

**Remarks by
OSM Director Joe Pizarchik
34th Anniversary of SMCRA
August 3, 2011**

Thirty-four years ago today President Jimmy Carter signed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act into law.

We are gathered today to mark the occasion and to reflect on what we have accomplished, and what remains to be done.

Many of you have been here from the beginning and can truly appreciate how far we have come.

Gone are the days when thousands of people across America lived in fear for their homes, their water, their environment and even their lives. That is because SMCRA is a success.

OSM has approved and oversees the implementation of 24 Permanent Programs states.

We have reclaimed more than 285,000 acres of the most dangerous abandoned mine lands in America.

Thousands of tons of sediment, metals and acid no longer pollute our streams and rivers.

The state and Federal AML and re-mining programs have restored more miles of streams than any other single program.

SMCRA is a success because of you and your counterparts in the states and tribes. I applaud everything you have done and what you continue to do to protect people and the environment.

This past year, we updated REG-8.

We reinstated REG-23.

We reinstated INE-35, and included guidance regarding permit defects.

During the past two and a half years OSM has reclaimed its oversight role.

Our inspections are up 46 percent.

We have doubled the number of TDNs issued to the states.

Citizen complaints have increased 78%.

We are receiving more citizen complaints now than we received in 2008 because together we have restored the public's confidence in OSM. I am counting on each one of you to maintain that trust.

In March, we announced that for the first time, we were standardizing the way we solicit input on state and tribal Performance Agreements.

Doing so is the first step in a bureau-wide systematic approach to improve transparency and increase public involvement in the oversight process. Your efforts have made this all possible.

There is still more to do.

We will continue our efforts to complete the Stream Protection Rulemaking revisions to better protect streams from the adverse effects of coal mining, and to more fully implement SMCRA. We know more today than we did 30 years ago and that new knowledge and science and the refinement of our regulations will allow us to more completely implement SMCRA.

We will continue to work to eliminate program deficiencies.

We will continue to work to prevent state backsliding.

We will continue to provide technical support and training to assist the states and tribes in the implementation of their AML and regulatory programs.

Our 2012 Budget proposal, for the first time in OSM's history, proposes additional staff. We have asked Congress to fund 25 additional positions for our Title V program.

Yesterday the Congress passed and President Obama signed the Budget Control Act of 2011 to reduce the deficit and to prevent a default. As we move forward in these difficult fiscal times I want you to know Secretary Salazar expressed strong opposition to the House of Representatives budget for Interior that proposed harsh cuts. The Administration expressed its strong opposition as well and issued a veto threat due to the policy riders and funding cuts.

House majority leaders are reported to have indicated that their Interior 2012 budget bill will likely not proceed and our 2012 budget would most likely be addressed in an omnibus bill when Congress returns from its August recess.

OSM has a strong record of continuing its mission notwithstanding past cuts. We have a track record of efficiencies of which we can be proud. We will continue to find innovative ways to reduce costs while preserving our mission. I appreciate your efficiency suggestions and look forward to more of your good ideas.

As we mark this 34th Anniversary of the creation of OSM, I thank you for all of your efforts.

Each day you enforce the law, every time you provide technical support or training to a state or tribe, every time you undertake other efforts to implement SMCRA, remember, every single such action you take is an incremental celebration of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. Thank you.