



# How does existing policy address the social & economic impacts of the coal transition?

Kelli Roemer, PhD student  
Montana State University | September 16, 2020  
EESI Briefing Series



# Resources & Communities Research Group at MSU



Rural, coal community transition context

Understanding the policy landscape

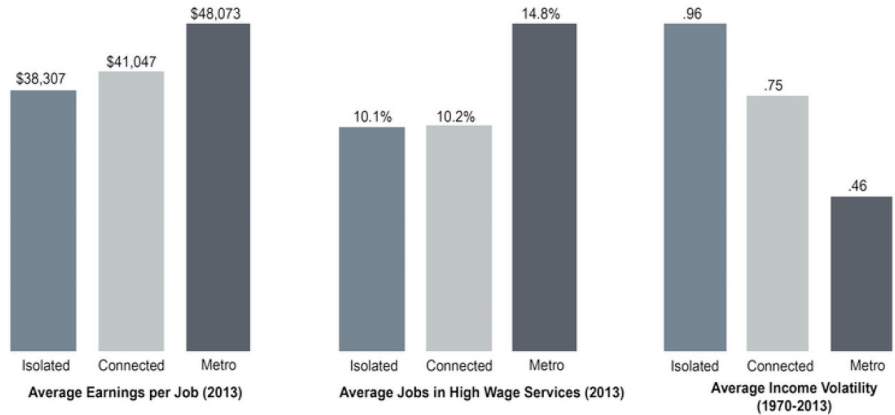
Alignment between existing assistance programs and needs



# Closures will have acute impacts on remote, isolated communities



Colstrip, MT



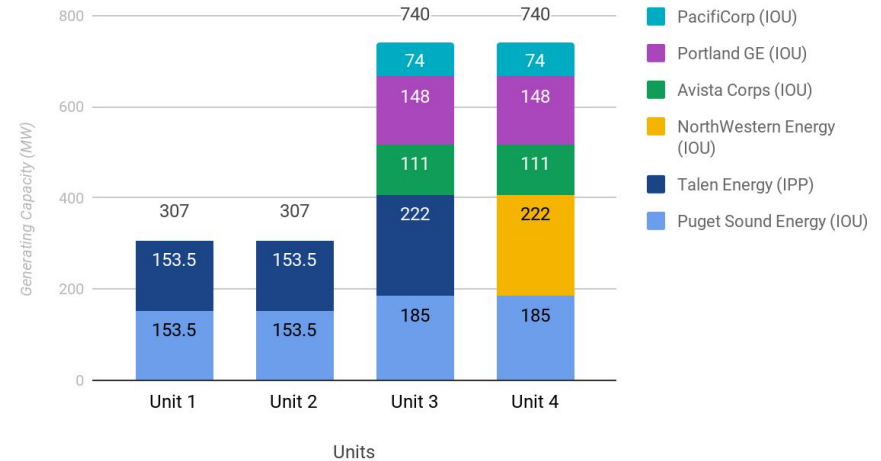
Haggerty et al., 2018

# Coal communities confront a complex ownership regime

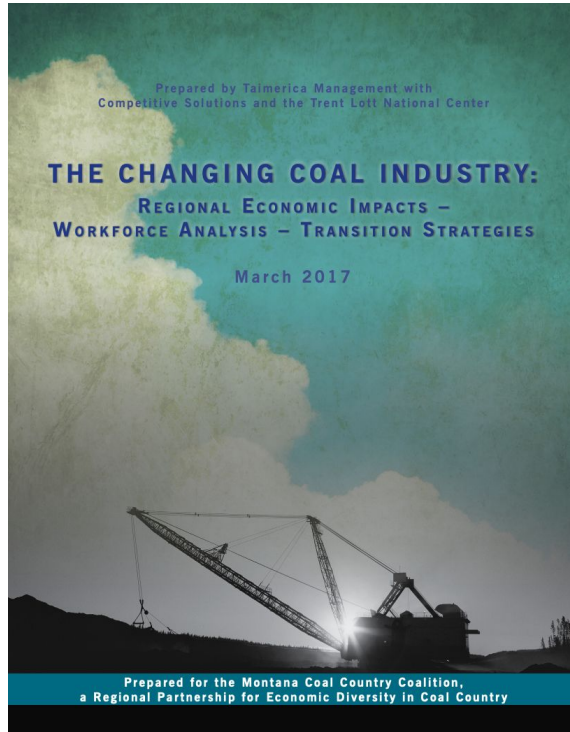


Colstrip Steam Electric Station, Colstrip, MT  
PC: Larry Mayer, Billings Gazette

Ownership in Colstrip's Units by Operator and Number of MW



# Existing transition planning is limited, dependent on local capacity and resources



Coal Brew coffee shop, Colstrip, MT

## Rural, coal community transition context

Need assistance that mitigate economic & fiscal impacts, negotiate closure dates and secures transition funds, support for early & long-term planning & worker assistance

## Rural, coal community transition context

Need assistance that mitigate economic & fiscal impacts, negotiate closure dates and secures transition funds, support for early & long-term planning & worker assistance

