Dear President Obama and Secretary Jewell,

As religious leaders in states that will be impacted by the federal coal review, we thank you for conducting the first Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement of the federal coal program in 30 years. We know that we are long overdue to assess the true cost of coal on God’s creation, our communities’ health, and our local economies.

Coal mining’s impact on land, water, and creatures has not been adequately accounted for, nor its impact on the climate. We are also aware that rising rates of asthma and other maladies that relate to mercury exposure and air quality must be counted when we consider coal’s impact on communities. Another aspect of the coal economy that has long been overlooked is in the tax system. Local communities that should have received millions in royalties to support schools, libraries, roads, and other projects for the common good, have not gotten their fair share. We look forward to seeing the federal government recognize the true cost of coal through this review process.

At the same time, we know that changes in the marketplace for coal have impacted, and will continue to impact, jobs in our communities. We are preparing for the pastoral, as well as practical impacts. Any responsible federal coal review process should include a robust plan built on stakeholder input that ensures coal-dependent communities are cared for, and that they will have new economic opportunities available to them.

Please consider religious communities as partners as you forge a new pathway forward.

In hope,
Rev. Peter Sawtell
Director, Eco-Justice Ministries
Denver, CO

Rev. Rebecca Kemper Poos
Senior Minister, Congregational United Church of Christ of Buena Vista
Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Jeff Neuman-Lee
Pastor, Whittier Community Church
Denver, CO

Rev. Mary Beth Mankin
Pastor, Pine Street Church
Boulder, CO

Rev. Gregory Garland
Minister, United Church of Broomfield
Arvada, CO

Rabbi Deborah Bronstein
Rabbi, Congregation Har Hashem
Boulder, CO

Rev. Dr. Peter Terpenning
Retired Pastor, United Church of Christ
Boulder, CO

Rev. Mark Meeks
Minister, United Church of Christ
Bailey, CO

Rev. Harriot Quin
Retired Clergy, United Church of Christ
Lafayette, CO

Rev. Amy Carter
Minister, United Church of Christ
Missoula, MT

Rev. Dr. Genny Rowley
Eco-Justice Community Chair, Alliance of Baptists
Board Chair, Utah Interfaith Power and Light
Salt Lake City, UT

Rev. Marjike Rossi
Clergy, United Church of Christ
Salt Lake City, UT

Rev. Gage Church
Clergy, United Church of Christ
Ogden, UT