

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 17, 2024

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning
Director
Bureau of Land Management
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Director Stone-Manning,

I am strongly opposed to the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed amendments to the Miles City Field Office and Buffalo Field Office Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and urge you to withdraw them. President Biden has made clear that he opposes coal mining and coal-fired energy generation regardless of the cost to rural America and electric reliability. The proposed moratorium on new federal coal leasing in Montana and Wyoming will destroy jobs in these rural states and harm our nation's energy security.

The Powder River Basin that spans Montana and Wyoming is the nation's largest coal field. Coal from this area has a low sulfur content making it highly valued. In Montana, the proposed Miles City amendment would remove 338 million tons of coal from leasing and the proposed Buffalo amendment would remove 48 billion short tons of coal from leasing consideration in Wyoming. Wyoming currently produces over 40% of U.S. coal with much coming from federal leases.

The proposed amendments to the RMPs are contrary to the statutory multiple use mandate under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, which directs BLM to manage lands and subsurface minerals "in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber." Banning new coal leases is clearly contrary to this directive. These proposed amendments follow the pattern of actions taken by the Biden Administration that advance regulations targeting multiple use and traditional baseload fuel generation in direct violation of the rule of law.

America's demand for electricity is expected to increase significantly over the next decade after years of little to no demand growth. It is vital that baseload coal-fired electric generating plants remain open to meet this demand. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation has stated that grid reliability is fragile and has warned about the risk of blackouts and brownouts across the country. Commissioners on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have also stressed the importance of baseload power plants for grid reliability. An unreliable grid will put American businesses at a disadvantage to countries with reliable power. In Montana, Wyoming, and other states that have subzero winter temperatures, blackouts can be life threatening. We need more electricity not less, and coal is a critical component of this supply.

Since coal production is a major economic driver in Montana and Wyoming, the proposed amendments will also damage the economies in these states. BLM's own analysis on these two proposed amendments acknowledges that ending coal leasing means foregoing thousands of potential mining jobs and a significant revenue stream to the states. This revenue from the

federal coal leases is used by the states and counties to support schools, repair roads, and provide essential services to rural communities. Losing these jobs and revenue will have a damaging effect on these states' economies.

I call on you to withdraw the proposed amendments to the Miles City and Buffalo RMPs and continue future coal leasing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Daines". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" at the beginning.

Steve Daines
United States Senator