



# United States Department of the Interior

## OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING RECLAMATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Washington, D.C. 20240



April 17, 2015

The Honorable Louie Gohmert  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations,  
Committee on Natural Resources  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter dated April 2, 2015, cosigned by Representatives, Bishop, Lamborn, and Mooney, regarding state cooperating agency involvement in providing input on the preparation of the Stream Protection Rule (SPR) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The coal mining industry is an important industry in the United States. Unfortunately, coal mining in the United States is governed by regulations that are over thirty years old. The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) is developing proposed reforms to update these regulations to keep pace with current science, technology, and modern mining practices.

OSMRE's engagement of the state cooperating agencies began during the development of the DEIS. The cooperating state agencies provided information, data, and comments based on their expertise to help build the foundation for the preparation of the DEIS. OSMRE used the information and comments received from the cooperating agencies to make significant changes and improvements.

OSMRE will continue to engage the state cooperating agencies on the preparation of the DEIS during the annual Interstate Mining Compact Commission meeting in Baltimore, Maryland on Monday, April 27, 2015.

With a draft proposed rule now at the Office of Management and Budget, OSMRE will continue to seek input of cooperating state agencies as needed and appropriate, as OSMRE and states work to improve techniques, processes, and procedures to ensure coal mines are operated in a manner that protects citizens and the environment. By working to develop a straightforward rule that takes into account current science and best management practices, the government can provide industry the regulatory certainty it seeks while achieving the human and environmental protection required by law.

The draft proposed rule is still subject to change before it is published as a proposed rule. We therefore continue to have a strong interest in protecting the integrity of the Department's

deliberations on this important matter. Nevertheless, we respect the Committee's oversight interest and we will produce documents that meet your needs without compromising important Executive Branch confidentiality interests. Additional time is needed for us to gather responsive documents.

Thank you for your interest in our efforts to use the most recent science and knowledge to update the rules. If you or your staff has additional questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Jason Powell at (202) 208-4946 or [jason\\_powell@ios.doi.gov](mailto:jason_powell@ios.doi.gov).

A similar response was sent to the cosigners of your letter.

Sincerely,



Joseph G. Pizarchik  
Director

cc: The Honorable Debbie Dingell, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigation, Committee on Natural Resources