DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

30 CFR Part 943

[Docket No. TX–054–FOR]

Texas Regulatory Program

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

ACTION: Proposed rule; reopening of public comment period on proposed amendment.

SUMMARY: We, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM), are announcing receipt of revisions to a previously proposed amendment to the Texas regulatory program (Texas program) under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA or the Act). The revisions concern technical standards and normal husbandry practices regarding habitat for bobwhite quail and other grassland bird species. Texas intends to revise its program to encourage reclamation practices that are suitable for grassland bird species.

This document gives the times and locations that the Texas program and proposed amendment to that program are available for your inspection and the comment period during which you may submit written comments on the revisions to the amendment.

DATES: We will accept written comments until 4 p.m., c.t., May 8, 2006.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments, identified by Docket No. TX–054–FOR, by any of the following methods:

- E-mail: mwolfrom@osmre.gov. Include “Docket No. TX–054–FOR” in the subject line of the message.
- Mail/Hand Delivery: Michael C. Wolfrom, Director, Tulsa Field Office, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, 5100 East Skelly Drive, Suite 470, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135–6547.
- Fax: (918) 581–6419.

Instructions: All submissions received must include the agency name and docket number for this rulemaking. For detailed instructions on submitting comments and additional information on the rulemaking process, see the “Public Comment Procedures” heading of the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section of this document.

Docket: For access to the docket to review copies of the Texas program, this amendment, a listing of any scheduled public hearings, and all written comments received in response to this document, you must go to the address listed below during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. You may receive one free copy of the amendment by contacting OSM’s Tulsa Field Office.

Michael C. Wolfrom, 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. E-mail: mwolfrom@osmre.gov.

In addition, you may review a copy of the amendment during regular business hours at the following location: Surface Mining and Reclamation Division, Railroad Commission of Texas, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78711–2967. Telephone: (512) 463–6900.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael C. Wolfrom, Director, Tulsa Field Office. Telephone: (918) 581–6430. E-mail: mwolfrom@osmre.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background on the Texas Program
II. Description of the Proposed Amendment
III. Public Comment Procedures
IV. Procedural Determinations

I. Background on the Texas Program

Section 503(a) of the Act permits a State to assume primacy for the regulation of surface coal mining and reclamation operations on non-Federal and non-Indian lands within its borders by demonstrating that its program includes, among other things, “a State law which provides for the regulation of surface coal mining and reclamation operations in accordance with the requirements of this Act * * *; and rules and regulations consistent with regulations issued by the Secretary pursuant to this Act.” See 30 U.S.C. 1253(a)(1) and (7). On the basis of these criteria, the Secretary of the Interior conditionally approved the Texas program effective February 16, 1980. You can find background information on the Texas program, including the Secretary’s findings, the disposition of comments, and the conditions of approval of the Texas program in the Federal Register (45 FR 12998). You can also find later actions concerning the Texas program and program amendments at 30 CFR 943.10, 943.15 and 943.16.

II. Description of the Proposed Amendment

By letter dated July 26, 2005 (Administrative Record No. TX–659),
Texas sent us an amendment to its program under SMCRA (30 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.), Texas sent the amendment at its own initiative.

We announced receipt of the proposed amendment in the August 31, 2005, Federal Register (70 FR 51689) and invited public comment on its adequacy. The public comment period ended September 30, 2005.

During our review of the amendment, we identified concerns relating to Section V.D.1., Fish and Wildlife Habitat; Section V.D.2., Woody-Plant Stocking; Appendix B. Summary of Revegetation Success Standards (Fish and Wildlife Habitat Only); and Attachment 2. Minimum Woody Vegetation Stocking Rates. We notified Texas of the concerns by letters dated October 17, 2005, and February 8, 2006 (Administrative Record Nos. TX-659.07 and TX-659.13). On January 12 and March 10, 2006, Texas sent us revisions to its amendment (Administrative Record Nos. TX-659.11 and TX-650.12)

Texas submitted revisions for the following provisions of the amendment:

1. Texas proposes to revise typographical errors and make minor wording changes at D.1., Ground Cover; D.2., Woody-Plant Stocking; and Attachment 2. Minimum Woody Vegetation Stocking Rates.

2. Procedures and Standards for Determining Revegetation Success on Surface-Mined Lands in Texas—Table of Contents.

Texas proposes to add, to the Table of Contents, “Bobwhite Quail and Other Grassland Bird Species” as a subcategory of “D. Fish and Wildlife Habitat.”


a. Texas proposes to revise its original 70 percent ground cover technical standard for bobwhite quail and other grassland bird species habitat by changing it to 63–70 percent.

b. In the statistical comparison section, Texas proposes to add the lowest acceptable value of 57 percent (63% × 0.9) and the highest acceptable value of 77 percent (70% × 1.1) for ground cover on bobwhite quail and other grassland bird species habitat.

4. Appendix B Summary of Revegetation Success Standards (Fish and Wildlife Habitat Only).

a. Texas proposes to revise the ground cover technical standard for bobwhite quail and other grassland bird species habitat by changing it from 70 percent ground cover to 63–70 percent ground cover.

b. Texas proposes to revise the woody-plant stocking rate exception clause as follows:

90% of the Following Technical Standard except for mottes used to support Bobwhite Quail and [Other] Grassland Bird Species, the standard for which is based on meeting or exceeding the following Technical Standard: Site-specific success standards will be developed by the permittee through consultation with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Standards will be approved by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.


Texas proposes to revise the headings “General Land Use Category” and “Planting Standards” by changing them to “General Wildlife Land Type Category” and “Stocking Rates/Planting Standards.”


a. Texas proposes to revise the Table of Contents by adding “Bobwhite Quail and Other Grassland Bird Species Habitat Management Practices” to Section E. Fish and Wildlife Habitat.


