



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Utah State Office

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Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155

<http://www.blm.gov>



IN REPLY REFER TO:

DES 11-51

UTC-040-12-01

UTU-081895

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is the draft environmental impact statement (Draft EIS) entitled *Alton Coal Tract Lease By Application Draft Environmental Impact Statement*. This document has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared this document in consultation with several cooperating agencies, including the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) and the Utah Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining. The National Park Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also contributed to this document's preparation. This document takes into account public comments received during the scoping effort as well. The Draft EIS is open for a 60-day review period beginning the date the EPA publishes the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the *Federal Register*.

The BLM has prepared this Draft EIS to analyze and disclose the potential impacts of leasing and mining the coal reserves in the Alton Coal Lease by Application (LBA) tract. The BLM's decision with respect to the LBA tract will pertain only to leasing the tract; however, the potential impacts of mining the tract are analyzed because a coal mine would be a logical extension of a lease. The LBA tract consists of approximately 3,576 acres of land located in Kane County, Utah approximately 0.10 mile south of the town of Alton and 2.9 miles east of U.S. Route 89. The tract is in the BLM Kanab Field Office planning area, which is managed under the *Kanab Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan* (BLM 2008a).

The public was provided a 90-day scoping period at the beginning of the EIS process to identify potential issues and concerns associated with the Proposed Action. Scoping comments were used to help develop alternatives to the Proposed Action, to guide the analysis of potential effects from leasing and mining the tract, and to identify potential mitigations for inclusion in the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS analyzes two action alternatives: 1) Alternative B (the Proposed Action), and 2) Alternative C: Reduced Tract Acreage and Seasonal Restrictions. Alternative C was developed in response to issues raised during the scoping period. This document analyzes a No Action Alternative, which would be to not offer the lease tract for leasing at this time and to maintain existing land uses in the tract area.

The Draft EIS is not a decision document. Rather, it is a document that will inform the BLM's final decision on whether to hold a competitive lease sale for the tract and, in the event that the BLM decides to offer the tract for competitive leasing, what special stipulations would be attached to the lease. The Draft EIS is being released to inform the public and interested parties of the potential impacts associated with implementing either action alternative.

Comments will be accepted for 60 days following the EPA's publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. The BLM is also publishing a Notice of Availability and Notice of Hearing in the *Federal Register*. All timely comments, postmarked by January 6, 2012, on the Draft EIS will be considered in the preparation of the Final EIS, currently scheduled for release in summer 2012. All substantive comments and information submitted will be summarized and addressed in the Final EIS. Substantive comments are ones that, with reasonable basis, question the accuracy of the information in the Draft EIS, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis, present new information relevant to the analysis, present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed, and cause changes or revision in one or more of the alternatives. The BLM can best use your comments if received within the review period. Comments received after the end of the 60-day comment period will be considered in preparation of the Final EIS as time permits. Comments may be submitted electronically to the attention of Keith Rigtrup at UT_Kanab_Altoncoal@blm.gov. Please include "Alton Coal Lease Draft EIS" in the subject line of your e-mail message. Comments may be submitted by mail to Alton Coal Tract LBA EIS, Keith Rigtrup, BLM, Kanab Field Office, 318 North 100 East, Kanab, Utah 84741. Comments may also be submitted by fax to (435) 644-4620.

The BLM will host public meetings in Alton, Kanab, Panguitch, Cedar City, and Salt Lake City, Utah to provide an overview of the results of the analysis in the document and to take public comments on the Draft EIS. The public meetings will be announced by the BLM at least 15 days in advance through public notices and local media news releases and mailings. A public hearing will be held at Festival Hall Convention Center, 96 North Main, Cedar City, UT on December 6, 2011 at 6:00 PM. The purpose of the hearing is to receive comments on the proposed coal lease, on the fair market value, on the maximum economic recovery of the federal coal resources in the tract, and on the potential environmental impacts associated with leasing and mining the tract.

Before including your address, telephone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information with your comments please be advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. Although you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organization or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

Printed copies of the Draft EIS are available for review at the following BLM offices:

BLM
Kanab Field Office
318 North 100 East
Kanab, Utah 84741

BLM
Utah State Office
440 West 200 South, Suite 500
Salt Lake City, Utah 84101

The document may also be viewed at the following public libraries:

- Kanab City Library, 374 North Main, Kanab, Utah 84741
- Panguitch Public Library, 25 South 200 East, Panguitch, Utah 84759
- Cedar City Library, 303 North 100 East, Cedar City, Utah 84720
- Salt Lake City Main Library, 210 East 400 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

You may also access the document on the Internet at
http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/prog/energy/coal/alton_coal_project.html

If you have any questions or would like to obtain an additional copy of this Draft EIS in either hardcopy or PDF, please contact Keith Rigtrup at (435) 865-3063.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry Barber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and "B".

Harry Barber
Kanab Field Office Manager