

Oppose Expansion of the Rosebud Coal Mine

A proposal for a massive expansion of one of the largest coal mines in the nation, the Rosebud Mine near Colstrip, will harm water quality, existing water rights, and contribute to severe climate impacts. The mine has failed miserably in keeping pace with reclamation obligations and the mine's owner is in deep financial trouble. Yet the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) dismisses or fails to consider these critical issues. Tell government regulators that enough is enough and the mine expansion should be rejected.

Ryan Zinke's Office of Surface Mining and the MT Department of Environmental Quality are considering allowing Westmoreland Coal Co. to expand the Rosebud Mine so it can continue to provide coal to the Colstrip coal-fired power plant. Westmoreland is in a financial freefall, but still wants to expand the mine by more than 6,500 acres in order to extract an additional 71 million tons of coal.

This is a terrible idea for innumerable reasons, including the following:

- The Colstrip plant is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gasses in the nation, releasing approximately 15 million tons of carbon dioxide into the air each year. All of the coal mined at Rosebud goes to the Colstrip plant and a filthy little waste coal plant nearby. When the coal is burned, it will result in an additional 140 *million* tons of carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere. **Yet the DEIS refused to even consider the cost of climate change.** By refusing to provide any estimate of the economic harm this project imposes on the public, the environment, and the economy, the DEIS misleads the public on the climate impacts caused by the expansion.
- The mine has already severely harmed water resources in the area, and the expansion will make matters worse. Existing mining operations have already dewatered parts of a stream, and the remaining water is polluted from mining activities. **This expansion will make the existing water quality and quantity problems even worse.**
- The expansion is expected to have significant impacts on water rights. The DEIS says that impacts to existing water rights could be "long-term and negligible to major." Harmful impacts are expected to persist in aquifers outside of the mining area for decades, and groundwater and surface water rights are expected to return to "pre-mine conditions *many decades* after mine closure." Finally, the DEIS concludes that if the mine expansion impacts someone's water, the mine owner will replace their water. However, it doesn't consider whether there is sufficient replacement water available or if the replacement water quality will be similar to what is lost.
- Westmoreland is in serious financial trouble and will likely have to declare bankruptcy in the near future. In the last year its stock dropped from 17.53

per share to 0.68 per share (a 97% drop). The mine has already harmed water resources, failed to meet its reclamation obligations, and can't be trusted to be around in the near future. This is a sad, but familiar tune for Montana.

- Only 2.7% of the mine has been fully reclaimed despite the fact that it has been in operation for over 40 years. Mines have an obligation to do “contemporaneous reclamation” but the Rosebud mine has failed to comply. The government should not let the mine expand and create an even bigger environmental mess when it hasn't bothered to clean up the mess it already made.
- We can do better. Montana and the Colstrip area have some of the best wind resources in the nation. There is a large transmission line that takes electricity from Colstrip to markets in Washington and Oregon. Those states are extremely concerned about climate change and are demanding clean, renewable electricity instead of coal. The DEIS fails to consider rapidly shifting energy markets and the demand for clean energy. Failure to consider these trends puts Montana at risk.

Say NO to more water and air pollution, water theft, and severe climate impacts from this financially precarious mining operation.