

## **Summary: Investigation of OSMRE Regional Director**

**Report Date: July 16, 2013**

OIG investigated allegations that an Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) regional director had excused Federal inspectors from a meeting with the coal company Farrell-Cooper Mining and made a deal with the company to stall OSMRE's enforcement of Farrell-Cooper's mining violations. We also investigated an allegation that the regional director's supervisor tried to prevent the allegations against the regional director from reaching us. During the investigation, we became aware of an allegation that employees of the Oklahoma Department of Mines (ODM) accepted gifts from Farrell-Cooper and provided preferential treatment in return.

The allegation that the regional director made an improper deal with Farrell-Cooper was not substantiated. While the regional director excused OSMRE inspectors from a meeting where the alleged deal discussions took place, we found no evidence that any improper action resulted. We did determine that the regional director contributed to delays in reviewing the State of Oklahoma's appeal of Farrell-Cooper's mining violations—a process that was supposed to take 15 days, but took 8 months. The regional director did not appear to be forthcoming with his supervisor about excusing the inspectors from the meeting, but we did not find evidence that the supervisor tried to keep allegations from reaching us. Finally, Farrell-Cooper denied giving gifts to ODM employees within the past 10 years.

We provided the results of our investigation to the then-acting Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management for any action he deemed appropriate. We later learned that the regional director received counseling from his supervisors on the importance of avoiding even the appearance of impropriety.

*This is a summary of an investigative report that was issued internally to the U.S. Department of the Interior. This summary was posted to the web on April 10, 2015.*

