



File Code: 2820-4

Date: March 14, 2007

**NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT
DEER CREEK SHAFT AND E SEAM METHANE DRAINAGE WELL PROJECT**

Dear Interested Party:

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) and the BLM-Uncompahgre Field Office (BLM) have prepared a draft environmental impact statement (Draft EIS) 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 23.8 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 Draft EIS is enclosed for your review, and is being released for the 45-day public comment period according to 36 CFR 215.5. The opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS ends 45 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register*. The publication date of the NOA is the exclusive means for calculating the time to submit comments on the Draft EIS.

Only those who submit timely comments will be accepted as appellants of the final decision. Comments are defined in 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3). Comments must be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the Responsible Official to consider. Also, for appeal eligibility, each individual or representative from each organization submitting comments must either sign the comments or verify their identity upon request.



The Forest Service Responsible Official is Charles S. Richmond, Forest Supervisor for the GMUG, (970)874-6600. Written comments may be submitted in hard copy through the mail, email, fax or delivered by hand.

Mail comments to: Charles Richmond, Forest Supervisor
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison NFs
2250 Highway 50
Delta, CO 81416

Fax Comments to: (970) 874-6698

Electronic comments will be accepted, and must be submitted as a Word document, or in rich text format. Please note in the subject line that the comments are for the Deer Creek Shaft – E Seam Methane Drainage DEIS. Electronic comments should be sent to:

comments-rocky-mountain-gmug@fs.fed.us

For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Hand delivered written comments will be accepted at the GMUG Forest Supervisor's Office, 2250 Highway 50, Delta, Colorado, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for federal holidays.

Oral comments will be considered in the final EIS.

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

Sincerely,

/s/ Charles S. Richmond
CHARLES S. RICHMOND
Forest Supervisor