

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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### Opening Statement

#### Ranking Member Brenda Lawrence (MI-14)

#### Subcommittee on the Interior

#### *Examining the Stream Protection Rule*

#### December 8, 2015

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for holding such an important hearing. The proposed Stream Protection Rule was drafted to preserve clean water and a healthy environment.

This new rule is necessary because existing rules do not offer enough protection to communities from the pollution and long-term environmental degradation caused by coal mining waste.

Mountain top removal mining has caused serious and permanent harm to the environment. Hundreds of miles of streams have been destroyed by mine waste.

Toxic chemicals from mine waste harms fish and other aquatic life. Humans and animals that consume fish from streams contaminated by mine waste are also harmed. Recent scientific studies have strongly associated high disease and mortality rates for residents in nearby communities with the harmful effects of mining practices.

Current rules to protect streams from the harmful effects of mountaintop removal mining are over 30 years old.

These rules were not developed with the science we have available today and have not prevented serious, persistent environmental harm.

The new rule will accomplish a number of objectives including: increasing the monitoring of water quality during mining operations and afterwards; requiring mine operators to restore streams damaged by mining practices; and requiring financial assurance that long-term pollution discharges will be treated.

This last point is important. Current rules do not address this huge problem. Mining companies have simply walked away from the pollution they created without any financial liability to clean up the mess.

Opponents of this common sense rule express concerns about loss of jobs and other economic impacts.

But according to experts and testimony received today, the new rule will create as many jobs as those that are number lost. The net effect on jobs will be zero.

The importance of clean water cannot be overstated—the survival of our planet depends on water.

I wholly support the Stream Protection Rule as one of the measures to maintain clean water and protect our environment.

Ms. Schneider, thank you for participating in this matter today.

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