



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING

Reclamation and Enforcement
1027 Virginia Street, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25301



May 4, 1999

To All Interested Parties:

The Office of Surface Mining (OSM) just completed the enclosed oversight report entitled, *An Evaluation of Approximate Original Contour and Postmining Land Use in West Virginia*. As the title implies, the report relates to approximate original contour, or the shape of the land prior to mining, and the kinds of postmining land uses that are allowed for mountaintop mining operations in West Virginia.

OSM initially released the draft of this report for public comment in December 1998. The comment period closed on February 12, 1999. The initial report contained many facts and information concerning specific mines in West Virginia and identified some programmatic problems as a result of the evaluation. The enclosed report briefly summarizes those problems, but more importantly, it focuses on measures that will be taken to fix the mountaintop mining issues in West Virginia.

With the release of this report, an action plan was formalized between the West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection and OSM and calls for joint actions to be initiated over the next several months to address the issues brought to our attention concerning mountaintop mining. The complete text of the action plan is contained in Appendix C and is discussed throughout the report.

OSM would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the individuals who took time to comment on the draft report. OSM received more than sixty letters, E-mail messages, and comments on the draft report. Public participation played a very important part in the development of this report, and it will continue to play an important role if we are going to resolve the mountaintop mining issues. A summation of the comments received on the draft report and OSM's responses to them are contained in Appendix A.

For those who may be interested, electronic copies of the initial draft report and this final report are posted on OSM's Web page. The reports may be viewed and downloaded at: <http://www.osmre.gov/mtindex.htm>. Upon request, additional copies of the enclosed report may also be obtained by calling (304) 347-7158 or by writing to the Charleston Field Office at 1027 Virginia Street East, Charleston, West Virginia 25301. Again, thank you for your interest in this important matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Roger W. Calhoun

Roger W. Calhoun, Director
Charleston Field Office

Enclosure