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

### *Public meetings across Nation to gather suggestions on scope of study*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior today launched the next step in the comprehensive review of the federal coal program to identify and evaluate potential reforms to ensure the program is properly structured to provide a fair return to taxpayers and reflect its impacts on the environment, while continuing to help meet the nation’s energy needs.

The [Notice of Intent to conduct a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement \(PEIS\)](#) begins a formal, comprehensive review of the federal coal program, with opportunities for extensive public engagement to inform the size and scope of the review.

“We have an obligation to all Americans, as well as future generations, to ensure coal resources we manage are administered in a responsible way,” said Bureau of Land Management Director Neil Kornze. “As we undertake this review, we look forward to hearing from the public on a wide range of issues, including how, when and where to lease federal coal, how to account for the environmental and public health impacts of federal coal production and how to ensure that American taxpayers earn a fair return for the use of their public resources, including whether current royalty rates should be adjusted.”

Secretary Sally Jewell announced the [review in January](#) to examine concerns about the federal coal program that have been raised by the Government Accountability Office, the Interior Department’s Office of Inspector General, members of Congress, interested stakeholders and the public. Today’s announcement builds upon President Obama’s call in his State of the Union address to improve the way we manage our fossil fuel resources and move the country towards a clean energy economy.

As part of the PEIS, a series of six public meetings will be held to solicit input to inform the scope of the review. The meetings are currently planned to be held in May and June in Casper, Wyo.; Grand Junction, Colo.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Seattle, Wash. Final information on dates, times and locations of the meetings will be announced soon.

“Coal will continue to be an important domestic energy source in the years ahead and we are undertaking this effort with full consideration of the importance of maintaining reliable and affordable energy for American families and businesses. But we haven’t undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of the federal coal program in more than 30 years. It’s time for a top to bottom review,” said Kornze.

Jewell last spring called for an open and honest conversation about modernizing the federal coal program. Following that call, Interior hosted 5 public listening sessions (Billings, Montana; Gillette, Wyoming; Denver, Colorado; Farmington, New Mexico; and Washington, D.C.) and a public comment period that produced a broad range of responses to questions, including: Are taxpayers and local communities getting a fair return from these resources? How can we make coal leasing more transparent and more competitive? How do we manage the program in a way that is consistent with our climate change objectives?

Since January, the Department has also launched a series of good government reforms to improve transparency and administration of the federal coal program.

These actions build on existing efforts to modernize the federal coal program, including the Office of Natural Resources Revenue’s work to finalize a proposed rule to ensure that the valuation process for federal and American Indian coal resources better reflects the changing energy industry while protecting taxpayers and American Indian assets.

The Interior Department will release an interim report on the PEIS by the end of 2016 with a summary of substantive comments received and conclusions from the scoping process about alternatives that will be evaluated and, as appropriate, any initial analytical results. The full review is expected to take approximately three years. Additional information on the PEIS can be [found here](#), and additional information on the federal coal program can be [found here](#).

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