WEST BLACK Thunder Lease proposal. I'm a native of Wyoming and have worked in the Powder River Basin coal industry for over twelve years. I feel the coal industry has benefited the people of Wyoming without adversely affecting the environment.

CASPER BLM	
DEC 05 91	
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AO	BR
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

Thank You
Matt Mella
516 Granite Ct.
Gillette, Wyo 82401
(307) 682-6437

2420(LB4)
WY1118907

December 3, 1991

James W. Monroe
BLN Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

CASPER BLM	
DEC 05 91	
DM	MN
ADM	FL
PA	SL
AO	BR
OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

RE: West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I'm taking this opportunity to provide some key discussion points for you to consider in the West Black Thunder environmental assessment.

It has been the general practice of Thunder Basin Coal Company to give primary consideration to safety and environmental issues when there is competition with economic factors. They have an established and proven track record, particularly in the environmental reclamation effort as indicated by the numerous State and Federal awards they have received over each of the last five years.

With the additional tonnage provided in the West Black Thunder tract, Thunder Basin Coal employees will be assured of extended employment beyond the year 2000. This would not only secure employment for TBCC employees, but also help the State of Wyoming by providing additional royalties amounting to \$125 million. Also, at least one support job is created for each full-time position at TBCC, thus propagating the State and local economy.

Thunder Basin Coal employees truly have pride in the fact that mining operations can successfully co-exist with the environment.

I ask that you carefully consider these points I have mentioned as you progress in the environmental assessment of the West Black Thunder lease tract.

Sincerely,

Arne G. Rajala

2420(LB4)
WY1118907

December 3, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLN Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY. 82601

re: Federal Coal Application WY1118907
West Black Thunder

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This is to express my support of the BLN's Coal Lease-by Application process. Especially in view of Thunder Basin Coal Company's interest in West Black Thunder.

It is with pride that I, as an employee, of TBCC see the contributions that we make to the people of Campbell County, both on a personal and a monetary level. Tax dollars are very important to the city, county, state and federal governments.

We are proud of the effort and concerns of our fellow workers in the environmental goals set by our company. It is evident when looking at the accomplishments in this area that the environment is of great concern to all of us at TBCC.

This lease would extend the life of the mine considerably, thereby enabling many people to attain a satisfactory life-style without detriment to the land on which we depend.

I urge you to confirm approval of the referenced application.

Sincerely Yours,
James E. Mattens
James E. Mattens
Mine Operations Supervisor

CASPER BLM	
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OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

2420(LB4)
WY1118907

December 3, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLN Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY. 82601

re: Federal Coal Application WY1118907
West Black Thunder

Dear Mr. Monroe:

This is to express my support of the BLN's Coal Lease-by Application process. Especially in view of Thunder Basin Coal Company's interest in West Black Thunder.

It is with pride that I, as an employee, of TBCC see the contributions that we make to the people of Campbell County, both on a personal and a monetary level. Tax dollars are very important to the city, county, state and federal governments.

We are proud of the effort and concerns of our fellow workers in the environmental goals set by our company. It is evident when looking at the accomplishments in this area that the environment is of great concern to all of us at TBCC.

This lease would extend the life of the mine considerably, thereby enabling many people to attain a satisfactory life-style without detriment to the land on which we depend.

I urge you to confirm approval of the referenced application.

Sincerely Yours,
S. J. Smart
S. J. Smart
Mine Operations Engineer

CASPER BLM	
DEC 05 91	
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OPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Resp

Post-Net brand fax transmittal memo 7871 (1 of copies)	
To: James Monroe	From: J. Johnson
CC: J.M.	CC: J. Johnson
Date: 12/5/91	Phone #: 939-1800
Fax #:	Fax #:

CASPER BLM
DEC 05 91

December 3, 1991

OMN MN
ADM FL
PA SL
AO BRA
OPR NRA
LRR PRA
RGR Lead Resp

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am writing in support of Thunder Basin Coal Company obtaining the West Black Thunder lease. Thunder Basin Coal Company employs approximately 500 people in Campbell County. For every full time position at Thunder Basin Coal Company at least one secondary job is created. The growth and success of this company has had a very positive impact on the economic development of both Wright and Gillette over the last ten years.

