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For Immediate Release, April 26, 2016 Contact: Matt Spangler (202) 912-7035

Interior Department Takes Next Step in Comprehensive Review of Federal Coal Program

BLM To Gather Public Input at Scoping Meetings Across Nation

WASHINGTON – As the next step in the Department of the Interior's comprehensive review of the federal coal program, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced the dates and locations for a series of public meetings in May and June to solicit public input. These meetings will provide the public with opportunities to help the BLM identify and evaluate potential reforms to the federal coal program. Today's announcement follows last month's publication of a Notice of Intent to conduct a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) that began a formal, comprehensive review of the federal coal program.

"As we begin this review, we are looking forward to hearing from the public about a wide range of issues about the federal coal program," said BLM Director Neil Kornze. "The information we gather will help shape future decisions about this public resource."

The BLM is particularly interested in gathering public input on the issues and policies that should be outlined in the PEIS, including topics such as whether Americans are receiving a fair return for federal coal, how market conditions affect coal, how federal coal affects the environment, and how these and other factors impact coal-dependent communities. Public feedback obtained during these meetings will help inform the size and scope of the review conducted in the PEIS.

In January, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell announced a comprehensive review that will examine a broad array of concerns about the federal coal program following critical reports issued by the Government Accountability Office and Interior's Office of the Inspector General; concerns raised by members of Congress and other interested stakeholders; and feedback received from a series of public listening sessions last year in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Washington, D.C.

Each public scoping meeting is scheduled from 10:00 a.m. -4:00 p.m. local time in the following six locations:

May 17, 2016 Casper Events Center

1 Events Center Drive Casper, WY 82601

May 19, 2016 Salt Palace Convention Center

100 West Temple

Salt Lake City, UT 84101

May 26, 2016 Tennessee Theatre

604 S. Gay St.

Knoxville, TN 37902

June 16, 2016 Pittsburgh Convention Center

1000 Fort Duquesne Blvd. Pittsburgh, PA 15222

June, 2016 Seattle

To be announced

June 23, 2016 Two Rivers Convention Center's Avalon Theatre

645 Main St.

Grand Junction, CO 81501

The meetings in Casper, Seattle and Pittsburgh will be live-streamed at www.blm.gov/live, and all six meetings will have a listen-only audio link via telephone. Those who attend the meetings in person and who wish to speak will be asked to sign-in. Speakers will be called upon on a first-come, first-served basis and will be accommodated to the fullest extent possible given the space and time available. Those interested in attending should check the BLM Coal PEIS website prior to the meeting for additional information.

Written comments may be submitted until July 23, 2016, using one of the following methods:

Email: BLM WO Coal Program PEIS Comments@blm.gov

Mail: Coal Programmatic EIS Scoping

Bureau of Land Management 20 M St. SE, Room 2134 LM Washington, D.C. 20003

The Interior Department will release an interim report on the PEIS by the end of 2016. The interim report will contain a summary of substantive comments received during the public scoping period and conclusions from the scoping process about potential planning alternatives results. The comprehensive review is expected to take approximately three years to complete.

Additional information on the PEIS can be found <u>here</u>, and additional information on the federal coal program can be found <u>here</u>.