



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

# News Release



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## **OSM Issues Proposed Rules for the Abandoned Mine Land Program**

(Washington DC) – The U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) announced today publication of a proposed rule that would align current regulations with amendments to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) which the President signed into law on December 20, 2006.

The amendments significantly changed the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program, including dramatically increasing the funds available for reclamation of abandoned coal mines. After an initial phase-in period, approximately 83% of fees collected annually will be allocated for this reclamation.

In the amendments, Congress mandated a reduction in the fee that the coal industry pays on each ton of coal that it mines. This fee is used to abate and remediate the environmental impact of historic coal mining. The fee rates are reduced by 10 percent from the levels established in 1977 for the period from October 1, 2007, through September 30, 2012, and again reduced by another 10 percent from the 1977 levels for the period from October 1, 2012, through September 30, 2021.

The proposed rule being published today codifies the reduction of the fee rates and OSM's authority to collect reclamation fees through September 30, 2021.

The proposed changes also affect the activities that State and Tribal reclamation programs may perform under the program and funding for reclamation grants to States and Indian tribes. Finally, the proposed changes reinstate expired incentives for the re-mining of certain lands and water adversely affected by past mining.

Interested persons may submit comments on the proposed rule through the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Comments may also be sent by mail or courier addressed to the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, Administrative Record, Room 252-SIB, 1951 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20240. Please include the proposed rule's docket id -- OSM-2008-0003 -- with all comments sent by mail or courier. Comments are due by August 19, 2008.

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