Q & A Document

Why is the Secretary proposing this integration?

The initiative is part of the Department's ongoing efforts to make government work better by increasing efficiencies, building upon existing strengths, and getting the most out of limited resources. The BLM and OSM share complementary responsibilities with respect to mining and ensuring that our nation's onshore energy development is done in a sustainable manner.

What are the next steps?

The Secretarial Order issued today will become effective December 1, 2011, following consultation with the White House Office of Management and Budget, employees, and applicable Congressional committees with responsibilities over these functions. The Order directs the Interior Deputy Secretary to work with OSM and BLM leadership and employees to develop a schedule, by March 1, 2012, to achieve the improvements laid out in the Secretarial Order.

Will there be opportunity to provide input on how best to implement the integration?

Yes, on several fronts. Over the next few months, the Directors from OSM and BLM will be meeting with as many employees as possible to listen to ideas, concerns, and questions. Members of Congress, industry and other stakeholders will also be included in a robust consultation process. Interior is fully committed to ensuring that the integration process takes into account the full range of relevant voices as we move toward the goal of better governance within the Department of the Interior.

How will this affect employees?

Discussions about the realignment remain in the early stages and it is premature to speculate about what type of effects the integration would have on employees in each bureau. The well-being of employees is and will remain of paramount importance throughout the process.

How will this impact the coal leasing and regulatory responsibilities of both agencies?

Because this would be an administrative reorganization, states, tribes, industry and other stakeholders should not see a disruption of technical or other types of assistance that they currently receive from OSM and/or BLM.

What are the legal authorities for the Secretary to explore taking this action? Is it necessary to pursue this reorganization legislatively?

The Secretary has authority to oversee and manage the Department of the Interior in a manner that best fulfills its roles and responsibilities. Any change in the organization of the Department would comport with all applicable legal requirements. Under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA), the Secretary acts through the Office of Surface Mining to perform the duties of the act.

Will the legal requirements and mandates under SMCRA be met?

If implemented, the integration would ensure that OSM will continue to carry out all statutory duties and obligations under the SMCRA.

How much money would be saved from this reorganization, and where and how will efficiencies be gained?

Discussions about the realignment remain in the early stages and it is premature to speculate on specifics. The realignment could yield savings and efficiencies through:

- Integration of OSM's administrative functions with BLM's administrative functions, including, but not limited to, the management of human resources, budget, communications, information, finance, ethics, and acquisition and financial assistance;
- Integration of OSM's abandoned mine lands programs and functions including its State grants-in-aid program and the Abandoned Mine Land Inventory System and BLM's mine and surface reclamation programs.
- Integration of OSM's coal fee collection and distribution functions with the Office of Natural Resources Revenue functions and programs, which already handles coal, oil and gas and geothermal revenue collection and distribution functions and programs for BLM.
- Integration of OSM's surface coal mining regulation, inspection and enforcement programs and functions and BLM's inspection and enforcement program functions relating to mining.

What is the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM)?

OSM was established in 1977 and oversees State surface coal mining regulatory programs and develops new tools to ensure the states and tribes administer their programs effectively.

How many employees do they have and where are their offices located?

The Office's 525 employees are headquartered in Washington, DC and throughout three regional offices -- Appalachian, Mid-Continent, and Western.