



File Code: 2820-4

Date: August 8, 2007

Dear Interested Party:

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) together with the BLM-Uncompahgre Field Office (BLM), and Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) have prepared a final environmental impact statement (Final EIS) for *Deer Creek Shaft and E Seam Methane Drainage Wells Project* that discloses the effects of installing a ventilation shaft, methane drainage wells and access needs to support on-going underground coal mining activities at Mountain Coal Company's West Elk Mine. The GMUGs preferred alternative would approve surface operations associated with accessing, drilling, constructing, operating, and reclaiming 168 methane drainage wells on 137 drilling locations; construction, operation and reclamation of one ventilation shaft and escapeway shaft; and construction, use, and appropriate decommissioning of about 22.6 miles of new and existing roads. This approval would contribute to having safe working conditions in the underground mine and would facilitate safe and efficient recovery of leased federal coal reserves. The general legal description of lands involved is:

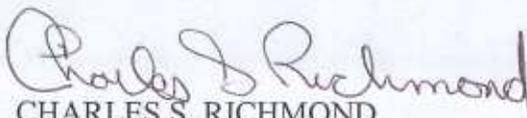
- Deer Creek ventilation shaft/escapeway in NE¼ Section 32, Township 13 South, Range 90 West, 6th PM,
- E seam methane drainage well development in Sections 26-29 and 32-35, Township 13 South, Range 90 West and in Sections 1-5, and 9-11, Township 14 South, Range 90 West, 6th PM,

The project area lies in Gunnison County, Colorado (approximately 7 to 10 miles east and northeast of Paonia, Colorado).

The Final EIS is enclosed for your information. No comment period is being offered with release of the Final EIS. The Final EIS is not a decision document. The GMUG will issue decision documents under separate cover after the Environmental Protection Agency publishes of the Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Final EIS in the *Federal Register*. Once a decision is issued, a 45-day appeal period will begin according to 36 CFR 215.9.

If you have any questions regarding this project or need additional information, please contact Niccole Mortenson, Engineering and Minerals NEPA Project Specialist at (970) 874-6616 or nmortenson@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,



CHARLES S. RICHMOND

Forest Supervisor

