Alaska possesses vast amounts of coal, probably a major portion of the world’s remaining coal resource. As a result, the choices that are made in Alaska regarding coal development will have a major local and global impact.

Even though small-scale mining began here in the 1850’s, coal mining has never taken off in Alaska. Usibelli Coal Mine has been the only active coal mine in the state since 1971, producing 1.5 to 2 million tons of coal per year. But rising global energy demands and rising prices for other fuels have led to a new surge of interest in developing Alaskan coal. Current proposals to utilize Alaskan coal include two conventional strip mines: the Chuitna Coal Mine and the Wishbone Hill Coal Mine, several coal-to-liquids plants, and an underground coal gasification plant in Cook Inlet. For a succinct summary of all coal-related projects in the state see our proposal overview page.

Coal provided 42% of the electricity in the US in 2011, giving the country a reliable source of energy. However, coal has greater environmental impact than almost any other energy source, and those impacts can have serious economic implications. Additionally, coal power is more expensive than a number of other energy sources.

As Alaskans, we stand at a decision point. Do we send Alaska and the world into a coal-based future? Or do we choose other, less polluting fuels, either non-renewable or renewable?
Coal in Alaska

Alaska is coal country. Mining started in the 1850s, and continues today at Usibelli Coal mine, the only remaining mine. There is interest in opening other mines, such as a large mine on the Chuitna River near Cook Inlet. For a metals mining map, go here.