



Stop the Largest Coal Mine Expansion in Modern History

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is currently accepting comments on a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for possibly the largest coal mine expansion in Montana history, and certainly in modern times. This massive expansion of the Rosebud coal strip mine, known as AM5, would increase the mine's permit boundary by over 9,000 acres and allow the mine to access up to 147 million tons of additional coal.

If permitted to expand, AM5 would exacerbate the climate crisis, as all of the coal mined at the Rosebud Mine is subsequently burned at the Colstrip coal-fired power plant. The expansion would also devastate sensitive prairie streams and wildlife, and impact agricultural operations in southeastern Montana. The mine expansion is also concerning because the previous owner of the Rosebud Mine (Westmoreland Coal Co.) recently declared bankruptcy, and the assets of the mine were sold off and acquired by a group of hedge funds and investors. These creditors are now attempting to reap the last bit of financial benefit possible out of the remaining life of the Rosebud Mine, our future be damned.

We need you to tell the Bullock Administration to say NO to this outrageous proposal. You can submit written comments to rosebud-mine-area-beis@eroresources.com (Please ensure the email subject line reads Attn: Rosebud Mine Area B AM5 EIS) or mail them to the Montana DEQ by sending them to the address below. The deadline for submitting comments is November 23rd, 2020.

*Montana DEQ, Attn: Jen Lane
MEPA Coordinator
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Additionally, DEQ is hosting an online public meeting and hearing to provide information on the proposed Project and to accept public testimony Tuesday, November 10th from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM MST via Zoom. [You can register for the event here.](#)

This massive expansion of the Rosebud Mine is outrageous for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- The Colstrip plant has historically been one of the single largest sources of greenhouse gas pollution in the nation, releasing approximately 15 million tons of carbon dioxide into the air annually. All of the coal mined at Rosebud goes to the Colstrip plant. If all of the coal included in this expansion were to be burned, it would result in an additional

294 million tons of carbon dioxide being pumped into our atmosphere. Yet the DEQ refused to even consider analyzing the cost of climate change in its DEIS, even though it has the tools and knowledge to do so. DEQ's refusal to provide any estimate of the serious environmental and economic consequences this mine expansion will have on the public, the environment, and the economy, is unconscionable.

- Last year, the DEQ permitted another massive expansion of the Rosebud Mine, known as Area F. This expansion increased the size of the Rosebud mine by over 6,700 acres and over 70 million tons of coal. These two expansions alone amount to over 210 million tons of coal and would allow for the remaining units at the Colstrip coal plant to continue to operate past 2050. It is highly unlikely that Colstrip would continue burning coal that much longer, and these mine expansions are just not necessary.
- The mine has already devastated water resources in the area, and this expansion will only make matters worse. Existing mining operations have already dewatered streams in the region, and the remaining water is now heavily polluted from mining activities. This expansion will make the existing water quality and quantity problems even worse.
- Following Westmoreland Coal Co.'s bankruptcy in 2018, the company's assets at the Rosebud Mine were acquired by a group of hedge funds and investors, mostly from the New York City and Chicago areas. These entities are creditors or had a financial relationship with Westmoreland and are attempting to reap the last bit of financial benefit possible out of the remainder of the Rosebud Mine in order to recoup investments and have an incentive to ignore environmental safeguards. 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.
- Less than 3% 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 entirely failed to comply. The government should not let the mine expand even further 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 and has the potential for solar energy development as well. There is already 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.