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## Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Reopens Comment Period on Tennessee Lands Unsuitable for Mining Petition

Washington, DC – Responding to requests by stakeholders, [the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](http://www.osmre.gov) (OSMRE) today reopened the comment period until February 26th on a draft Petition Evaluation Document and draft Environmental Impact Statement (draft PED/EIS) to designate portions of certain Tennessee mountain ridges as unsuitable for surface coal mining. Interested parties may now submit written comments on the proposal through February 26, 2016.

In its request, the State of Tennessee 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, the publicly announced preferred alternative would set aside approximately 67,000 acres from coal production while allowing certain areas to be re-mined, after operators obtain all the necessary permits and authorizations. Re-mining such areas can address public health and safety concerns and allow 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 reclaim those lands in accordance with modern standards.

A final decision on the petition will not be made until after the additional 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](http://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.

The original 45-day public comment period on the draft proposal and EIS ended on January 25, 2016. During that period, OSMRE held four public hearings and accepted more than 13,000 written comments from stakeholders.

*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](http://www.twitter.com/OSMRE).*

