

# Memorandum



**Date:** 08/01/02

**To:** OSM Staff, Alumni, Partners and Friends

**From:** Jeff Jarrett  
Director, OSM *Jeffery D. Jarrett*

**Re:** 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of SMCRA and OSM

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This Saturday, August 3, marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the enactment of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. When Congress passed SMCRA, it presented a challenge – strike a balance between our country's need for the energy produced by coal and the protection of our environment. Through vital partnerships between the Office of Surface Mining, state governments, tribal governments, the coal mining industry, and environmental associations, the daunting goal of SMCRA was and is being achieved.

Today, coal is mined in a safer, more environmentally responsible way than it ever has been. Since the passage of SMCRA, 22 billion tons of coal has been produced by the mining industry, providing 50% of our nation's electricity and helping to fuel our nation's leadership in the global economy. All the while, the mining industry has protected land and water in the coal fields during mining and has provided \$6 billion to clean up mine sites abandoned before SMCRA's enactment. Specifically, these funds have been utilized to reclaim more than 180,000 acres of abandoned coal mine sites and eliminate the hazards associated with more than 20,000 open mine portals and shafts, 2.5 million feet of dangerous highwalls, and 100,000 acres of dangerous piles and embankments. Clearly, the implementation of SMCRA has eliminated threats to public health and safety and has protected and enhanced the lives of millions of Americans living and working in the coal fields of this great nation.

These first 25 years are something we, who have been associated with the implementation of SMCRA, can be very proud of. I feel very fortunate to be a part of the history of this accomplishment. I have seen firsthand the positive results SMCRA has lead to and what can be accomplished with simple cooperation, communication and consultation between and among the various entities involved in coal mining. I believe in this program and I believe in the people who make this program work!

I congratulate each and every one of you and thank you for your contribution towards making SMCRA such a success. Finally, on behalf of those of us who are part of OSM now or who have been a part of OSM during the first 25 years, I pledge that OSM will continue to be on the forefront of efforts not only to ensure our energy security, but to protect our land, our water, our people and our communities.