



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

News Release



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Public Submits Thousands of Comments on Environmental Impact Statement for New Rule to Protect Streams

(Washington, D.C.) – Officials at the Department of the Interior’s [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSM) have received a strong public response to the bureau’s call for comments on the scope of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a new rule to better protect streams from the adverse effects of surface coal mining.

OSM held nine open houses in eight coalfield states (covering more than 95 percent of the coal-producing areas in the U.S.) between July 19 and July 29. During the open houses, the public was invited to comment on the eleven EIS alternatives. Nearly 400 people — representing coal miners, the coal industry, citizens and environmental groups, and other interested parties — attended the open houses and provided more than 450 written or dictated comments. The public also submitted more than 21,000 comments via electronic mail, U.S. mail, and hand delivery.

“We are pleased with the robust public response we received, both through the open houses and other means,” said [OSM Director Joseph Pizarchik](#). “We wanted a forum where people could freely express their opinions in a non-confrontational environment,” he added. “I appreciate the fact people were polite and civil. As we move forward in the process, we will carefully consider the many thoughtful and substantive opinions put forth.”

“The open houses provided an excellent forum for members of the public to weigh in on public policy at the earliest stage,” Pizarchik continued. “In Kentucky, for instance, several miners and their families visited our open house, discussed the various alternatives, and then submitted written comments. Their input will be helpful as we work to implement the best strategy through which to protect our streams.”

The open houses are part of the “scoping” process required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which mandates that Federal agencies must involve the public while developing new regulations or other major projects. The public comment period for the scope and content of the EIS ended July 30, 2010. OSM is now evaluating the comments before writing a Draft EIS (DEIS).

OSM will publish the DEIS early next year on its website. The bureau will announce the DEIS's availability in the *Federal Register*, on Twitter, and will hold additional public meetings for review and comment.

For instant updates on the Stream Protection Rule and other items of interest, follow OSM on Twitter at www.twitter.com/OSMRE or visit the OSM home page at www.osmre.gov.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement carries out the requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 in cooperation with states and tribes. OSM's objectives are to ensure that coal mining activities are conducted in a manner that protects citizens 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.

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