

Salazar announces merger of mining agency, BLM

Manuel Quinones and Phil Taylor, E&E reporters

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar outlined plans today for moving the Office of Surface Mining to the Bureau of Land Management. Salazar said he would sign a secretarial order today for the merger. And he promised to involve both employees and lawmakers in drawing up a reorganization plan by next year.

As expected, the secretary said the move would allow Interior to work more efficiently and allow OSM and BLM to share administrative functions. The larger combined agency, he added, would carry more weight in budget talks on Capitol Hill.

"I think it will be easier for us to be able to do that when we are dealing with a larger organization when we have OSM and BLM working together," he said. OSM Director Joe Pizarchik and BLM Director Bob Abbey would work on the reorganization efforts, Salazar said.

Key Points made by Secretary Salazar on call:

***Will sign the executive order today it will not go into "effect" for 30 days during which time the leadership will Develop a "how to plan"**

***Mar 1, 2012 the Reorganization effort will commence**

***OSM will stay its own entity with a Director**

***Employees should not be concerned for their jobs**

*** Will be looking for areas of efficiencies**

***Listed the following areas that we have dual functionality**

-Abandoned mines

-Revenue collection

-Regulation and Inspection Programs

-Administrative support functions

***Both organization's employees are essential to success in this endeavor**

***All employees will be kept informed at each step in this process**