



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

News Release



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FY2006 Office of Surface Mining Budget Emphasizes Reauthorization of AML Fee Collection Authority and Technology Transfer to States and Tribes

Washington - Jeffrey Jarrett, Director the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining today announced a FY2006 budget proposal that puts a renewed emphasis on reauthorizing the AML Fee collection authority and on enhancing the technology transfer activities afforded the States and Indian Tribes.

With the expiration of AML fee collection authority pending on June 30, 2005, the Administration remains committed to reauthorizing AML fee collection authority and to bringing reform to the AML program that expedites the elimination of high priority health and safety abandoned coal mines as well as to providing for the expedited payment of unappropriated balances to certified States and Tribes, within the President's mandatory and discretionary spending limits.

The President's budget supports the Administration's vision for reauthorizing the AML program. OSM's request for the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund appropriation is \$246 million. This is a total increase of \$57.8 million over the 2005 appropriated budget. The proposed budget provides for increasing AML grants to non-certified States as well as increasing AML grants to certified States and Tribes.

In addition to State and Tribal funding, OSM proposes increases to watershed cooperative agreements and high priority projects as well as to cover fixed cost increases. Funds will also be provided in permanent authority for supporting health benefits through the United Mine Workers of America to coal miners and their dependents as authorized by the Energy Policy Act of 1992 and Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA).

"The budget submitted by President Bush and Secretary Norton provides the funding necessary to continue important reclamation work," said Jeff Jarrett, director of OSM. "This demonstrates this Administration's firm commitment to protecting the health and safety of our citizens, improving the environment and strengthening partnerships within our communities."

Since enactment of SMCRA in 1977, OSM has provided more than \$3 billion in grants to States and Tribes to clean up mine sites that were abandoned before passage of SMCRA. More than 225,000 acres of abandoned coal mine sites have been reclaimed under OSM's AML program. OSM has also provided nearly \$1 billion in grants to States and Indian Tribes to fund the regulation of active coal mines.

Of the total budget request, \$110 million is for Regulation and Technology. This is a total increase of \$2 million over 2005. The proposed budget seeks increases towards OSM's applied science and technology transfer activities, including its National Technical Training Program, and its Technical Innovation and Professional Services Program.

Said Jarrett, "In order to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of our program, we must take advantage of the tools modern science and technology have to offer."

The Interior Department's budget request for OSM for fiscal year 2006 requests \$356,549,000 and 580 FTEs to achieve its 2006 annual performance goals. The 2006 discretionary request represents a \$60 million increase over the 2005 enacted level of \$296.6 million. To offset some of the program increases, OSM has proposed program decreases in SOAP grants as well in funding for vehicles, office space and information technology expenses.

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