



Tuesday, October 22nd, 2024

**Secretary Deb Haaland,
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
1849 C Street, N.W.. Washington DC 20240.**

The situation surrounding the Navajo Transitional Energy Company's Spring Creek Mine is becoming increasingly critical, and it highlights a troubling disconnect between unelected bureaucrats in the Biden-Harris Administration and the needs of Montanans. This Administration's Department of the Interior has put forth a draft environmental impact statement that proposes four alternative plans, three of which threaten the viability of the mine and would cause it to completely shut down. This isn't just a politically motivated decision; it's a direct attack on hundreds of well-paying jobs that are essential to the way of life of so many in Big Horn County.

With an average salary of \$120,000 at the mine, these positions are a lifeline for a community where the average income is only \$20,000. The implications of potentially closing the mine are dire: families would be devastated, local businesses would suffer, and the tax base necessary for schools and emergency services would be decimated. It's hard to see how these policies, which are often falsely framed as environmentally responsible, do anything but sacrifice the well-being of working families at the altar of extreme environmentalism – a far too common trend from this Administration.

While this Administration pushes for the shutdown of resource development in the U.S., it is happy to import coal from countries like China, where labor and environmental standards are nonexistent.

The potential closure of the Spring Creek Mine threatens not just jobs, but the entire wellbeing of the community. Without a stable tax base, the community will struggle to provide adequate resources for schools and emergency services could be compromised, putting lives at risk.

The Montana Public Policy Center (MPPC) stands firmly opposed to the three of the four proposed plans. We urge the adoption of Alternative 1, the only plan that does not put the mine's future in jeopardy. The risks posed by shutting down the mine are a threat to Montana jobs and our way of life. Montanans deserve better than policies that prioritize distant political ideals from unelected bureaucrats. Ideals that are purely virtue signaling and do nothing more than damage our state.