In addition to being one of the leading coal producers in the United States, Thunder Basin Coal Company has received numerous environmental recognition awards. In 1991 Thunder Basin Coal Company was the recipient of Atlantic Richfield Company's Environmental Achievement Award for Wildlife Habitat Development and Enhancement of Mined Land. Thunder Basin Coal Company has donated this \$25,000 award to further research and development of environmental projects. This action clearly demonstrates Thunder Basin Coal Company's commitment to protecting the environment now, and in years to come.

Being a recent college graduate, Thunder Basin Coal Company has given me the opportunity to grow and develop within a major American Company while living in the northwest region. This is an opportunity that, unfortunately, many of my colleagues were not able to enjoy due to the lack of industry in our region.

Please help Thunder Basin Coal Company remain one of the leading coal producers in Wyoming. Consider my request to support the West Black Thunder lease.

Sincerely,

Julia A. Johnson
Julia A. Johnson
Safety Advisor

CASPER BLM
DEC 05 91

OMN MN
ADM FL
PA SL
AO BRA
OPR NRA
LRR PRA
RGR Lead Resp

3-Dec-91

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE: West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Monroe:

First and foremost, as a native senior citizen of Campbell County raised on a ranch in northern Campbell County and receiving my education from Campbell County schools, and with several children who are natives of this state, I believe I can speak with direct experience regarding the positive effect that coal mining development and production has brought to this county and to the State of Wyoming. Education, work opportunity and community development have resulted from coal mining and because of this, my children who have chosen to stay in their native state of Wyoming have not been forced to leave the state to seek adequate employment. Every educational and working choice has been theirs to develop and obtain the most benefit from their efforts and abilities. So few states have that kind of advantage for the younger worker and still be able to retain a protection of the environment for urban, rural and recreational areas.

Raised to respect the lands and water, it gives me deep satisfaction to see these recovered and restored from mining operations to an even better quality than the original state at so many Campbell County Coal mines.

Secondly, as a senior citizen employee of Thunder Basin Coal Company, I have very closely observed the mining and restoration processes of Black Thunder Mine for about ten years. In spite of a period of dryness and low water tables, I have seen very little pollution of the air and have watched the land restored to a quality of range land far exceeding its original state. I have also watched the mining operation progress in such a way as to protect then restore and enhance the water ways. I have observed the taxation imposed on every ton of coal loaded and hauled from this mine for rehabilitation and recovery of the lands at eastern states coal mining operations and noted that the time would not ever come when such a tax would be necessary to restore the lands here. I have had to stop many times while traveling to and from and on the mine site to allow the wild animal life to go their natural ways undisturbed by the mining operations around them. I see the many Environmental awards that this Company has received (see attached sheet) and watch the extraordinary efforts and dedication of the Company employees who make this Company worthy of such awards and recognition. I see the Payroll and Taxes generated by the operation of Thunder Basin Coal Company and the strong efforts made to build and sustain ever better communities by TBCC employees. I see every effort made to maintain a safe working environment so each employee need not work in hazardous conditions.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

- * 1991 ARCO Environmental Achievement Award for Wildlife Habitat Development and Enhancement on Mined Land - \$25,000 awarded to further research and development of environmental and ecological projects.
- * Honorable Mention 1990 Wyoming Excellence in Surface Mining and Reclamation for "Innovative Revegetation Technology".
- * 1990 Special Merit Recognition for "Wildlife Habitat Development and Enhancement" from the National Environmental Awards Council.
- * 1989 Outstanding Conservation Award from the National Institute for Urban Wildlife for "Construction of Replacement Reservoir 26-SR-1".
- * First Place 1989 Wyoming Excellence in Surface Mining and Reclamation Award for "Wildlife Habitat Development and Enhancement".
- * First Place 1988 Wyoming excellence in Surface Mining and Reclamation Award for the "Rocky Hill Coal Gasification Land Farm Project".
- * Honorable Mention 1987 Wyoming Excellence in Surface Mining and Reclamation Award for "Construction of Rockpile Habitat for Small Mammals and Raptors".
- * First Place 1987 Wyoming Excellence in Surface Mining and Reclamation Award for "Construction of Replacement Reservoir 26-SR-1".

I see the efforts of those who are poorly informed or easily misguided who condemn mining operations and yet they and their families are among the first to enjoy the benefits to the community and the state from those very same mining operations.

I urge you, Mr. Monroe, to reach a positive decision about the West Black Thunder Environmental assessment and proceed with confidence so that the future of harvesting one of Wyoming's most valuable resources may come to pass extending both the life of this mine and the power utilized from this otherwise wasted resource.

Thank you for your attention to my request.

