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Comments:

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Colorado Roadless Rule

U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region

740 Simms Street

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Via Web: [go.usa.gov/3JQwJ](http://go.usa.gov/3JQwJ)

Re: Comments of High Country Conservation Advocates et al. on Proposal to Reinstate North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception to the Colorado Roadless Rule (Project #46470)

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for allowing opportunity to submit my comments regarding the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) to reinstate the North Fork Coal Mining Area exception of the Colorado Roadless Rule. As residents of Colorado, my family frequently spends time in state and national parks, forests, and wilderness areas. I have a strong interest in conservation and in preserving these areas for future generations as well as myself.

The intent of roadless wilderness is to protect some small form of nature's biodiversity from mankind's never-ending encroachment. Colorado roadless areas draw eco-tourists from all over the nation and the world. Encroachment on these areas by any industry destroys the "Sense of Place" that the roadless designation was designed to preserve and our state tourism will suffer accordingly.

With these roads comes the heavy volume of vehicle traffic needed to support the mining accompanied by their associated pollution from exhaust and litter, increased danger of man-related fires, damage to plants, fragmented wildlife habitat, and erosion. The effects from the noise, dust, and pollution caused by the mining and the vehicle traffic will extend far beyond the actual mining; disrupting wilderness visitors and wildlife, destruction of trees and other plants. The traffic on the roads will undoubtedly lead to more death of wildlife as they are crossing the roads and are hit by vehicles.

The flattened areas created by a network of roads and mining pads disrupt the natural contours of the land and encourage non-mining related vehicle traffic, including poachers and individuals who use our protected areas to hide illegal marijuana farming and the chemical pollutants that accompany it. Even when the mining ends, the effects remain. Reclamation takes years, and often introduces invasive weeds and species during reseeding. The higher the elevation, the shorter the growing season and the more decades it will take to recover to a pre-mining state. Mining-related activities also require electricity and the wires and poles to deliver it, which means more intrusion into a sensitive environment.

Coal mining releases huge amounts of methane daily and the burning of coal releases CO<sub>2</sub> - greenhouse gases causing the climate change our government says it is committed to reversing. Easing the way for new coal mining, as provided for in this exception, seems counterproductive to what our nation is trying to achieve.

The methane released by mining requires drainage well venting and requires water which is used for mining and later retrieved in a polluted form into holding ponds. In Colorado, a state where water is very precious and usually not very abundant, any water taken will impact the watersheds and sub-watersheds that feed our streams and can disrupt the water quality and the stream levels needed by fish and downstream communities in the Gunnison River area.

As our society increasingly turns to cleaner sources of power, increasing coal production seems very shortsighted. I believe it is important to see if the royalties we receive from this mining will offset the costs and pollution it creates. If the coal is exported overseas, as is often the case with energy producing resources in the U.S., then we are not even reaping the benefit from the energy it produces; only the consequences of the mining.

There does not appear to be sufficient proof that this exception to the Colorado Roadless Rule is justified. It does not appear that there has been enough supporting evidence released by the Forest Service to show the public that it will provide enough benefits to offset the costs and effects to these sensitive areas by allowing this exception. I believe that the Forest Service needs to provide proof that there has been a thorough analysis of the impacts of the North Fork Coal Mining Area exception of the Colorado Roadless Rule - environmental, societal, and economical - before this exception can be granted.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on this issue.  
Respectfully,

Julie Young