

The National Academy of Sciences Evaluation of the Use of Coal Ash in Mining Activities

Dr. Tamara L. Dickinson

Committee on Earth Resources, Board on Earth Sciences and Resources, National Academies, Washington, D.C.

KEYWORDS: National Research Council, Health, Safety, and Environmental Risks, Coal Combustion Waste, Placement at Mines

ABSTRACT

The Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), 42 U.S.C. 6901 et seq., and its State counterparts, regulate the generation, storage, treatment, and disposal of hazardous waste. In May 2000, EPA published a Regulatory Determination on Wastes from the Combustion of Fossil Fuels (40 CFR Part 261) concluding that coal combustion wastes do not warrant regulation under subtitle C of RCRA as hazardous wastes. However, EPA did determine that national regulations under subtitle D of RCRA are warranted for coal combustion wastes disposed of in landfills or surface impoundments, and that regulations under subtitle D and/or possible modifications to existing regulations established under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) are warranted when the materials are used as fill in surface or underground mines.

In response to a request from Congress, the National Research Council is conducting a study that will examine the health, safety, and environmental risks associated with using coal combustion wastes for reclamation in active and abandoned coal mines. The study will look at the placement in abandoned and active, surface and underground coal mines in all major coal basins. The committee will meet 5 times in open session during the study period to gather information, analyze input, prepare and edit the report, and respond to reviewers' comments. Most of these meetings will be held in coal country and will include public listening sessions to hear the concerns of citizens in coal country. The report is expected to be released in December 2005.

Submitted for presentation in the OSM Forum in the 2005 World of Coal Ash, April 11-15, 2005, Lexington, Kentucky, USA.