



NEWS RELEASE

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Fiscal Year 2015 Budget for Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Strengthens Compliance, Invests in Research

Budget proposal restores mine lands, expands technology use, reduces subsidies, and strengthens State and Tribal regulatory programs

(Washington, DC) – President Obama’s proposed \$144.8 million in discretionary funding for the [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSMRE) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 focuses funding on improving State and Tribal compliance with coal production laws and reduces Federal subsidies to the coal industry. The budget also proposes changes in mandatory funding to address the most critical needs for reclaiming abandoned coal mine sites.

OSMRE’s proposed discretionary budget is a decrease of \$5.3 million from the bureau’s FY 2014 enacted level. The FY 2015 budget provides an increase of \$3.8 million to improve implementation of the [Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977](#) (SMCRA) and to support approved state and tribal surface coal mining regulatory programs. Overall, state and tribal regulatory grants are funded at \$55.2 million, a reduction of \$13.4 million from last year.

The FY 2015 budget includes \$3.4 million to address critical challenges in energy production by investing in scientific studies that advance technologies and practices specific to coal mine sites and to expand current efforts to provide better data through the GeoMine Project, a web-based, digital “one-stop shop” map of surface coal mining and reclamation activities in the U.S. These investments will make available better data for decision making, and for more comprehensive ecosystem restoration, including reforestation and reclamation using native vegetation.

“The President’s responsible budget reflects his commitment to strengthening State and Tribal capacity for regulating their surface coal mining operations,” said [OSMRE Director Joe Pizarchik](#). “The Administration’s budget also proposes to provide \$186 million to states and tribes for high-priority abandoned coal mine reclamation,” he added.

SMCRA allows states and tribes to assume primary responsibility — or primacy — for regulating surface coal mining operations within their borders. To date, 24 states have achieved primacy, while OSMRE is the regulatory authority in Tennessee and Washington State.

The FY 2015 budget encourages primacy states to maintain funding levels for their



regulatory programs by increasing the amount of costs they recover for services each State provides to the coal industry for the state to review, administer, and inspect SMCRA permits. Where OSMRE is the regulatory authority for coal mining operations (Tennessee, Washington, and on Tribal lands), the budget calls for a reduction that will be offset by \$1.9 million in costs that OSMRE proposes to recover from mine operators for the services the bureau provides to the industry.

In FY 2015, OSMRE will distribute an estimated \$352.7 million in mandatory funds under the [Abandoned Mine Land](#) (AML) Program. These funds are not subject to an annual appropriation. Of this total, the budget proposes \$186.0 million for high-priority abandoned coal mine reclamation and provides \$166.7 million for payments to the United Mine Workers of America Health Plans.

With regard to the reclamation fee that mine operators pay on each ton of coal produced, the FY 2015 budget proposes to return rates to the levels in effect before Congress reduced the fee by amending SMCRA in 2006. The President's budget will focus the additional funds on the highest priority remaining AML sites. To reduce the deficit and ensure AML funding is used for reclaiming high-priority AML sites, the Administration proposes terminating mandatory payments to states and tribes that have finished reclaiming their abandoned coal mines, saving \$295 million over 10 years. The budget also proposes to build off the success of SMCRA's AML Fund by creating a parallel fund to reclaim abandoned hardrock (e.g., gold or copper) mines.

OSMRE will hold a teleconference on March 6, 2014, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time for interested parties to learn more about President Obama's proposed FY 2015 budget for the bureau. To join the call, dial 1-888-324-9612 and use the passcode 1449462. For TTY/Closed Captioning Service, log in by clicking on the following link at the start of the event: <http://www.fedrcc.us/Enter.aspx?EventID=2328348&CustomerID=321>

To see OSM's proposed FY 2015 budget, click [here](#). To see OSM budgets from past years, click [here](#). For instant updates on OSMRE, follow the bureau on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/OSMRE> or visit www.osmre.gov.

OSMRE carries out the requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act in cooperation with States and Tribes. The bureau'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 pursuing reclamation of abandoned coal mines.

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