

April 15, 2020
20 Roberts Dr
Sheridan, WY 82801

Deputy Director of the Department of Environmental Quality
200 W 17th Street, Suite 10
Cheyenne, WY 82002

RE: Brook Mining Co. LLC application for coal mining permit

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing today to comment on the proposed coal mining permit for Brook Mining Co. LLC. First let me say that my comments are not in opposition to business growth in Wyoming. I live and work here and understand that economic development is necessary in our great state. My concerns focus on the location of the proposed operation.

1. The applicants are proposing to develop a new coal mine in the Upper Tongue River Basin, eight miles NW of Sheridan. This area is home to many old ranching operations that have long depended on the Tongue River as a source for irrigation. Furthermore, the people that live and ranch along the Tongue depend on well water for their drinking water. While the applicant makes claims that there will be no detectable hydrologic impacts to either ground water or surface water, that determination will not in reality be made for years. I believe that we have a duty to support and protect our ranching communities. Locating a new coal mine in the middle of a thriving ranching area puts the livelihood of those ranches at unnecessary risk.
2. The Tongue River is a tributary to the Yellowstone River, and as such, is a critical force for life in the Western States. In addition to supporting the agricultural community of Northern Wyoming and Montana, the valley created by this river also provides recreational opportunities for fisherman and hunters. The proposed coal mine would not only impinge on access for fishermen and hunters but disturbing the delicate hydrologic balance in this valley has the very real potential to destroy the very habitat that supports the wildlife that live there.
3. The Upper Tongue River valley has already experienced subsidence damage from previous coal mining efforts. The United States Geological Survey has studied and documented hydrologic damage from coals mines operated in this very area between 1900 and 1943 creating subsidence that continued long after the mining operations stopped. Considering that a significant amount of state and federal dollars have already been invested in addressing previous subsidence damage, is it really worth it to threaten this alluvial valley with more subsidence?

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4. Finally, it doesn't make sense to open a new coal mine in the middle of a productive agricultural valley or in the middle of great fishing and hunting habitat when there is so much coal that is already available in both Montana and Wyoming. In the Northern Powder River Basin, there are four currently permitted coal mines (Decker, Spring Creek, Absaloka, and Rosebud) with Decker and Spring Creek located nearby the proposed operations. In the Southern Powder River Basin there are an additional 12 permitted coal mines (Black Thunder, Coal Creek, Wyodak, Belle Ayr, Eagle Butte, Antelope, Codero, Buckskin, North Antelope Rochelle, Caballo, Rawhide, and Dry Fork) all of which are connected to proposed area by rail. In addition to having an abundance of coal already permitted outside of this alluvial valley, Coal Companies are eager to sell their coal and prices couldn't be better. There are numerous options for obtaining coal for the Ramaco operation that would cause less environmental damage to the Upper Tongue River valley.

In closing, I respectfully request that the Department of Environmental Quality hold a public hearing in Sheridan to allow the ranchers who live along the Tongue River and citizens of the State who enjoy recreating in the area the opportunity to express their concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CMA', with a large, stylized initial 'C' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Christine M. Anderson