



# The Mountain Pact



September 17, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Neil Kornze  
Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell and Director Kornze,

As representatives of mountain communities throughout the American West, we applaud the Bureau of Land Management for considering changes to the federal coal program and inviting feedback from the public on this important issue. There is growing agreement that current coal royalty rates are too low and bonding requirements too loose, which does not fairly compensate taxpayers while exposing them to millions of dollars in liabilities for cleaning up mines.

Positioned in rural mountain areas and often surrounded by federal land, our communities are experiencing first hand the effects of climate change. From reduced snowpack and protracted droughts to increased flood risk and more severe wildfires, our communities and outdoor recreation economies are bearing the growing financial costs of warming temperatures and more extreme weather events. Meanwhile, the federal government is collecting a royalty rate on coal that does not take into account these growing costs of climate change. Greenhouse gas emissions from coal are a major contributor to climate change and failing to account for these costs in the federal coal leases shifts them onto taxpayers, who already receive an exceedingly low return on federal mineral resources. In order to ensure a fair return to taxpayers, the royalty rate on coal should incorporate costs related to climate impact mitigation and adaptation.

This is an important opportunity to reform an outdated program that short-changes the American people. We urge the Department of Interior to ensure that American taxpayers receive their fair share by closing the loophole that allows coal companies to avoid paying what they owe in royalties, to tighten the bonding requirements for coal to help ensure that companies have to

restore the landscapes after production is over, and to invest a portion of the increased revenues into local climate resilience projects.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and we look forward to working with you on this and other reforms to the federal coal program.

Sincerely,

City of Aspen, CO

City of Durango, CO

Town of Telluride, CO

Town of Nederland, CO

Town of Ridgway, CO

Town of Ophir, CO

City of Leadville, CO

Town of Vail, CO

Village of Taos Ski Valley, NM

Town of Alta, UT

CC:

Shaun Donovan, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Christy Goldfuss, Acting Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality

Brian Deese, Senior Adviser, Office of the President