



January 24, 2024

Dear US Forest Service,

I am writing on behalf of the Arkansas Audubon Society, a statewide organization committed to fostering a greater knowledge of the natural history of Arkansas and promoting conservation of the state's natural resources. **We have the following concerns about USFS Project 64897 Heavener Coal Mine that we would like to see further addressed in the upcoming environmental assessment:**

- Impacts of development (including supporting infrastructure) and disturbance to sensitive breeding bird populations, as well as other rare and threatened animals (including any nearby populations of the federally listed Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*)), plants, and habitats.
- Extent of greenhouse gas emissions (including carbon dioxide, methane, etc.) from the project's construction, operation, and products (including their transportation), as well as plans for reduction and mitigation of these emissions.
- Potential for contamination of ground and surface waters, and how any contaminated waters would in turn affect other aspects of the surrounding ecosystem.
- Is there truly longevity in this industry, and how, if at all, will Arkansas and Arkansans locally and statewide benefit from this project? Its products would be sent overseas, which increases the carbon footprint of this already high-impact energy resource.
- Will there be other opportunities for local communities, including native communities, to voice their concerns with this project and its effects on the land? As seen with coal mines elsewhere, there can be effects on the health of local residents, among other concerns.
- How will consequences of the mining operation be monitored throughout its lifetime if the project is approved? How will the mining company be held responsible for any environmental, ecological, or health consequences resulting from its operation?
- What will be done with the mine and the land once the 30-year lease is completed? Will any work be done to restore it to pre-mining conditions? Will restoration experts be involved in establishing any such requirements or plans?

We appreciate the opportunity for these concerns to be heard at this stage, and we plan to provide more input as the project advances for consideration. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Krajcir'.

Kevin J. Krajcir, M.S.
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