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## **Obama Coal Lease to Fuel Exports, Global Warming**

### ***Utah Coal Sale Draws Objection Over Impacts to Public Lands, Endangered Species, Climate***

SALT LAKE CITY— An Obama administration proposal to auction off millions of tons of coal underneath central Utah's national forests came under fire late last week as a coalition of groups filed an administrative objection to block the proposal and safeguard public land, endangered species and the climate.

"Selling more coal portends disaster for our public lands, our climate and our clean energy future," said Jeremy Nichols, WildEarth Guardians' climate and energy program director. "While President Obama is calling for action to combat climate change, his administration seems to be doing everything they can to appease the coal industry and open the door for more carbon pollution."

The Greens Hollow coal lease would expand a SUFCO underground coal mine located in central Utah, the largest mine in the state. The mine's owner, Kentucky-based Bowie Resources, exports coal internationally through ports in California's San Francisco Bay Area. The company has even convinced local counties to [invest taxpayer dollars in a new export facility](#) in Oakland.

The company also sells the coal to nearby power plants, including the massive Hunter and Huntington plants, which are the largest sources of air pollution in central Utah.

Adding nearly 60 million tons of coal that lies under more than 6,000 acres of national forest land, the lease would extend the life of the mine for another decade. When burned, this coal would unleash more than 120 million tons of carbon, equal to the amount released every year by 23 million cars.

"This coal lease is another example of the dangerous disconnect between Obama's climate rhetoric and his policies that open public land to fossil fuel extraction," said Taylor McKinnon of the Center for Biological Diversity. "Adding more coal pollution to the world's quickly dwindling carbon budget and more mercury to the West's already-polluted rivers is bad public policy. The Forest Service should withdraw this plan now."

Located underneath the Fishlake and Manti-La Sal national forests, the SUFCO mine has been a disaster for public lands, fish and wildlife. It has caused major subsidence in the area, fracturing the ground, causing springs to disappear, toppling trees, triggering rock slides and draining streams. Imperiled species including the sage grouse, Colorado River cutthroat trout and Colorado pikeminnow have been driven to the brink of local extinction; more mining and coal combustion pollution threatens to push these imperiled species to the point of no return.

"The Forest Service has been willing to name short-term dollar profits from digging up more coal from under the national forest, but has been unwilling to use existing equipment and tools to describe the considerable social and ecological downsides of that digging, as required by law and as essential for candid decision-making," said Mary O'Brien, Utah forests program director for Grand Canyon Trust.

The coal lease is one of several proposed by the Bureau of Land Management, the Interior Department agency tasked with managing federal coal, in the American West, and comes as Interior is [under fire for illegally selling coal](#) below fair market value.

In oversight reports released in 2013 and in early 2014, investigators chided the Bureau of Land Management in Utah for illegally negotiating coal prices with industry and failing to take into account the environmental and economic implications of coal exports.

"It's bad enough that the Forest Service is opening the door to more carbon pollution, but they're doing it at the expense of our public lands and American taxpayers," said Nathaniel Shoaff, staff attorney with the

Sierra Club. “If the Obama administration wants to show real leadership on climate, it needs to start keeping publicly owned coal in the ground.”

The appeal, filed by WildEarth Guardians, Grand Canyon Trust, Sierra Club and the Center for Biological Diversity, challenges the U.S. Forest Service's proposal to allow the Bureau of Land Management to sell the Greens Hollow coal lease. Without Forest Service approval, the lease cannot proceed.

The Forest Service must respond to the coalition's objection by June 1.

To download the objection, click [here](#).

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