

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), Western Region Office, will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for the Cordero Rojo Mine's (CRM) mining plan modification for federal coal lease WYW174407 (the Project). In accordance with the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 (MLA), The DOI Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management (ASLM) must approve the Project before any mining and reclamation can occur on lands containing leased federal coal. The Lease by Application (LBA) application was filed with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) by Cordero Mining Company (CMC) on September 20, 2001. BLM subsequently issued a Record of Decision (ROD) for the lease on June 6, 2007 and the lease was effective on August 1, 2008. On December 17, 2015, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ)/Land Quality Division (LQD) received an application for an amendment to CRM Permit 237, including mining portions of WYW174407.

OSMRE is preparing an EA to evaluate the environmental impacts resulting from the Project, pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The CRM is located approximately 15 miles south-southeast of Gillette, Wyoming. The CRM uses a combination of dragline and truck shovel mining methods. The amount of remaining recoverable federal coal authorized for removal within the currently approved federal mining plan is approximately 232.6 million tons (Mt). The Project proposes to add approximately 569.1 acres and 55.77 Mt of federal coal to the approved federal mining plan. The annual production rate used to calculate the environmental impacts resulting from the Proposed Action will be 20 million tons per year (Mtpy), which is the estimated future annual production rate suggested by CMC and is below the maximum permitted production rate of 65 Mtpy set by WDEQ/AQD air quality permit MD-9943. CRM started operation in 1976 and the mine will continue to operate until 2027 under the current, approved mining plan. Using the estimated 20 Mtpy production rate, the Project would extend the life of the mine by approximately 2.8 years, to 2030.

The EA will update, clarify, and provide new and additional environmental information for the Project. As a result of the EA process, OSMRE will determine whether or not there are significant environmental impacts. An environmental impact statement will be prepared if the EA identifies significant impacts. If a finding of no significant impact is reached, and pursuant to 30 CFR 746.13, OSMRE will prepare and submit to the ASLM a mining plan decision document recommending approval, disapproval, or conditional approval of the mining plan. The ASLM will approve, disapprove, or conditionally approve the mining plan approval document within the mining plan decision document, as required under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920.

The proposed expansion is not affected by the Interior Department's pause on federal coal leasing announced in January because regulatory actions under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act are not subject to the pause.

OSMRE is soliciting public comments on the Project. Your comments will help to determine the issues and alternatives that will be evaluated in the environmental analysis. You are invited to direct these comments to:

ATTN: Cordero Rojo Mine Amendment EA
C/O: Logan Sholar,
OSMRE Western Region

1999 Broadway, Suite 3320
Denver, CO 80202-3050

Comments may also be emailed to: osm-nepa-wy@osmre.gov, ensure the subject line reads: ATTN: OSMRE, Cordero Rojo Mine Amendment EA. Comments should be received or postmarked no later than September 5, 2016 to be considered during the preparation of the EA. Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection. Additional information regarding the Project may be obtained from Logan Sholar, telephone number (303) 293-5036 and the Project website provided below. When available, the EA and other supporting documentation will be posted at:

<http://www.wrcc.osmre.gov/initiatives/CorderoRojoMineAmendment.shtm>.