

## Be Proud of the Word COAL, Our Coal Miners, and All the Volunteers who Make This Show the Best in the Nation, Said Reid



Bill Reid

“Instead of being ashamed of the word “coal,” we should be proud of it,” said Bill Reid, Managing Editor, CoalZoom and Chairman of the Bluefield Coal & Mining Show, Media and Exhibitors Breakfast, which took place at the Brush-fork Armory and Civic Center in Bluefield, WV, immediately before the show opened.

“Be Proud of our coal miners, who have fueled the industrial revolution and two world wars, the information age, and still work around the clock providing reliable fuel and contributing to America’s standard of living,” said Reid, who criticized manufacturers that use the term “soft rock” instead of “coal” because they think the word “coal” is not politically correct.

“Be proud of all the volunteers, who put together this great event, and make it the best regional coal show in the nation!” he said. Traditionally, the breakfast is held to thank the mining media, and organizations such as the Bluefield Daily Telegraph, and WVVA TV for promoting the show around the country. Reid also took the opportunity to thank the 165 exhibitors, who came from 30 states as well as Canada, Germany, Poland and Singapore.

After welcoming all the attendees, Reid said that these were extraordinary times and the world was putting an extraordinary value on the price of coal. Some coal is 5 times the normal price! Global coal production was continuing to rise and will exceed its record level reached a decade ago, of 8 billion tons. The world’s coal producers, including the U.S., are scrambling to replace the 140 million tons of seaborne coal from Russia that has been removed from the market by sanctions or not bought by countries that hate what Russia has done to Ukraine. The world’s coal producers are planning 300 new mines with 2.3 billion tons annual capacity.

Here at home, coal continues to face headwinds and the war on coal has resumed. Last month a federal judge reinstated the moratorium on coal leasing from federal lands affecting nearly 250 million tons a year. The Inflation Reduction Act, passed later last month, further increased already considerable incentives for renewable energy, putting additional disadvantages on coal.

But there is also good news for coal in the U.S., explained Reid. The inflation Reduction Act does have financial incentives for CCS, which may get the ball rolling in that field. The Supreme Court has reigned in the EPA and said it needs to get Congressional approval when addressing major policy issues such as limiting CO2 emissions from power plants causing a transition away from coal. Other welcome news is that several companies including Arch Coal, Alpha, Bens Creek, Century Mining, CONSOL, and Contura, all report progress with their new mines.

Coal mine production here at home recovered by 7.9% last year due to Covid recovery and is increasing another 4% this year to 600 million tons. This figure would have been bettered if not for the shortage of railroad cars and train drivers. Looking ahead, U.S. coal production is expected to remain flat for the next five years but, according to Reid, the coal industry is putting up a strong fight against the challenges it faces:

First, the National Mining Association is vigorously appealing the moratorium on coal leasing on federal lands.

Second, further to McKinley’s bill last year, there will be a second Net Negative CO2 Baseload Power Bill drawn up involving co-firing 80% coal with 20% biomass, which gives a net-negative CO2 footprint and may be the only way for the long-term future of U.S. coal power plants.

Third, there will be numerous law suits on a state by state basis to defend coal and to keep power plants open to preserve the reliable electricity grid.

More good news locally is that Bluefield State University is hoping to bring back its mining engineering technology curriculum. In addition, these are improving opportunities for coal exports as Appalachian coal is closely connected to world coal markets because of location and coal quality. Exports of steam coal have doubled in the first six months of the year.

“Another purpose of this breakfast is to pay tribute to the exhibitors, who supply the industry and there is better news too from manufacturers of mining machinery with several reporting full order books,” said Reid. “So, be proud of the 165 exhibitors, who are here, all who contribute to the economy and are betting their future on the great American coal industry!”