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The War on Coal is Over: Interior Announces Historic Coal Projects in Utah

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Approvals advance the Trump Administration's goal of American energy wealth, creating jobs to help communities prosper

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Interior announced today the Bureau of Land Management’s approval of two historic mining projects in Utah – the \$12.3 million Alton Coal Tract coal lease in Kane County, Utah, and two coal lease modification proposals for the SUFCO Mine in Sevier County, which will extend the life of the existing mine by up to five years. These approvals will further the Administration’s energy dominance and economic prosperity goals, leveraging American energy wealth and creating jobs in Utah communities.

Through the continued approval of coal lease applications and modifications, the BLM has been able to support the success of coal development on federal lands – including the Alton and SUFCO coal mines. [Secretarial Order 3348](#) made these actions possible by overturning the 2016 moratorium on all new coal leases on federal land. The projects approved today will help foster Utah’s continued economic expansion through access to premier natural resources in the most efficient and responsible manner possible.

“American coal jobs matter,” **said Acting U.S. Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt**. “Coal production on federal lands provides nearly 40 percent of our nation’s coal. By approving these projects today, we will ensure that these mines are operational for years to come, providing well-paying jobs and affordable energy to the people of Utah.”

“The war on coal is over, and the Trump Administration is committed to facilitating much-needed job creation and energy production,” **said Assistant Secretary Joe Balash**. “In coal towns across this country, the American dream is alive and well.”

“The previous administration tried to kill coal production in Utah but this administration is committed to bringing the industry back,” **said Senator Mike Lee**. “That’s why coal production in Utah increased in 2017 for the first time in three years. These two new coal projects are a huge win for Utah jobs, Utah consumers, and the Utah economy.”

“This lease agreement will bring jobs and generate revenue to support the local economy in Kane and Garfield counties, while also protecting our natural resources,” **said Senator Mitt Romney**. “Responsible energy development is important to Utah’s energy industry

and rural economies, and I appreciate the cooperative efforts of the Bureau of Land Management and community partners to bring this project to fruition.”

“The approval of new leases on federal lands in Utah reiterates that coal will remain a staple of power production in our country, and an important economic driver for local communities,” **said Congressman Rob Bishop**. “Not only will this coal contribute to our nation’s baseload power supply, it will provide nearly 500 direct and indirect Utah jobs and help fund education. I commend the Department for ensuring our nation’s federal lands are utilized in meaningful ways that contribute to our nation’s energy security.”

“Alton Coal is an economic engine that provides good-paying jobs that benefit the entire region,” **said Congressman Chris Stewart**. “This lease is a big win for my constituents. It will allow for additional growth and create more jobs that can support families year round. I’m grateful for the leadership of Acting Secretary Bernhardt on this issue.”

I am glad to hear about this lease, which will bring new jobs and opportunities to southern Utah,” **said Congressman John Curtis**. “I look forward to working with Acting Secretary Bernhardt, and the Administration more broadly, on policies that ensure a safe and reliable energy system for all Americans.”

On Nov. 28, 2018, the BLM-Utah state office held a competitive sale of federal coal on approximately 2,114 acres 30 miles south of Panguitch near Alton, Utah. The tract contains approximately 40.9 million tons of in-place coal and an estimated 30.8 million tons of recoverable coal. The bid of \$12,320,000 by Alton Coal Development, LLC, was determined to be the high and acceptable bid ensuring fair market value for the coal.

The lease covers a total of 3,581 acres of federal mineral estate, of which 2,305 acres of the surface are BLM-administered and 1,276 acres are in private surface ownership by eight private landowners. Based on an estimated two million tons of production annually, this lease could directly create over 100 new jobs at the mine and indirectly increase employment by 240 to 480 jobs, including fuel providers, and positions in maintenance, grocery stores, and retail stores.

The successful lessee would be required to obtain additional federal, state, and local approval to develop, mine, and operate facilities on the affected public lands. The lessee or the operator cannot construct or operate a coal mine without the appropriate licenses and permits from the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement or the affected state and local governments, as required by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

The SUFCO mine currently produces approximately 5-6 million tons of coal per year, with a very small surface footprint. The mine has been producing coal since 1941 and is one of the most productive and technologically advanced underground coal mines in the world. Coal produced by the mine provides for the annual electrical household needs of approximately three million people.

The SUFCO mine lease modifications will support employment for approximately 383 direct mining jobs. Assuming most mine employees and supporting employment would be within Sanpete and Sevier counties, these direct mine jobs represent some 3.6 percent of the non-farm employment levels in the counties. About 1,307 jobs in total would be created domestically through direct and induced economic activity.

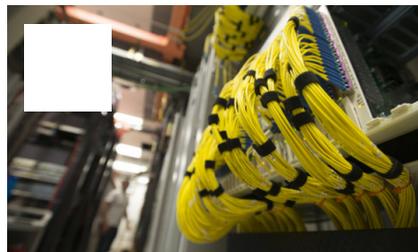
The coal industry on public lands in Utah contributed \$748 million in total economic output in FY 2017.

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