

National Mining Association Calls on Congress to Block OSM's Costly, Unnecessary Stream Rule

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Washington, D.C. – The stream buffer zone regulation unveiled today by the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSM) is the latest in a series of costly and unnecessary regulations from an administration that appears determined to destroy coal mining communities. The National Mining Association (NMA) urges Congress to block a rule that will cause further job losses in a high-wage industry, adds nothing to environmental protections already ensured by state and federal agencies and responds to no new evidence of water quality damage.

“This is a rule in search of a problem,” said NMA President and CEO Hal Quinn. “It has nothing to do with new science and everything to do with an old and troubling agenda for separating more coal miners from their jobs. The agency’s own reports on existing state regulatory programs show the vast majority of mine sites are free of any offsite impacts, and the agency has produced no evidence to justify more regulations, let alone redundant ones that interfere with state agencies mining and water quality laws.” By overlaying a massive regulatory program on top of existing regulations designed to address the same issues, OSM has offered a needless and conflicting framework that will significantly hinder coal production without any benefits.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the regulation is not confined to Appalachian surface mines but would apply to all mining operations nationwide. It was developed without the benefit of state agency experts who have publicly criticized OSM’s disdain for the viewpoints of those who either operate or regulate coal mines. “By ignoring state officials, OSM has made a mockery of the administration’s pledge toward greater transparency,” Quinn said.

“What OSM has made transparent is the need for Congress to bridle an agency and a rule that is more about extending its bureaucratic reach than improving environmental performance.”