Project Title: National Coal Resource Assessment Program
Location: National Southeastern and Eastern Montana, Powder River and Williston Basins
Period Of Project: Five years beginning 1996
Project Leader: Edith M. Wilde, as representative for Montana beginning 1997

Project Staff: Romeo Flores, USGS, Denver, Program Director; Stephen Roberts, USGS, Denver, Regional Director; and one MBMG student assistant

Funding Source: U.S. Geological Survey, Energy Team

Issue

Recently enacted federal mining regulations, as well as new air and water quality standards, have brought into question the accuracy of reserve estimates currently being used for energy policy decisions. Current reserve estimates are based on data over twenty years old and considerable coal has been mined during that time. Additionally, results of recent Coal Availability Studies have emphasized the need for updated reserve estimates based on conditions that are more current.

Objectives

To re-evaluate the Nation’s coal reserves using a basin by basin approach, and emphasizing coal beds/zones currently being mined or likely to be mined in the next 20 years.

Approach

USGS personnel are compiling all available information into data bases for each basin under study. The STRATIFACTS software program is being used for data storage and initial bed correlations. MBMG is assisting with data acquisition, determination of significant beds, coal bed correlation, data interpretation, and organization of field trips. Data from recent studies in Montana is being included.

Data will then be combined into a National data base, and used to update the National reserve estimates. Derivative products, charts, maps and tables will be prepared based on the updated information obtained by this program. Data will be made available to policy makers in Washington once the study is completed.

Progress during the 1999–2001 Biennium

Currently available data for both the Williston and the Powder River Basin areas of Montana has been submitted to the program. Determination of regional reserve areas has been completed. To date, the results have been published as USGS Open File Report 99-376 (1 CD ROM disc) and USGS Professional Paper 1625-A (two CD-ROM discs). Three additional publications are undergoing review.

Plans for the 2001–2003 Biennium

Assist with the completion of any pending publications. All major work and publications are expected to be complete by the end of 2001.
Information Products

Regional information has been published in CD ROM form for the Williston and the Powder River Basins. A finalized version including the basin-wide results for the entire nation is expected to be published by the end of 2001.