

submittal is consistent with SMCRA and its implementing Federal regulations and whether the other requirements of 30 CFR parts 730, 731, and 732 have been met.

3. National Environmental Policy Act

No environmental impact statement is required for this rule since section 702(d) of SMCRA (30 U.S.C. 1292(d)) provides that agency decisions on proposed State regulatory program provisions do not constitute major Federal actions within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)).

4. Paperwork Reduction Act

This rule does not contain information collection requirements that require approval by OMB under the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3507 *et seq.*).

5. Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Department of the Interior has determined that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*). The State submittal that is the subject of this rule is based upon counterpart Federal regulations for which an economic analysis was prepared and certification made that such regulations would not have a significant economic effect upon a substantial number of small entities. Accordingly, this rule will ensure that existing requirements previously promulgated by OSM will be implemented by the State. In making the determination as to whether this rule would have a significant economic impact, the Department relied upon the data and assumptions for the counterpart Federal regulations.

List of Subjects in 30 CFR Part 906

Intergovernmental relations, Surface mining, Underground mining.

Dated: February 27, 1996

Russell F. Price,

Acting Regional Director, Western Regional Coordinating Center.

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30 CFR Part 936

[SPATS No. OK-017-FOR]

Oklahoma Regulatory Program

AGENCY: Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM), Interior.

ACTION: Proposed rule; public comment period and opportunity for public hearing.

SUMMARY: OSM is announcing receipt of a proposed amendment to the Oklahoma regulatory program (hereinafter referred to as the "Oklahoma program") under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA). The proposed amendment consists of a revision to the Oklahoma regulations that adds a new permit condition concerning protected activity. The proposed amendment is intended to revise the Oklahoma regulations to be consistent with the Federal regulations.

DATES: Written comments must be received by 4:00 p.m., c.s.t. April 4, 1996. If requested, a public hearing on the proposed amendment will be held on April 1, 1996. Requests to speak at the hearing must be received by 4:00 p.m., c.s.t. on March 20, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Written comments and requests to speak at the hearing should be mailed or hand delivered to Jack R. Carson, Acting Director, Tulsa Field Office at the first address listed below.

Copies of the Oklahoma program, the proposed amendment, a listing of any scheduled public hearings, and all written comments received in response to this document will be available for public review at the addresses listed below during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Each requester may receive one free copy of the proposed amendment by contacting OSM's Tulsa Field Office.

Jack R. Carson, Acting Director, Tulsa Field Office, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, 5100 East Skelly Drive, Suite 470, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135-6547, Telephone: (918) 581-6430

Oklahoma Department of Mines, 4040 N. Lincoln, Suite 107, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105, Telephone: (405) 521-3859

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jack R. Carson, Acting Director, Tulsa Field Office, Telephone: (918) 581-6430.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background on the Oklahoma Program

On January 19, 1981, the Secretary of the Interior conditionally approved the Oklahoma program. Background information on the Oklahoma program, including the Secretary's findings, the disposition of comments, and the conditions of approval can be found in the January 19, 1981, Federal Register (46 FR 4902). Subsequent actions concerning Oklahoma's program and

program amendments can be found at 30 CFR 936.10, 936.15, and 936.16.

II. Discussion of the Proposed Amendment

By letter dated February 21, 1996, Oklahoma submitted a proposed amendment to its program pursuant to SMCRA (Administrative Record No. OK-973). Oklahoma submitted the proposed amendment at its own initiative. The provisions of the Oklahoma regulations that Oklahoma proposes to amend are at Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) 460:20-15-7 concerning permit conditions. Specifically, Oklahoma proposes to revise OAC 460:20-15-7 by adding a new permit condition at subsection (5) concerning protected activity that reads as follows.

(5) No person shall discharge or in any other way discriminate against or cause to be fired or discriminated against any employee or any authorized representative of employees because that employee or representative has—

(A) Filed, instituted or caused to be filed or instituted any proceedings under the Act by—

(1) Reporting alleged violations or dangers to the Secretary, the State Regulatory Authority, or the employer or his representative;

(2) Requesting an inspection or investigation; or

(3) Taking any other action which may result in a proceeding under the Act.

(B) Made statements, testified, or is about to do so—

(1) In any informal or formal adjudicatory proceeding;

(2) In any informal conference proceeding;

(3) In any rulemaking proceeding;

(4) In any investigation, inspection or other proceeding under the Act;

(5) In any judicial proceeding under the Act.

(C) Has exercised on his own behalf or on behalf of others any right granted by the Act.

(D) Each employer conducting operations which are regulated under this Act, shall within 30 days from the effective day of these regulations, provide a copy of this part to all current employees and to all new employees at the time of their hiring.

Existing subsections (5) through (8) are renumbered (6) through (9).