Sincerely yours,

Kathleen M. Walker

Kathleen M. Walker
Box 404
Wright, WY 82732

:Enc

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December 3, 1991

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East E Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I have been an employee of Thunder Basin Coal Company for the last eight years and I support the West Black Thunder Lease. During my employment at Thunder Basin Coal Company I have witnessed the company's strong environmental reclamation program successfully restore the mined land. In addition, Thunder Basin Coal Company has received numerous environmental achievement awards in the past few years.

Please consider my support of the West Black Thunder lease.

Sincerely,

Karl J. Mattix

Karl J. Mattix
Safety Advisor
Thunder Basin Coal Company

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December 3, 1991

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East E Street
Casper, Wyoming 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am writing in regard to the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment. I have been employed by Thunder Basin Coal Company at the Black Thunder Mine since August of 1976. Having lived in Wyoming for close to 30 years with a deep respect for wildlife and the outdoors, I initially had some concerns about the affect of mining on our beautiful state. None of my concerns ever became reality. The land where mining has been completed is restored to far better grass and productivity than was there prior to mining. This is no accident, a serious commitment to restoring the land, that goes beyond regulatory requirements, has obtained these results.

The additional coal reserves in the West Black Thunder lease application are critical to my future as well as the future of 500 friends and co-workers. Many of us plan to retire here, if possible, so these additional reserves are important to us. Failure to obtain West Black Thunder will most likely result in decreased coal shipments from 1996 into the future which translates to fewer jobs and less tax paying citizens.

Please move forward with the West Black Thunder Environmental Assessment as rapidly as possible. The positive impacts are real and are many in number. The possible negative impacts are only speculation (with no basis in fact) and are few in number from a very vocal minority most of whom don't even live in this area.

Sincerely,

Jerry Stanart

Jerry Stanart
10389 Hwy. 59
Gillette, Wyoming 82716

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Dec 16, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

I am writing in response to the Thunder Basin Coal Federal Coal Lease Application. I have been working for Thunder Basin Coal for 7 1/2 years, it is a real good job. I feel we need the new coal lease for future retirement, future jobs and also brings in revenue for the state.

Thunder Basin Coal has the best reclamation projects there is as a equipment operator I've seen good work on the projects. We need the new coal lease for jobs and to keep the economy going.

Sincerely,

Mark C. Nicolls

Thunder Basin Coal Employee

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Dec 16, 1991

James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East E St.
Casper, WY 82601

Rick Sellen
113 Sequoyia Dr
Gillette, WY
82716-4415

Dear Sirs:

I have been employed at Black Thunder Mine for eight years and I have found it to be a very good job. I am writing this letter in support to the proposed West Black Thunder lease being considered. I am very happy that this lease is being granted to Thunder Basin Coal Co. (TBCO) and I am sure it will prove to be a very positive influence on both our economy and environment here in Wyoming. I point to Thunder Basin Coal Co.'s reclamation past record regarding reclamation and environmental protection. Again, I ask that this lease be granted to Thunder Basin Coal Co. (TBCO). This is very important to both the State of Wyoming and the employees of Black Thunder Mine. Thank you.

Rick Sellen

3420(LBA)
WVW118907

Dear Mr James Monroe

My Name is Ronald Holmes
I have worked at Black Thunder
mine for 14 years. I was born in
Chapone Wyo And have lived in
Wyoming all my life. I do not
want to live any where else.
I would like you to approve the
West Black Thunder Lease. To Black
Thunder Mine. So that I may keep
working for many more years at
Black Thunder mine. and not have
to look out side the state for
work like some of the people
I grow up with had to do.
Please Approve the Lease

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Thank you
Ronald Holmes
Wright, Wyo - 82732
464-1921

3420(LBA)
WVW118907

Dear Mr Monroe:

I have worked at Black Thunder
now 12 years and it has been very
generous to me and my family. I hope to
work there many more years.

I write this letter to encourage you
to consider the West Black Thunder lease
and I am hopeful that you will grant this
lease to Thunder Basin Coal Co

Respectfully
Ronald Holmes

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3420(LBA)
WVW118907

Dear Sir

I'm writing in hope of gaining your support for the
pending acquisition of the West Black Thunder lease by
Thunder Basin Coal Co

If Thunder Basin Coal Co. is able to acquire this
lease it would extend the life of the mine by
up to thirteen years, which would provide already
employment for many people in Wyoming as well
as millions of dollars in royalties for the state.