## Understanding the policy landscape



**Most recent comprehensive energy legislation was in 2005**



# Recent energy policy has been made through executive action



2015



2017

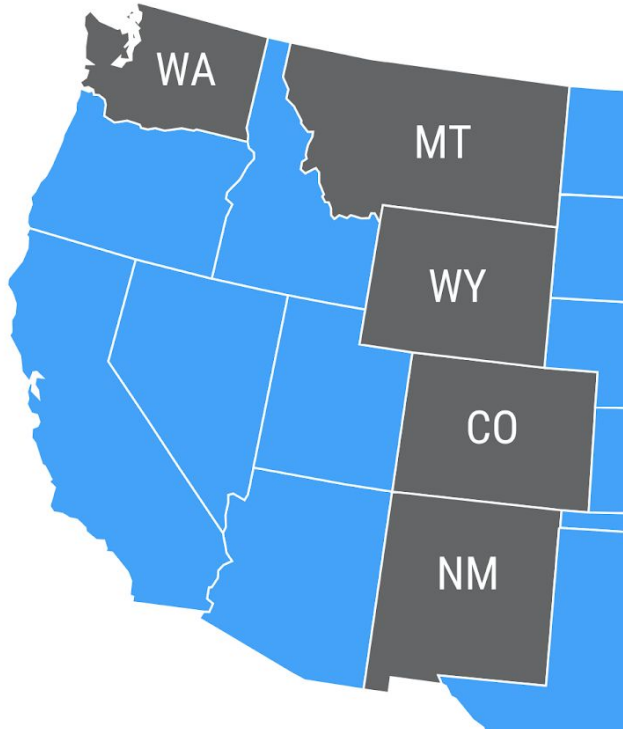
## Rural, coal community transition context

Need assistance that mitigate economic & fiscal impacts, negotiate closure dates and secures transition funds, support for early & long-term planning & worker assistance

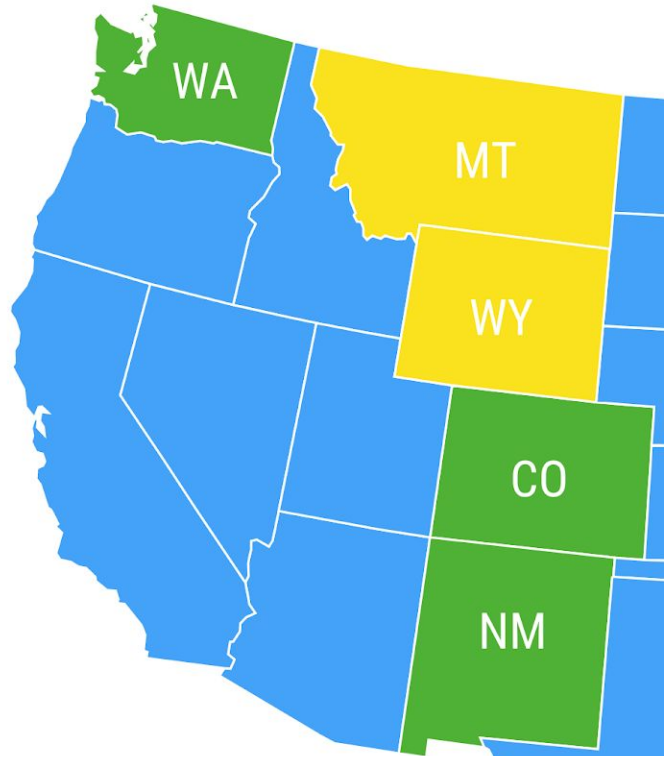
## Understanding the policy landscape



Absence of policy exacerbates uncertainty and sends conflicting messages

# Several western states have enacted legislation to address coal industry decline



# Two distinct approaches emerge to manage coal industry decline



-  Accelerates the energy transition and seeks to clarify the pace of transition
-  Works to slow transition by bolstering the coal industry and aims to postpone coal plant retirements



# Existing transition assistance programs - POWER, ACC, DOL



**Transition assistance programs do not adequately address the needs of remote, isolated communities**

# Transition assistance programs do not adequately address the needs of remote, isolated communities

*“They’d sit in a room and start talking about transitioning economies, that there’s not a direct replacement for that... I think that the backfill of revenue support is the piece we have not figured out.”*

*- Community development practitioner*

**Transition assistance programs do not support early or long-term planning**

# Transition assistance programs do not support early or long-term planning

*“You’re not going to come in with a three-year grant and save the community.”*

*- Economic Development Practitioner*



# Transition assistance programs are insufficient

# Transition assistance programs are insufficient

*Need long-term reinvestment “orders of magnitude higher than existing grants or loans...”*

*- Energy and tax policy expert*

# Key takeaways

# Key takeaways

Develop legislation that coordinates the energy transition

# Key takeaways

Develop legislation that coordinates the energy transition

Expand scope and scale of assistance programs



# Key takeaways

Develop legislation that coordinates the energy transition

Expand scope and scale of assistance programs

**Reinvest in impacted communities and workers**

# Key takeaways

Develop legislation that coordinates the energy transition

Expand scope and scale of assistance programs

Reinvest in impacted communities and workers

**Increase flexibility in grant programs**

Thank you! Questions?

**email** [kelliroemer@montana.edu](mailto:kelliroemer@montana.edu)

**web** [resources4communities.org](http://resources4communities.org)

**twitter** @kelliroem



This research has been supported by U.S. National Science Foundation grant #1632810 and USDA NIFA Pre-doctoral Fellowship Award #2020-67034-31718