

# Deseret News

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SALT LAKE CITY — A massive coal sale in central Utah exempted under a national moratorium on any new mining on federal land was delayed Tuesday after environmental groups filed an appeal.

The Sierra Club, the Center for Biological Diversity, Grand Canyon Trust and WildEarth Guardians appealed the Bureau of Land Management's decision to go ahead and offer the Green Hollow Tract in Sanpete and Sevier counties, citing concerns about sage grouse habitat.

The action now prompts the Interior Board of Land Appeals to take another look, staying the sale planned for Tuesday for a review period that could take 45 days.

BLM offered the tract of 6,175 acres despite a three-year moratorium announced by the Obama administration in January as part of sweeping reforms.

## Appeal delays massive coal sale planned for central Utah



Christopher Watkins, Deseret News Archive  
FILE - A male Greater sage-grouse struts at a lek near Henefer, Utah Sunday, April 16, 2006. The Bureau of Land Management received a petition and stay from four environmental organizations over the planned coal lease in central Utah where 56 million...

The tract was covered under exceptions granted through the moratorium because an environmental review had already been performed.

The agency also said the Alton coal tract of 49 million tons was potentially exempted from the moratorium because of its place in the environmental review process.

BLM spokesman Ryan Sutherland said Alton Coal applied for an exemption under the moratorium, which is still under consideration.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, in announcing the moratorium, said a comprehensive review of the decades-old federal coal leasing program was necessary given concerns raised by the Government Accountability Office, the Interior Department's inspector general, members of Congress and the public.

Among concerns that will be examined during the expansive review are questions over a "fair return" to taxpayers on publicly owned coal, environmental impacts and consequences to public health from coal combustion.

The Green Hollow tract is about 10 miles east of the town of Emery and 5 miles from the portal of the SUFCO Mine, Utah's largest coal mine operated by Bowie Resources. The tract is believed to hold 55.7 million tons of recoverable coal and would extend the life of Bowie's mine.

The Interior Board of Land Appeals is headed by a chief administrative law judge with authority delegated by the Interior secretary to issue final decisions on behalf of the agency. An appeal of the board's decision would then have to be filed in federal court.