

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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## WILDLIFE AND COAL EXPERTS TO FOCUS ON EAST

Four scientists of the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will soon begin examining the impact of coal mining on fish and wildlife east of the Mississippi River.

Operating from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, the small staff known as the Eastern Energy and Land Use Team will begin their studies in the Appalachian region, which is considered highest priority.

Coal mining transportation and processing in the East will play an increasingly important role in energy requirements over the next decades. Equally important is the impact this activity can have on inherent fish and wildlife values in the region.

Through contracts and research of their own, the scientists will document the impact of current and expected coal mining in the Appalachian area. Initially they will prepare recommendations for Fish and Wildlife Service participation in these operations.

Coal surface and underground mining operations will receive first priority. Phosphate mining in the coastal areas will also be examined as will other mineral extraction operations in the Midwest. The impact of all these kinds of mining on streams will receive very close scrutiny as there are numerous species of fish native to all inland waters of the East.

The program of research is designed to, first, identify and map eastern ecological test areas. Then, studies on the best way to reclaim mines in a manner that will benefit wildlife will be undertaken. Shaping and vegetation cover placed in these areas can have an enormous effect on wildlife populations. Deer, game birds, and numerous other species require certain brush and forest habitat, and the scientists will attempt to design the best mix so that wildlife can flourish.

Remote sensing from earth satellites and infrared aerial photography will be employed in these research efforts, so that accurate habitat analysis can be made.

Contracts with local universities, private consulting firms, State resource agencies, mining companies, and other Federal agencies are likely during the first year of operations as the goal in this effort is to document the current conditions and design realistic plans while the development of energy resources goes on.