



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

# News Release



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For immediate release

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## **OSM Issues Proposed Rules for Remining and Reclaiming Abandoned Coal Mine Refuse Sites**

(Washington DC) – The U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) today announced publication of a proposed rule aimed at giving coal mine operators an incentive to remine and reclaim abandoned coal mine refuse sites.

Currently, these sites are reclaimed using a fund generated through a fee on each ton of coal produced in the United States. Under the proposed rule, these fees would be waived for coal removed from an abandoned coal mine refuse site if all the refuse is removed for reprocessing off site.

The proposed rule is authorized by recent amendments to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) made by the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006.

Abandoned coal mine refuse sites often pose environmental and safety problems resulting from inadequate reclamation. These sites were mined prior to the reclamation requirements of SMCRA. Examples of these hazards include landslides, erosion, sedimentation of streams, inadequate vegetation, and water quality problems. In many cases, these sites still contain coal reserves that can be economically mined. Operators, however, may be reluctant to remine these sites.

"We see this proposal as a win-win," said Brent Wahlquist, Director of OSM. "Encouraging coal operators to remine these sites at no cost to the Abandoned Mine Land Fund will preserve the fund for use at other AML sites.

"The result will be that more of these hazardous sites will be remediated than would be possible without this incentive," he added.

The proposed rule is designed to provide this incentive to remine while imposing little additional regulatory requirements on operators or on states wishing to implement the incentive.

Interested persons may submit comments on the proposed rule through the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Comments may also be sent by mail or courier addressed to the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, Administrative Record, Room 252-SIB, 1951 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20240. The

proposed rule has been assigned docket id: OSM-2007-0016. Please include the docket id with all comments sent my mail or courier.

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