

# **SCM Case Study**

## ***Environmental Assessment***

### **What was the client's issue presented to WWC?**

In 2016, the United States District Court for the District of Montana (Court), ruled that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) violations had occurred associated with the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management (ASLM) 2012 approval of Spring Creek Mine's (SCM) federal mining plan modification. SCM's plan modification approved the mining of the federal coal within the boundaries of the mine's state mining permit (SMP C1979012). As part of the NEPA process for the federal mining plan modification approval, an environmental assessment (EA) was prepared to evaluate the direct and indirect environmental effects of the SCM federal mining plan modification request.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) had prepared this EA in conjunction with the SCM. The Court required correction of the NEPA violations by preparing an updated EA that reevaluated the direct and indirect environmental effects of the SCM federal mining plan amendment and ordered OSMRE to complete the updated EA within 240 days of the Court's decision. The coal included in the federal mining plan revision was being mined and was vital to the SCM and the 240-day completion period, which was a relatively short time for the completion of the reevaluation.

### **How did WWC brainstorm and collaborate with the client to find a solution?**

WWC met with the client and OSMRE personnel to discuss the NEPA process and to formulate a schedule that would ensure that the reevaluation EA would be completed within the allotted time.

### **What was the solution chosen by WWC?**

WWC, the client, and OSMRE personnel partnered together to determine the information needed to prepare the document, including text, tables, and maps to prepare the document. The team determined that building on the 2012 EA would be the best approach, in that the required information could be integrated into the revised EA without compromising the schedule.

### **What was the final result of the completed project?**

The result was a success, the EA was completed, and the court order was vacated. SCM was allowed to continue mining according to the reapproved federal mining plan.