



Brent T. Wahlquist
Director
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

Brent Wahlquist is Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) – one of seven bureaus within the Department of the Interior. Created in 1977 under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA), OSM works in partnership with State and Tribal Governments to regulate active coal mining and reclamation and to reclaim abandoned mines.

After his nomination by President Bush to become the 10th Director of OSM, Wahlquist was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate on August 3, 2007 – the 30th anniversary of SMCRA. He has actually been at the helm at OSM since December 20, 2005, when he was named Acting Director by former Interior Secretary Gale Norton.

Director Wahlquist has held various positions in State and Federal government, consulting, land holding, and mining over the past 35 years. Raised in Idaho, he holds a PhD in biology from New Mexico State University, as well as masters and bachelors degrees in botany from Brigham Young University in Utah.

Wahlquist began his career in 1971 as principal investigator and project manager for environmental studies of electric generating stations, transmission lines and coal mines at Westinghouse Electric in Pennsylvania. In 1977, he joined Rocky Mountain Energy Corporation in Colorado where he continued working on environmental issues related to coal mining. The following year, he went to work for Carbon Fuel Company in West Virginia developing the company's capability to meet the requirements of the newly-enacted Federal Surface Mining law at its surface and underground coal mines in West Virginia and Kentucky.

Director Wahlquist has extensive experience managing the technical, administrative, environmental, regulatory, energy and policy issues affecting the coal industry, both surface and underground mining. He began his government career in 1982 as Deputy Director of the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources where he was responsible for the Water Resources Division as it assumed delegated authority under the Clean Water Act, as well as the Reclamation Division as it assumed regulatory authority (primacy) under the Surface Mining Act. In December 1983, Wahlquist moved over to the Federal government becoming Assistant Director of OSM responsible for developing national regulatory and reclamation policy during the initial years of State primacy.

Director Wahlquist also has the unique distinction of having served as Regional Director in each of OSM's three Regions. In 1995, he was named Regional Director for the newly formed Mid-Continent Region outside of St. Louis. In addition to being tasked with all of the start-up and organizational responsibilities that accompany the creation of a new office, Wahlquist instituted the capability to provide Federal oversight, grants, training, and technical assistance to the eleven coal-producing states in the new region.

In 1999, Wahlquist moved to Denver taking over as Western Regional Director where he turned his expertise to administering OSM's responsibilities in the large Western States where coal production is growing rapidly. In Denver, he also was responsible for direct regulation of coal mining on Indian Lands.

Three years later, in 2002, Wahlquist transferred to the Regional Director's post in Pittsburgh where he took over OSM's role in the coal States of Appalachia where coal mining has always posed the greatest environmental and public safety challenges. In addition to providing Federal oversight and technical assistance in mountainous States like West Virginia that have been producing coal for more than a century, his responsibilities included direct regulation of mining in Tennessee, handling emergency AML reclamation projects in Pennsylvania and Kentucky, and managing OSM's nationwide Applicant/Violator System designed to prevent operators linked to outstanding violations from receiving new permits to mine. Even while running OSM as Acting Director for 18 months in 2006 and 2007, Wahlquist retained the Appalachian Regional Director's post. In 2005 he received a Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Executive Service.