Thunder Basin Coal Co. makes a very positive
environmental statement by being one of the leaders
in mine reclamation and has been credited with
numerous environmental awards.

The successful acquisition of this lease is of
great importance to me personally, I have spent
most of my life in Wyoming and hope to raise
my family here. I've been employed by Thunder
Basin Coal Co for eleven years and the successful
acquisition of this lease will help insure my
retirement with this company.

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Respectfully
Wally C. Hardy

3420(LBA)
WVW118907

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Basin District Office
1701 East E St
Casper, Wyo. 82401
Dear Sir Monroe:

Being an employee of Thunder Basin
Coal Company for the past thirteen
years, I have seen the positive economic
improvement of the Basin. Thunder Basin
has proven its desire to uphold
the highest quality in environmental
control.

Thunder Basin Coal Co. and will
continue to be a leader in the coal
industry.

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Wally C. Hardy
Wright, Wyo

3420(LBA)
WYU118907

Dec 15, 1991
Mr James Monroe
3rd Floor Casper District Office
1761 East E St
Casper, Wyo 82401

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Re Fed Coal lease Application WYU118907

Dear Mr Monroe

In regards to the Federal Coal lease application WYU118907. I believe very strongly in supporting ARCO Black Thunder mine application to mine coal from this property. I have worked at Black Thunder since 1978 and have observed first hand their commitment to the environmental concerns in protecting this area.

Being born and raised in north-east Wyo they have proved to me that they are as dedicated as I am in preserving this area.

I urge you to support ARCO's application for this lease.

Sincerely,
Franklin Evans
Box 475
Horton, Wyo 82730

3420(LBA)
WYU118907

Dear Mr. James W. Monroe

I have recently become employed at Thunder Basin Coal Co. as a Contractor and believe it is a very generous opportunity in my career. I hope you will grant the proposal of the West Black Thunder lease. It would ensure myself and others to remain employed at Black Thunder and within Campbell County.

Respectfully,

Kelly G. Hintz

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3420(LBA)
WYU118907

Dear Mr Monroe,

In regards to the west Black Thunder lease. I would like you to consider Thunder Basin coal for this lease. As this would be very beneficial to myself, myself and the state and the rest of Wyoming. I have worked here for ten years and have enjoyed living and working in Wyoming. I look forward to at least ten more years.

Sincerely,
Paul Vetter

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3420(LBA)
WYU118907

Dear Mr. Monroe

I am writing to encourage the granting of West Black Thunder Coal lease to Thunder Basin Coal Co. I have worked at this mine for more than 12 years and it has been good to me. The granting of this lease will be beneficial to many people. The new lease will put more people to work and help to stabilize the economy in this area and the state. There will be a lot of people retiring in the next few years and the new lease would help in opening employment opportunities for a lot of people.

I appreciate your consideration of granting this lease to Thunder Basin Coal Co.

Respectfully Yours,
Charles Jones

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3420(CB4)
WYUS 112907

Dear Mr. Monroe,
I am an employee of Thunder Basin Coal Company and have been for a number of years. I would also like to be here for awhile longer. I am hopeful that you will grant the West Black Thunder lease to Thunder Basin. I believe it would be very beneficial, not only to me, but the community and state as well.

Thank you
Doug Hunter
G. Hette Wyo

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3420(CB4)
WYUS 112907

Dear Mr. Monroe
I have worked at Black Thunder Mine for sometime and enjoy the benefits and the job. I would like to encourage the approval of the west black thunder lease as I would like to continue to work here + others here.

Sincerely
H. Hardy
G. Hette Wyo

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3420(CB4)
WYUS 112907

December 1, 1991
James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

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Dear Mr. Monroe:

Thunder Basin Coal Company is a responsible company that takes care of the environment. They employ a department of well educated and well trained people in their environmental department.

They comply with federal and state regulations in regard to re-establishing mined areas. They even go over and above what the federal and state requires for reclaiming mined areas.

They pay burdensome taxes both state and federal. These taxes support the agencies that try to put them out of business.

They employ in excess of 500 people. The people they employ also pay taxes on the wages they earn and they contribute greatly to the local economy.

If you want to investigate something worthwhile, you should investigate these environmentalist such as the Sierra Club for subversive activists. Some members of the Powder River Resources Council have ulterior motives for their involvement in the group. They want to keep the coal business back in the eastern states until they can organize the local mines. The reason being the eastern coal people are all union and this is where their funds come from.

