

# Federally Owned Coal and Federal Lands in the Colorado Plateau Region

Federally owned coal plays a major role in the energy supply of the United States. About 1.1 billion tons of coal were produced in the United States in 1997 (U.S. Department of Energy, 1998). About 30 percent of that total, or about 330 million tons, came from Federal lands. (See USGS Fact Sheet FS-012-98, <http://greenwood.cr.usgs.gov/pub/fact-sheets/fs-0012-98/>.) Almost all of the Federal coal production is from Wyoming, Montana, and three States in the Colorado Plateau Region—Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico<sup>1</sup> (see table below).

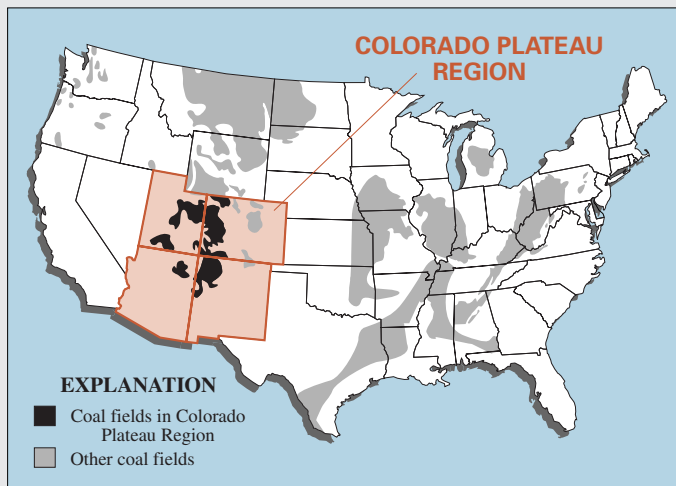
1997 Federal Coal Production from States in the Colorado Plateau Region (in thousands of short tons)	
Utah	23,887
Colorado	22,264
New Mexico	6,029
<b>TOTAL for Region</b>	<b>52,180</b>

(U.S. Department of Energy, 1998, p. 21)

The National Coal Assessment, a multi-year effort by the U.S. Geological Survey, included studies of Federally owned coal in seven areas (called "priority assessment units") in the Colorado Plateau Region. The goal of the assessment was to identify and characterize major coal resources that will supply the Nation's energy needs during the first quarter of the 21st century, and, likely, well beyond.

This Fact Sheet presents resource estimates, never before calculated, for Federal coal in the seven priority assessment units in Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. More than 360 billion tons of Federal coal exist in those areas. Knowing where the Federal coal is located, how much Federal coal exists, and its geologic setting helps land managers, planners, and mineral developers to make informed land-use decisions.

The Colorado Plateau Region has extensive coal-bearing areas (fig. 1) and approximately 40 active coal mines which supply fuel for many of the region's electrical power plants. From figures 1 and 2, we see that coal-bearing areas occur beneath lands administered by the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS), or the Department of Agriculture's U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Additionally, coal is present beneath many Tribal, State, and private lands in the Colorado Plateau Region.

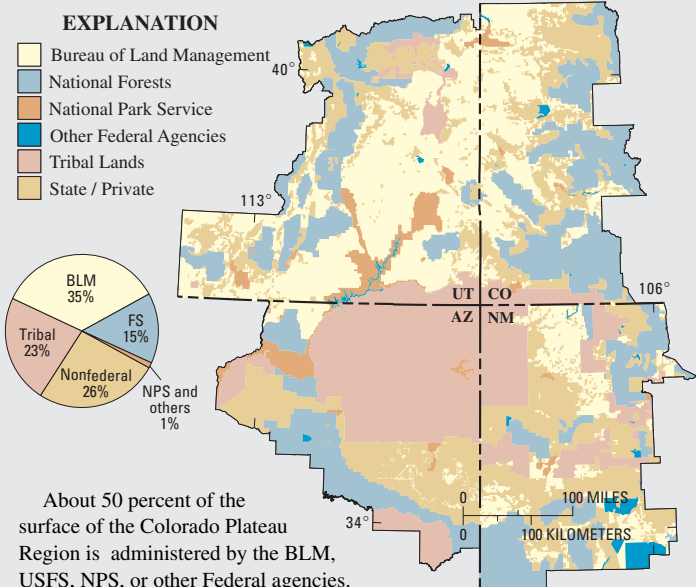


<sup>1</sup> Arizona coal production is not from Federally owned coal resources and thus is not included in this discussion.



Figure 1 (above). Index map of Colorado Plateau Region showing study area, coal-bearing areas, major towns, and roads.

Figure 2 (below). Land status in the Colorado Plateau Region.



About 50 percent of the surface of the Colorado Plateau Region is administered by the BLM, USFS, NPS, or other Federal agencies. About 23 percent of the area consists of Tribal lands; although those lands are held in trust by the U.S. Government, they are not considered Federal lands and their coal resources are not included in this study. About 26 percent of the region is administered by State agencies or is privately owned.

