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Mining Plan Modification Approved Following Environmental Assessment of Trapper Coal Mine in Colorado

Washington, DC – Today, the Interior Department’s Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) issued the approved mining plan modification to allow continued [development of Federal coal at the Trapper Mine](#), located about 6 miles south of Craig, Colorado. This action applies to an existing Federal coal lease and does not represent a new leasing decision.

Approval of the mining plan modification occurred following completion of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and subsequent Finding of No Significant Impact. The EA was the result of a Federal court-approved agreement with a citizens group and the mine operator that required OSMRE to conduct a new EA after the court identified deficiencies with the original EA. As required by the National Environmental Policy Act, the new EA disclosed the potential for direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to the environment that may occur as a result of current and future mining on the Federal leases, including the potential environmental impacts of burning coal.

The development of the new EA involved significant public outreach. In October 2015, OSMRE held an outreach meeting in Craig, Colorado to inform the public about the project and solicit public comments regarding preparation of the EA. OSMRE released the EA for public comment between January 25, 2016 and February 19, 2016 and carefully considered a total of 1,148 letters and emails received during the comment period.

The Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety previously approved the mining operations and determined that a reclamation performance bond of \$23,400,000, payable to both the State of Colorado and the United States is adequate financial assurance for both the State Permit and this mining plan modification. Trapper Mine employs about 180 people and the current land uses of rangeland, wildlife habitat and cropland will not change within the permit and mining plan area.

The approval allows the mine permit holder, Trapper Mining Inc., to continue mining and produce up to 2.6 million tons of coal per year from two federal coal leases issued in 1958 and 1962 that cover about 2,423 acres of Federal mineral estate and contain about 19 million tons of recoverable coal. Mining of the Federal coal will disturb an additional 268 acres of private and state land. Mining previously disturbed about 3,388 surface acres at the site. The operator uses a combination of dragline, truck shovel and highwall mining methods to remove the overburden and mine the coal, which is burned at the Craig Power Generating Station.

The proposed expansion is not affected by the [Interior Department's pause on federal coal leasing](#) announced in January because it is not a new coal leasing decision. OSMRE is responsible for reviewing plans to conduct coal mining and reclamation operations, including mining plan modifications, on lands containing leased federal coal.



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To learn more about the EA, mining plan modification, and the history of the project, please visit <http://www.wrcc.osmre.gov/initiatives/trapperMine.shtm>

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) carries out the requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 in cooperation with states and tribes. OSMRE's objectives are to ensure that coal mining activities are conducted in a manner that protects citizens and the environment during mining, to ensure that the land is restored to beneficial use after mining, and to mitigate the effects of past mining by aggressively pursuing reclamation of abandoned coal mines. For instant updates on OSMRE, follow the bureau's Twitter feed at www.twitter.com/OSMRE.

