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**June 21, 2017**

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**RE: Make Transition From Coal a Priority at the San Juan Coal Mine and in the Four Corners Region**

Dear Secretary Zinke and Acting Director Owens:

The undersigned organizations are writing to urge the U.S. Department of the Interior (“Interior”) and Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (“OSMRE”) to make transition from coal a number one priority at New Mexico’s San Juan coal mine.

Interior and OSMRE are in the process of preparing an environmental impact statement to analyze and disclose the potentially significant impacts of coal mining at the San Juan mine, as well as to consider a range of reasonable alternatives for future action. We strongly urge the agencies to ensure that transition is the preferred alternative.

The San Juan coal mine fuels the San Juan Generating Station, a power plant that has saddled the Four Corners region with enormous amounts of air, climate, and water pollution. While the mine and power plant may have provided jobs over the years, both are slated to shut

down in the early 2020's. What's more, other coal-fired power plants and mines in the region are similarly on course to retire in the near-future, including the Navajo coal mine and Four Corners power plant and the Kayenta and Black Mesa coal mines and the Navajo Generating Station.

Interior and OSMRE must play a role in ensuring the orderly clean-up of coal mines and power plants in the region; and in advancing economic transition, justice, and prosperity in the Four Corners region.

Given this, the undersigned call on OSMRE and Interior to acknowledge the reality that the San Juan coal mine and San Juan Generating Station are shutting down in the very near future. We further call on your leadership to ensure that the preferred alternative of the environmental impact statement accomplishes the following:

- **Environmental Justice.** Interior and OSMRE must ensure that low income communities and tribal communities are protected from the disproportionate health and environmental impacts of the San Juan coal mine and San Juan Generating Station.
- **Just Transition.** Interior and OSMRE must ensure an orderly decommissioning and clean up of the mine and power plant, and enables workers and communities to move toward more sustainable and prosperous economies. As part of a "Just Transition," the agencies must work to leverage resources and enable communities to develop alternative sources of sustainable revenue and jobs. This includes prioritizing job placement for plant and mine workers in SJGS site reclamation and decommissioning, and job re-training.
- **Protection of Clean Air and Water.** Safeguarding clean air and water must be a priority of any alternative analyzed by Interior and OSMRE in the environmental impact statement. We urge the agencies to prioritize eliminating sources of air and water pollution, as well as to mitigate sources of carbon pollution, including coal mine methane emissions. Stakeholders are particularly concerned with the millions of tons of coal ash and its safe and secure disposal.
- **More Cooperation.** Interior and OSMRE must work with other federal, state, and local agencies that can provide expertise and resources to help advance transition, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, the Navajo Nation and Navajo Nation Chapters, the Mountain Ute Tribe, the National Park Service, the States of New Mexico and Colorado, and San Juan County, New Mexico.
- **Complete and Timely Reclamation.** Interior and OSMRE must ensure that as the San Juan mine and Generation Station shut down, reclamation occurs expeditiously, completely, and effectively. We urge the agencies to consider allowing the development of renewable energy as a post-reclamation beneficial land use.
- **Transition to Clean Energy.** As part of any action alternative, Interior and OSMRE must address the ability of renewable energy to replace lost capacity and provide

economic development opportunities. As part of this analysis, Interior and OSMRE must consider means of providing electric power locally in the region and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

The San Juan coal mine environmental impact statement provides a critical opportunity for Interior and OSMRE to help the Four Corners region transition from coal to more sustainable and prosperous economies, as well as to clean and more reliable and affordable energy sources. We urge you not to squander this opportunity and to ensure that transition is a paramount goal of the San Juan coal mine review. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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