



## United States Department of the Interior

### OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING RECLAMATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Washington, D.C. 20240



Dear editors and publishers,

I am forced to take issue with an Associated Press article that appeared last week about a rule that the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) is preparing to better protect streams from the adverse effects of surface coal mining (“New Rules Would Cut Thousands of Coal Jobs,” January 26, 2011). The article claims that the rule “would trim coal production to the point that an estimated 7,000 of the nation’s 80,600 coal mining jobs would be lost.”

With great respect, this misrepresents the facts. The document to which the article refers is the first working draft of part of what could become the preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement. OSM has shared the working draft with state agencies that are cooperating with OSM by providing comments as OSM considers further development of the rule. OSM’s mission is to strike a balance between protecting the environment while assuring that the coal supply essential to the Nation’s energy needs is maintained.

The purpose of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is to inform OSM — and, in turn, the public — about the best way to accomplish this balance. As required by law, OSM will consider in the EIS a reasonable range of alternatives, which may vary from not revising the rule at all, to alternatives that may greatly restrict the way that surface coal mining is conducted. The alternative cited in the article is one of several being considered, and the potential job impacts cited in the article relate to only one of the options that the Draft EIS will evaluate.

Again, the “Environmental Impact Statement” referenced in the article is a very early working draft document. The data in the document is a work in progress, and the data is not complete. The data and the analyses have not been validated and are subject to additional review by the agency. OSM has not adopted the numbers in this working draft document.

OSM has shared this very preliminary document with its state and Federal partners in a spirit of openness and transparency, but at this point, OSM has not made a final decision as to what changes will be in the proposed rule. The proposed rule that OSM intends to publish later this year will fully consider the importance of coal as an essential energy resource for this nation, as well as protect our valuable streams, and help ensure solid, well-paying jobs for the citizens of Appalachia and other coal-producing regions.

Sincerely,

Joe Pizarchik  
Director, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement  
Washington, D.C.