Gunnison County
COLORADO

Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners
Phone: (970) 641–0248 • Fax: (970) 641–3061
Email: bocc@gunnisoncounty.org • www.GunnisonCounty.org

May 1, 2012

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

The Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners supports the issuance of lease modifications to Federal Coal Leases C-1362 and COC-67232 for Mountain Coal Company's West Elk Mine. The reserves in the modification area are projected at 19.6 million tons.

Gunnison County is heavily reliant on property tax and royalties related to the mining of high-quality, low-sulfur Colorado coal. Mountain Coal Company's West Elk Mine is the single largest tax payer in the County. A timely issuance of these lease modifications will ensure that high paying jobs associated with the coal industry in the North Fork Valley are preserved and add an additional four years to the life of the mine.

The protracted nature of the lease modification process thus far has prevented the exploration of the coal resource in the modification areas and any further delay may jeopardize the project all together. Providing certainty and timeliness will go a long way in protecting the economy of the region.

Sincerely,

Hap Channell, Chairperson | Paula Swenson, Commissioner | Phil Chamberland, Commissioner

cc: Governor John Hickenlooper
Congressman Scott Tipton
Senator Michael Bennet
Senator Mark Udall
US Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell
Mountain Coal Company