

A coalition of environmental groups including Kentucky Waterways Alliance has sued the Interior Department and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, seeking to overturn a new rule that will make it easier for mining companies to dump waste rock into streams.

The revisions, made final Dec. 12, will let mining companies disregard a 100-foot stream buffer zone if they are able to convince regulators that no other option was available and that they had taken steps to minimize harm to the environment.

"The notion that coal mining companies can dump their wastes in streams without degrading them is a fantasy that the Bush administration is now trying to write into law," said Judith Petersen, executive director of Kentucky Waterways Alliance.

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