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NEWS

BNI wins approval for federal mine plan

Center, North Dakota—BNI Coal announced today that the U.S. Department of the Interior has approved the Center Mine’s Section 20 mine plan.

The Section 20 plan, in the works for nearly 13 years, was needed to allow mining of federal coal under a lease awarded in January 2021. It is critical to efficient and cost-effective operations at the Center Mine and the Milton R. Young Station, both of which play an essential role in the region’s electrical grid.

Without its approval, BNI and Minnkota Power Cooperative would have been required to implement contingency plans adding over \$35 million worth of unnecessary costs; all of which would have been borne by ratepayers in the form of higher electricity prices.

Center Mine is owned and operated by BNI and supplies coal to the adjacent Milton R. Young Station, a 700-megawatt power plant operated by Minnkota that provides baseload electricity in North Dakota and Minnesota

BNI General Manager Mike Heger said support from U.S. Sen. John Hoeven was instrumental in securing the Section 20 mine plan.

“BNI is grateful to Sen. Hoeven for his dedicated leadership and support during this federal mine plan approval process. It takes a dedicated team to secure the rights to mine coal owned by the federal government. We are extremely fortunate to have Sen. Hoeven as part of that team. His role has been both unique and invaluable,” Heger said. “This approval provides BNI with some much-needed regulatory certainty, which is necessary to fulfill our mission to responsibly mine North Dakota lignite. We will continue to provide the resources needed to produce reliable and affordable electricity vital to our entire region.”

“Getting this mine plan approved was critical to the operations of Center Mine and the Milton R. Young Station, both of which play an essential role in this region’s electrical grid,” Hoeven said in a [news release issued by his office](#). “That’s why we worked to move this process forward and ensure DOI signed off on BNI’s mine plan, and we appreciate Deputy Secretary Beaudreau for continuing to work with us on this priority. We need more baseload power, like coal-fired electric, and today’s announcement is a win for the continued affordability and reliability of the grid.”

BNI Coal is a subsidiary of ALLETE, which is headquartered in Duluth, Minnesota.