

We've been periodically covering the Obama EPA's attempt to find a middle way on mountaintop removal mining, reducing the most egregious environmental impacts of the practice without prohibiting it altogether. On Monday EPA announced, in effect, that it thinks it has found that compromise. In a [letter to the Corps of Engineers](#) Huntington office, EPA declared that it would not object to issuance of a permit for Hobet Mining's Surface Mine No. 45 in West Virginia, one of the projects EPA had subjected to enhanced review. The review process produced a negotiated agreement in which Hobet agreed to cut the impacts to headwater streams in half (from burying six linear miles to only three). It would allow Hobet to extract 91% of the coal it had originally proposed to remove.

The [Charleston Gazette](#) and Ken Ward's [Coal Tattoo blog](#) have more, including environmental groups' negative reaction. I hope to have more comment after I've read the letter more carefully, including the monitoring and adaptive management plan.