I feel that the approval should be given to the West Black Thunder lease it will benefit the community and the government.

Jack Matheson
Jack Matheson
PO Box 622
Wright, WY 82732

3420(CB4)
WYUS 112907

December 1, 1991
James W. Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East 'E' Street
Casper, WY 82601

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Dear Mr. Monroe:

Thunder Basin Coal Company is a responsible company that takes care of the environment. They employ a department of well educated and well trained people in their environmental department.

They comply with federal and state regulations in regard to re-establishing mined areas. They even go over and above what the federal and state requires for reclaiming mined areas.

They pay burdensome taxes both state and federal. These taxes support the agencies that try to put them out of business.

They employ in excess of 500 people. The people they employ also pay taxes on the wages they earn and they contribute greatly to the local economy.

If you want to investigate something worthwhile, you should investigate these environmentalist such as the Sierra Club for subversive activists. Some members of the Powder River Resources Council have ulterior motives for their involvement in the group. They want to keep the coal business back in the eastern states until they can organize the local mines. The reason being the eastern coal people are all union and this is where their funds come from.

I feel that the approval should be given to the West Black Thunder lease it will benefit the community and the government.

Cassie Casner
Cassie Casner
1 Sierra Drive
Gilletta, WY 82716

3420(LBA)
WYW118907 Dec 15, 1991

I am writing in support of Thunder Basin Coal application for additional reserves.

Thunder Basin has been an asset to their community, and to the environment. Their reclamation effort have been superb. The animal room there freely and without any concerns for their safety. The mines have shown the environment in Wyoming can be protected.

The way these mines bring into the state are something Wyoming can not do without. It would cause massive damage to state resources and revenues of Wyoming and the revenues from mines that are in Campbell County.

Many of the groups that may be opposing additional reserves are not thinking of the damage it would do to Wyoming. Ask yourself, what if these important people working and paying taxes in people use and pay for not paying taxes, losing jobs, losing power, and the state income tax. Will these thoughts into consideration.

Carroll & Jim Martin
227 Mt View
Helena Wyo. 82116

3420(LBA)
WYW118907

Dec 5, 1991

Dear Mr. Monroe

In regards to federal coal lease application WYW118907

I have had the opportunity to work on the mines and for personal experience I can say that the reclamation efforts are extremely good. Everyone makes it a matter of proud pride to help keep the environmental quality as good as possible.

I think it would be a mistake to not allow the mines again more lease. Thanks for your time

Sincerely
C. L. Lipton

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3420(LBA)
WYW118907

Dec 15, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" St.
Casper, Wyo 82601

RE Fed. Coal Lease Application WYW118907

Dear Mr. Monroe,

Would like to take this opportunity to express my feelings about the lease application by the Thunder Basin Coal Company.

This new lease is very important - not only to the company and its employees - but to the entire area in Northeastern Wyoming - actually the entire state of Wyoming.

As you know - or should know - TBC has always strived to work in accordance with reclamation laws and I feel they even go beyond this. Doing an outstanding job of leaving a mined area better than it was preceding the project.

Please do what you can to address this issue.

Sincerely, Ron Maiter, Lipton, Wyo.

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3420(LBA)
WYW118907

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East E Street
Casper, Wyoming 82601

Dec. 5, 1991

Dear Mr. Monroe

I would like to voice my support for Thunder Basin Coal Company's application for additional reserves. I think it is extremely important to the future of not only the coal company, but also to the economy of the state of Wyoming.

I know the environmentalist are equally concerned to the future of the state. Thunder Basin Coal Company is equally concerned to the states environment. I truly believe Thunder Basin Coal Company's reputation, a billion a vote for the retention of Thunder Basin's coal application would definitely be a step in the right direction, not for the company its self, but also the future for the State of Wyoming.

Doris W. Miller

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3420 LBA
WY118907

DECEMBER 16, 1991

MR. JAMES MONROE
BLM CASPER DIST. OFFICE
1701 EAST "E" STREET
CASPER, WY. 82601

RE: FEDERAL COAL LEASE APPLICATION WY118907

DEAR MR. MONROE,
AS A NATIVE OF WYOMING AND A RESIDENT OF A SMALL
COMMUNITY, I AM WRITING IN SUPPORT OF THUNDER BASIN
COAL COMPANY'S APPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL RESERVES.