III. Public Comment Procedures

In accordance with the provisions of 30 CFR 732.17(h), OSM is seeking comments on whether the proposed amendment satisfies the applicable program approval criteria of 30 CFR

732.15. If the amendment is deemed adequate, it will become part of the Oklahoma program.

Written Comments

Written comments should be specific, pertain only to the issues proposed in this rulemaking, and include explanations in support of the commenter's recommendations. Comments received after the time indicated under **DATES** or at locations other than the Tulsa Field Office will not necessarily be considered in the final rulemaking or included in the Administrative Record.

Public Hearing

Persons wishing to speak at the public hearing should contact the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** by 4:00 p.m., c.s.t. on March 20, 1996. The location and time of the hearing will be arranged with those persons requesting the hearing. If no one requests an opportunity to testify at the public hearing, the hearing will not be held. Any disabled individual who has need for a special accommodation to attend a public hearing should contact the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Filing of a written statement at the time of the hearing is requested as it will greatly assist the transcriber. Submission of written statements in advance of the hearing will allow OSM officials to prepare adequate responses and appropriate questions.

The public hearing will continue on the specified date until all persons scheduled to speak have been heard. Persons in the audience who have not been scheduled to speak, and who wish to do so, will be heard following those who have been scheduled. The hearing will end after all persons scheduled to speak and persons present in the audience who wish to speak have been heard.

Public Meeting

If only one person requests an opportunity to speak at a hearing, a public meeting, rather than a public hearing, may be held. Persons wishing to meet with OSM representatives to discuss the proposed amendment may request a meeting by contacting the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. All such meetings will be open to the public and, if possible, notices of meetings will be posted at the locations listed under **ADDRESSES**. A written summary of each meeting will be made a part of the Administrative Record.

IV. Procedural Determinations

Executive Order 12866

This rule is exempted from review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under Executive Order 12866 (Regulatory Planning and Review).

Executive Order 12778

The Department of the Interior has conducted the reviews required by section 2 of Executive Order 12778 (Civil Justice Reform) and has determined that, to the extent allowed by law, this rule meets the applicable standards of subsections (a) and (b) of that section. However, these standards are not applicable to the actual language of State regulatory programs and program amendments since each such program is drafted and promulgated by a specific State, not by OSM. Under sections 503 and 505 of SMCRA (30 U.S.C. 1253 and 1255) and 30 CFR 730.11, 732.15, and 732.17(h)(10), decisions on proposed State regulatory programs and program amendments submitted by the States must be based solely on a determination of whether the submittal is consistent with SMCRA and its implementing Federal regulations and whether the other requirements of 30 CFR parts 730, 731, and 732 have been met.

National Environmental Policy Act

No environmental impact statement is required for this rule since section 702(d) of SMCRA (30 U.S.C. 1292(d)) provides that agency decisions on proposed State regulatory program provisions do not constitute major Federal actions within the meaning of section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)).

Paperwork Reduction Act

This rule does not contain information collection requirements that require approval by OMB under the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3507 *et seq.*).

Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Department of the Interior has determined that this rule will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*). The State submittal which is the subject of this rule is based upon corresponding Federal regulations for which an economic analysis was prepared and certification made that such regulations would not have a significant economic effect upon a substantial number of small entities. Accordingly, this rule will ensure that

existing requirements previously promulgated by OSM will be implemented by the State. In making the determination as to whether this rule would have a significant economic impact, the Department relied upon the data and assumptions for the corresponding Federal regulations.

List of Subjects in 30 CFR Part 936

Intergovernmental relations, Surface mining, Underground mining.

Dated: February 28, 1996.

Brent Wahlquist,

Regional Director, Mid-Continent Regional Coordinating Center.

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Bureau of Land Management

43 CFR Chapter II

[WO-310-3110-02 1A]

Promotion of Development, Reduction of Royalty for Marginal Gas Properties

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of request for information and suggestions regarding an incentive for producers of marginal gas from Federal leases.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking public comments and suggestions on a possible incentive for producers of marginal gas from Federal leases. The incentive would encourage continued production through a possible reduction in Federal royalties for producers of marginally economic gas properties. If the comments indicate that such a reduction in royalties is warranted and will result in a greater ultimate recovery of gas resources (without a net loss in revenues to the states and/or the Federal government), the BLM will initiate a public outreach program in order to discuss comments and suggestions received as a result of this request. Based upon those meetings, the BLM will prepare a proposed rule for subsequent publication.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before June 3, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Dr. John W. Bebout, Senior Technical Specialist, Bureau of Land Management (WO-301), 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. John W. Bebout (BLM) (202) 452-0340.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The United States has a vast and diverse natural gas resource base. In their 1992 study entitled *The Potential for Natural*