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EXHIBIT 15  
DATE 01/10/05  
HB 2

**FAX TRANSMISSION: 1-406-841-2771**

January 5, 2005

Natural Resources Appropriation  
House Subcommittee  
State Capitol Building  
Helena, Montana 59620

**RE: *Support for Coal Board***

Dear Committee,

I have worked as an attorney from Southeastern Montana for over sixteen (16) years (Hysham, Forsyth, and Colstrip) and have seen the significant opportunities Coal Board grants have provided in the region. The grants have been instrumental in building schools, buying law enforcement vehicles, and helping initiate services for the elderly.

Treasure County, in particular, has been impacted by the coal industry, but does not receive the benefit of an increased tax base.

Maintaining the present communities in Eastern Montana is critical for the coal industry. The Coal Board, through their grants, has accomplished this in a very practical way.

Through this letter, I would request that you please continue your support.

Sincerely yours,



Gary Ryder  
Attorney at Law

GR/cabs