



Tennessee Lands Unsuitable for Mining Petition Fact Sheet

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) is a bureau within the United States Department of the Interior that carries out the requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 in cooperation with states and tribes. OSMRE's objectives are to ensure that coal mining activities are conducted in a manner that protects people and the environment during mining, to ensure that the land is restored to beneficial use after mining, and to mitigate the effects of past mining by aggressively pursuing reclamation of abandoned coal mines.

- In 2010, Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen filed a petition with the OSMRE requesting that OSMRE declare a 1,200 foot corridor (600 feet on either side of the ridgelines) in the North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area and Emory River Tract Conservation Easement as unsuitable for surface coal mining operations.
- The petition area includes approximately 500 miles of ridges in an area of slightly over 67,000 acres in the counties of Anderson, Campbell, Scott, and Morgan located in East Tennessee. A map of the areas described in the petition is available on the OSMRE web site at www.osmre.gov/TNLUM.shtm
- The petition area begins approximately 3 miles north of Wartburg, Tennessee and extends 40 miles in a northeasterly direction ending about 8 miles northeast of Lafollette, Tennessee.
- Prior to issuing a LUM decision, the regulatory authority OSMRE must evaluate the petition, consider and prepare a detailed statement on the potential coal resources in the area, the demand for coal resources, and the impact of the designation on the environment, the economy, and the supply of coal.
- OSMRE evaluated the State's petition and prepared a draft Petition Evaluation Document and accompanying draft Environmental Impact Statement (draft PED/EIS).

- The draft EIS identifies six alternatives that were under consideration for the disposition of the petition. They include:
 - Alternative 1—deny the petition and do not designate any of the petition area as unsuitable for surface coal mining operations (no-action);
 - Alternative 2—grant the petition and designate the entire petition area as unsuitable for all surface coal mining operations (State’s proposed action, the designation of 67,326 acres);
 - Alternative 3—grant the state petition designation while allowing re-mining of abandoned surface mine benches (which would then be reclaimed) and road access (OSMRE’s preferred alternative) (designation of 67,326 acres);
 - ❖ The agency has chosen Alternative 3 as its “preferred alternative” because it is the most consistent with the State’s request. Re-mining would allow for the balancing of mining and conservation interests.
 - Alternative 4—grant an expanded corridor designation of independently identified ridgelines within the petition area while allowing re-mining and road access (designation of 76,133 acres);
 - Alternative 5—designate lands based on the presence of certain sensitive resources, including sensitive wildlife habitat, a state park, and sensitive wetlands (designation of 12,331 acres); and
 - Alternative 6—designate a reduced corridor or 600 feet (designation of 39,106 acres)
- The preferred alternative would designate 67,326 acres within the petition area as unsuitable for mining, while allowing certain areas previously mined to be re-mined. When re-mining is complete, the mine operator would be required, under any permit issued under the applicable regulatory program, to reclaim the disturbed land in order to protect people and the environment.
- Interior previously designated a Tennessee area as Unsuitable for Mining in 1990 in order to preserve the unique resources of a state park. In 2000, the Secretary of the Interior also declared areas near Falls Creek Falls, Bledsoe, and Van Buren counties as Unsuitable for Mining.
- OSMRE is soliciting written comments by mail, courier delivery, electronically, and through public hearings for interested parties to provide input. The comments will go into the written record for evaluation before the Secretary of the Interior makes the final determination.