

MINING: OSM PROPOSES NEW RULE FOR MINERAL EXTRACTORS

Reviving "a long-simmering controversy over mining coal in national forests" and other areas, the Interior Dept.'s Office of Surface Mining on 1/31 published a proposed rule telling mineral rights owners what they must do before they are allowed to extract coal from federally protected lands.

The OSM proposal would limit strip mining of coal to owners who either obtained or made a good-faith effort to get all necessary mining permits before 1977, when the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act banned strip mining in the National Park System, the National Wild and Scenic River System and other lands (Katherine Rizzo, AP/mult., 2/4).

The agency also issued an interpretation that federal law currently protects homeowners from damage caused by underground mining on their property. However, Glenn **Sugameli** of the National Wildlife Federation said that some 1.8 million homes are currently not protected and could be subject to potential damage from mining (GREENWIRE sources).

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