

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Oklahoma Reviewing Surprise Inspector General Report Concerning Mining Reclamation**

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oklahoma (August 9, 2013) – The Oklahoma Department of Mines (ODM), in coordination with Oklahoma Attorney General Pruitt’s Office, is reviewing a report issued on August 5, 2013, by the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of the Interior. The report is entitled “Enforcement of Approximate Original Contour in Oklahoma by the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.”

The report, which takes the form of a lengthy memorandum addressed to Joseph Pizarchik, Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, was authored by Donald W. Cairns, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audits, Inspections and Evaluations. ODM was not provided a copy of this report from either the Office of Surface Mining or the Office of the Inspector General. ODM was not interviewed or contacted for information by either party during the investigation.

The matter at issue is the subject of pending federal litigation between the Office of Surface Mining and the State of Oklahoma concerning federal overreach into a state regulatory enforcement agency. The case is now awaiting a decision from the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. The report, which recommends OSM suspend federal grant funding to ODM, ignores that the issue of “Approximate Original Contour” (AOC) is still to be decided by the federal courts.

The Oklahoma Department of Mines is the state agency responsible for ensuring the reclamation of land disturbed by mining operations. ODM enforces and implements various provisions of state and federally-mandated programs in health, safety, mining and land reclamation practices associated with surface and subsurface mining.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) is the federal agency which approved Oklahoma’s surface coal mining and reclamation program, granting the state primacy over the regulation of coal mining in the state. OSM provides partial funding for the state coal program.

For contact information refer to the ODM website:  
<http://www.ok.gov/mines/>

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