

File Code: 1300-1/2800-1/2820-5

Date:

JUN 03 2008

Lisa Evans, Attorney
Earthjustice
21 Ocean Avenue
Marblehead, MA 01945

Dear Ms. Evans:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the Earthjustice April 3, 2008, Petition for Correction of Information to the USDA Forest Service under the Information Quality Act (IQA; Public Law 106-554 §515) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Information Quality (IQ) Guidelines. Earthjustice requested that the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the proposed Smoky Canyon Mine Panels F and G expansion be withdrawn for correction. The petition asserts that a key model simulation presented in the FEIS is not consistent with the earlier recommendations of consultants working on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and therefore, that the predicted water quality effects in the FEIS are incorrect. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) also received a similar petition from Earthjustice. In consultation with the BLM, the Forest Service has given the Earthjustice request for correction careful consideration and the identified concerns have been thoroughly reviewed.

The modeled prediction of effects to water quality from on-lease waste rock disposal facilities do not directly pertain to the Forest Service's decision to authorize off-lease access and utilities; rather, they are more pertinent to BLM's decision to authorize on-lease mining activities. Consequently, BLM has compiled a detailed explanation of why the prediction of water quality effects in the FEIS is not incorrect, and they will provide that in their response to the similar IQA petition served to them. The Forest Service concurs with the response provided by BLM.

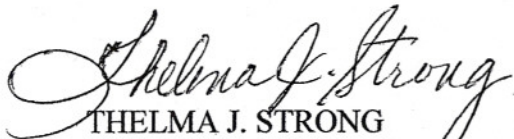
If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may submit a Request for Reconsideration (RFR). An RFR filed after the 45-day deadline may be denied as untimely. The RFR should reference this letter. Additional requirements and information for an RFR are listed on the USDA Correction of Information website: http://www.ocio.usda.gov/qi_guide/corrections.html. An RFR can be submitted to the Reconsideration Official by mail, fax, or email:

USDA Forest Service
ATTN: Data Quality Office
Mail Stop 1113, 1SW Yates Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1143
FAX : (202) 260-3245
EMAIL: gvargas@fs.fed.us



If you should have additional questions, please contact George Vargas, Forest Service Quality of Information Officer, at (202) 205-0444, or e-mail gvargas@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thelma J. Strong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large loops and a prominent initial "T".

THELMA J. STRONG

Director, Office of Regulatory and Management Services

cc: Larry Timchak, Jeff Jones, Barry Burkhardt, Tony L Ferguson, George Vargas, Christopher Carlson, Kenneth Paur, Joshua Stout, Joseph Kraayenbrink