



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Opens Comment Period on Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Tennessee Lands Unsuitable for Mining Petition and Announces Public Hearings to Gather Input from Stakeholders

Washington, DC – Responding to a request by the State of Tennessee, today [the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](http://www.osmre.gov) (OSMRE) released a draft proposal and draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to designate portions of the state’s mountain ridges as unsuitable for surface coal mining in accordance with state wildlife management plans. The 45-day public comment period on the draft proposal and EIS will begin on December 11, 2015 and end on January 25, 2016.

“We took Tennessee’s request to act on this matter very seriously,” said OSMRE Deputy Director Glenda Owens. “Our staff rigorously evaluated Tennessee’s petition and the impacts of restricting mining in the requested area. We look forward to public comment on this proposal.”

In its request, the State asked OSMRE to deem ridgelines on land managed for multi-use in the North Cumberland Wildlife Management Area and Emory River Tract Conservation Easement unsuitable for surface coal mining operations, in accordance with provisions of the [Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act \(SMCRA\)](http://www.osmre.gov).

Based on its analysis of Tennessee’s petition, OSMRE’s proposal would set aside the requested 67,000 acres from coal production while allowing certain areas to be re-mined (after obtaining all the necessary permits and authorizations), which can address public health and safety concerns. Re-mining allows companies to mine previously mined lands that were left abandoned prior to the enactment of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977 and then reclaiming those lands in accordance with modern standards. Abandoned mine lands continue to pose significant health and safety risks around the country.

A final decision on the petition will not be made until after the 45-day public comment period ends and OSMRE has considered all comments. To view Tennessee’s petition, the draft PED/EIS and other supporting documents, visit www.osmre.gov/TNLUM.shtm. OSMRE is accepting written comments on the draft proposal and EIS through the mail, hand-delivery and courier at its Knoxville, Tennessee Field Office.

OSMRE will also hold four public hearings in January 2016. The dates and locations are as follows:

Monday, January 11, 2016
Wartburg Central High School
1119 Knoxville Hwy
Wartburg, TN 37887

Tuesday, January 12, 2016
Roane State Community College
O’Brien Theater
410 W.H. Swain Blvd
Huntsville, TN 37756



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CONTINUED

Wednesday, January 13, 2016

Clinton Community Center
101 Hicks St.
Clinton, TN 37716

Thursday, January 14, 2016

Campbell County High School
JROTC Room
150 Cougar Ln
Jacksboro, TN 37757

All hearings will begin at 5:30 p.m. (EST) with an open house discussion. The formal hearing begins at 6:30 p.m. and will conclude after all parties have submitted their comments. OSMRE will provide detailed information to attendees at each public hearing and on the bureau's website in advance so that all parties may provide substantive comments on the petition.

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. OSMRE'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. For instant updates on OSMRE, follow the bureau's Twitter feed at www.twitter.com/OSMRE.

