



630 S. Bailey St. #204 Palmer, Alaska 99645

September 8, 2015

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support H.R. 1644

Dear Chairman Bishop:

The Alaska Coal Association supports H.R. 1644, "Supporting Transparent Regulatory and Environmental Actions in Mining Act."

Alaska has significant coal resources (nearly 20 percent of the world's coal reserves), as well as the majority of the nation's streams, rivers, and wetlands. Coal is responsible for providing heat and power to much of Interior Alaska, where temperatures can reach beyond 50 below zero in the winter with only a few hours of daylight.

The proposed Stream Protection Rule (SPR) by the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) represents an enormous rewrite of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). It is an across-the-board, nationally applicable rule which changes or adds more than 475 regulations. The proposed SPR is unnecessary and counterproductive, and will add to the more than 40,000 coal miners who have lost their jobs since 2011 – all without an environmental benefit.

Furthermore, the proposed SPR will be felt beyond the coalfields, driving up energy costs for families and businesses. Of particular concern to the Alaska Coal Association is that during development of this rule, OSM ignored state experts. State regulators, who perform 97 percent of the regulatory activity, were completely cut out of the process. Despite legal requirements to consult with states, OSM has effectively shut out the states for the past four years.

H.R. 1644 provides much needed transparency of the proposed SPR while preventing any duplicative rulemaking by OSM. The Alaska Coal Association commends the Natural Resources Committee for working to advance this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Daniel Graham, P.E.
President, Alaska Coal Association