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## Land Board delays action on Otter Creek coal leases

Wednesday, 18 Nov, 2009

Missoulian reported that the state Land Board delayed until next month a decision whether to lease millions of tonnes of state owned coal for possible development in southeastern Montana, saying that more time is needed for the public to examine the proposed bid letting.

Ms Linda McCulloch secretary of State, who made the motion to delay action on leasing the Otter Creek coal tracts until the board's December 21st 2009 meeting said that "I think it is appropriate for us to have a little more time to look at this."

Mr Anne Hedges program director for the Montana Environmental Information Center in Helena said that "The bid package could result in a lease that will bind the state for decades to come. It will determine how the land is developed, what authority the board will retain over the property and the amount of compensation the state will receive for the complete depletion of this resource."

Others said that they're simply opposed to coal development at Otter Creek, as well as the accompanying Tongue River Railroad and that the state shouldn't encourage either.

The state owns 572 million of the 1.3 billion tonnes of coal in the valley, interspersed with coal owned by Great Northern Properties, the largest private owner of coal in the US. Last week, Great Northern announced that it has agreed to lease its 730 million tonnes of Otter Creek coal to Arch Coal Inc.

(Sourced from Missoulian.com)

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