III. Public Comment Procedures

We are reopening the comment period on the proposed Texas program amendment to provide the public an opportunity to reconsider the adequacy of the proposed amendment in light of the additional materials submitted. Under the provisions of 30 CFR 732.17(h), we are seeking comments on whether the proposed amendment satisfies the applicable program approval criteria of 30 CFR 732.15. If we approve the amendment, it will become part of the Texas program.

Written Comments

Send your written or electronic comments to OSM at the address given above. Your written comments should be specific, pertain only to the issues proposed in this rulemaking, and include explanations in support of your recommendations. We will not consider or respond to your comments when developing the final rule if they are received after the close of the comment period (see DATES). We will make every attempt to log all comments into the administrative record, but comments delivered to an address other than the Tulsa Field Office may not be logged in.

Electronic Comments

Please submit Internet comments as an ASCII or Word file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please also include Attn: TX-054–FOR and your name and return address in your Internet message. If you do not receive a confirmation that we have received your Internet message, contact the Tulsa Field Office at (918) 581–6430.

Availability of Comments

We will make comments, including names and addresses of respondents, available for public review during normal business hours. We will not consider anonymous comments. If individual respondents request confidentiality, we will honor their request to the extent allowable by law. Individual respondents who wish to withhold their name or address from public review, except for the city or town, must state this prominently at the beginning of their comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public review in their entirety.

IV. Procedural Determinations

Executive Order 12630—Takings

This rule does not have takings implications. This determination is based on the analysis performed for the counterpart Federal regulation.

Executive Order 12866—Regulatory Planning and Review

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

Executive Order 12988—Civil Justice Reform

The Department of the Interior has conducted the reviews required by section 3 of Executive Order 12988 and has determined that 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 because each 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 the Federal regulations at 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.

Executive Order 13132—Federalism

This rule does not have Federalism implications. SMCRA delineates the roles of the Federal and State governments with regard to the regulation of surface coal mining and reclamation operations. One of the purposes of SMCRA is to “establish a nationwide program to protect society and the environment from the adverse effects of surface coal mining operations.” Section 503(a)(1) of SMCRA requires that State laws regulating surface coal mining and reclamation operations be “in accordance with” the requirements of SMCRA, and section 503(a)(7) requires that State programs contain rules and regulations “consistent with” regulations issued by the Secretary pursuant to SMCRA.

Executive Order 13175—Consultation and Coordination With Indian Tribal Governments

In accordance with Executive Order 13175, we have evaluated the potential effects of this rule on Federally-recognized Indian tribes and have determined that the rule does not have substantial direct effects on one or more Indian tribes, on the relationship between the Federal Government and Indian tribes, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Indian tribes. This determination is based on the fact that the Texas program does not regulate coal exploration and surface coal mining and reclamation operations on Indian lands. Therefore, the Texas program has no effect on Federally-recognized Indian tribes.

Executive Order 13211—Regulations That Significantly Affect the Supply, Distribution, or Use of Energy

On May 18, 2001, the President issued Executive Order 13211 which requires agencies to prepare a Statement of Energy Effects for a rule that is (1) considered significant under Executive Order 12866, and (2) likely to have a significant adverse effect on the supply, distribution, or use of energy. Because this rule is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866 and is not expected to have a significant adverse effect on the supply, distribution, or use of energy, a Statement of Energy Effects is not required.

National Environmental Policy Act

This rule does not require an environmental impact statement because 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 certifies 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 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. 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.

Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act

This rule is not a major rule under 5 U.S.C. 804(2), the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act. This rule: (a) Does not have an annual effect on the economy of $100 million; (b) Will not cause a major increase in costs or prices for consumers, individual industries, Federal, State, or local government agencies, or geographic regions; and (c) Does not have significant adverse effects on competition, employment, investment, productivity, innovation, or the ability of U.S.-based enterprises to compete with foreign-based enterprises. This determination is based upon the fact that the State submittal, which is the subject of this rule, is based upon counterpart Federal regulations for which an analysis was prepared and a determination made that the Federal regulation was not considered a major rule.

Unfunded Mandates

This rule will not impose an unfunded mandate on State, local, or tribal governments or the private sector of $100 million or more in any given year. This determination is based upon the fact that the State submittal, which is the subject of this rule, is based upon counterpart Federal regulations for which an analysis was prepared and a determination made that the Federal regulation did not impose an unfunded mandate.

List of Subjects in 30 CFR Part 943

Intergovernmental relations, Surface mining, Underground mining.


Charles E. Sandberg,
Regional Director, Mid-Continent Region.
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

30 CFR Part 950

[SATS No. WY–035–FOR]

Wyoming Regulatory Program

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

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

SUMMARY: We are announcing receipt of a proposed amendment to the Wyoming regulatory program (hereinafter, the “Wyoming program”) under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA or the Act). Wyoming proposes revisions to and additions of rules about self-bonding (Rule Package 1–U). Wyoming intends to revise its program to be consistent with the corresponding Federal regulations, provide additional safeguards, clarify ambiguities, and improve operational efficiency.

This document gives the times and locations that the Wyoming program and proposed amendment to that program are available for your inspection, the comment period during which you may submit written comments on the amendment, and the procedures that we will follow for the public hearing, if one is requested.

DATES: We will accept written comments on this amendment until 4 p.m., m.s.t. May 22, 2006. If requested, we will hold a public hearing on the amendment on May 16, 2006. We will accept requests to speak until 4 p.m., m.s.t. on May 8, 2006.