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## US to stop coal overburden dumping into waterways

*Sunday, 22 Nov, 2009*

It is reported that the US government took the first steps to reverse a last minute rule passed by the Bush administration which allowed coal mine operators to dump excavated material into streams.

Mr Frank Quimby a spokesman for the Interior Department which oversees the OSM said the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement announced an advance notice of rulemaking that would govern the overall operations and conduct of where to place excess oil from mountaintop mining.

He said that the Interior Department will also seek to strengthen its oversight of actions to protect streams from the adverse impacts of coal mining, including while the new rules are being worked out.

The administration of former president Mr George W Bush in its last weeks revised a rule that had stood for 25 years and had broadly prohibited dumping excess material produced in coal mining operations called overburden within 100 feet of streams.

Under the 1983 rule, overburden could only be dumped near streams if doing so would not cause or contribute to the violation of state or federal water quality standards and not adversely affect the water quantity or quality or other environmental resources of the stream. But the Bush administration rule allowed a surface coal mine operator to place excess material into streams if they could show it was not reasonably possible to avoid doing so.

Mr Wilma Lewis Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management said "We are moving as quickly as possible under the law to gather public input for a new rule based on sound science that will govern how companies handle fill removed from mountaintop coal seams."

Mr Quimby said the move to protect the streams and waterways will affect mainly communities in Appalachia, the region that follows the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi.

(Sourced from AFP)

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