



United States Department of the Interior



OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING
Reclamation and Enforcement
2675 Regency Road
Lexington, KY 40503-2922

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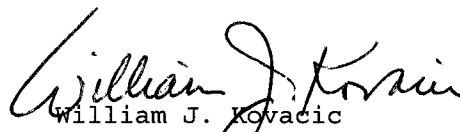
To All Interested Parties:

The Office of Surface Mining (OSM) recently completed a study on mountaintop operations in Kentucky. The study focused on decisions surrounding approximate original contour variances, associated post-mining land uses, and excess spoil determinations. We are releasing the report in draft format and are soliciting comments from the public prior to finalizing the report. Please provide your comments to us at the above address or by E-mail to bkovacic@osmre.gov by October 21, 1999. Enclosed is a copy of the draft report.

The draft study addresses mountaintop operations, i.e., those surface mines that remove all or a large portion of a coal seam or seams running through the upper fraction of a mountain or ridge. Some States in the Appalachian Region reported an increase in mountaintop operations in recent years, both in number and scale, which may explain the upsurge in the public's interest in such mines. As a result of increased public attention in West Virginia and Kentucky, OSM's Appalachian Regional Coordinating Center initiated studies in States where mountaintop operations occur. The studies are part of each State's 1999 oversight activities. Upon conclusion of the regional studies, OSM will determine if regulatory, policy, or procedural changes are needed either nationally or on a State-specific basis.

We know your time is valuable and we appreciate your taking time to review and comment on the study. For questions or media inquiries, please contact Mr. Allen D. Klein, Appalachian Regional Director, on (412) 937-2828.

Sincerely,


William J. Kovacic
Field Office Director

Enclosure