NOT ONLY WOULD REJECTION OF THIS APPLICATION HURT
CAMPBELL AND WESTON COUNTY BUT THE WHOLE STATE OF
WYOMING. THE REVENUE THAT THIS COMPANY PUTS INTO
THE STATE MONEY SYSTEM IS VERY MUCH NEEDED. NOT ONLY
FOR THE STATE SYSTEM, BUT ALSO FOR THE COMMUNITIES
WHERE EMPLOYEES HAVE MADE THEIR HOMES.

IF EVERYONE MADE THE EFFORT THAT THE COAL MINES DO TO
PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY HERE
IN WYOMING OR ANY OTHER STATE.

SINCERELY,
James R. King
JAMES KING

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3420 LBA
WY118907

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23 North Summit Avenue
Newcastle, WY 82701
December 16, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe,
As a resident of Weston county, I am fully aware of the economic
benefit of Black Thunder Mine's nearby presence. Both we, and
the entire state, need its continued operation, particularly
since their restoration of the land is so well done.

I am strongly in support of Federal Coal Lease Application WY118907.

Sincerely,

Robert King

Robert King

3420 LBA
WY118907

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21 Timberline Road
Newcastle, WY 82701
December 16, 1991

Mr. James Monroe
BLM Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

Dear Mr. Monroe,
I would like to register my support for Federal Coal Lease
Application WY118907. The Powder Basin coal mines, particularly
Black Thunder Mine, have proved their dedication to environmental
reclamation, and their economic benefit is a necessity in
Weston County.

Sincerely,

Frank McGinty

Frank McGinty

3420 LBA
WY118907

Dear Mr. Monroe

*I would like to encourage you
to grant Black Thunder Mine the
requested Black Thunder lease
My family & many other families future
well you depends on this lease*

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*Respectfully,
W.A. Smith*

3420(LBA)
WYU 118907

Dear Mr. Monroe

I am writing you to encourage you to Grant Black Thunder mine the West Black Thunder Lease. The Times of Snow country must be about our local economy plus Wyoming.

Thank you
Ed Shugart

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3420(LBA)
WYU 118907

Mr. James Monroe
Bldg Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, Wyo. 82601.

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Federal Coal Lease Application

Dear Mr. Monroe

People and jobs is what makes a state strong in every area that you can think of, without either one of these two ingredients, your cup of life as a state will soon be full of dust... Choking trying to stay alive.

Black Thunder's need for reclamation and the environment speaks for itself. Other industries in the state should take notice.

I feel the economic impact on getting the new lease, will by far outway the environmental impact. I fully agree we need to take care of our state in every way we can, but I don't feel we need to put peoples jobs and their families future on the line cause a lease was held up for us and that

if the state will provide the eye, Black Thunder will feel it full of life for a long time to come.

Thank you very much
Dan Darity

3420(LBA)
WYU 118907

Tim Weisbach
P.O. # 703
WYO 82712

Mr. James Monroe
Bldg Casper District Office
1701 East "E" Street
Casper, WY 82601

RE Federal Coal Lease Application WYU 118907

Dear Mr. Monroe

I am writing to encourage approve the lease application by Thundebasin coal of the above numbered application also known as West Black Thunder.

As a resident and lease owner of Campbell County I feel that obtaining this lease would have a long term positive economic impact for Campbell co and for the state of Wyoming.

Yours truly
Tim Weisbach

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3420(LBA)
WYU 118907

Mr. James Monroe

I have worked in Campbell County for ten years and would like to continue working here. This is why I would like to see TBCC get the lease of West Black Thunder. It would keep the local economy moving in a positive direction.

Sincerely
Jimmy Griffin

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34720(LBA)
WYU0112907

December 20 1991

Mr James Monroe
Bism Casper District Office
1701 East E Street
Casper WY 82601

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DEC 24 91	
COM	MIN
ADM	FL
PA	SL
AO	BRA
DPR	NRA
LRR	PRA
RGR	Lead Rep

11427

RE: Federal Coal Lease Application WYU11 8907

Dear Mr. Monroe

As a coal miner and a Thunder
Basin Coal Comp. employee I highly support
that Thunder Basin Coal Comp get the most
lease. Its proven that the mine recleaving
it land is better than natural ground
by all the wildlife that lives out there.
And also so the people working there can
continue living and working in Wyoming.

Sincerely + Thank you
T L L
Terrance L. Lion

Response to Letters 30 through 92

The preceding letters, and the fact that they were received in this number indicate a significant support for coal mining in general and the Thunder Basin Coal Company specifically in northeastern Wyoming. These comments will be taken into account in the Decision Record.