



Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

Alternative Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Programs

Since Pennsylvania gained primary control of its mining program from the federal government in 1982, the Commonwealth has led the nation in identifying and addressing abandoned mine land problems that affect public health, safety and the environment. Abandoned mine lands in Pennsylvania constitute a significant liability for the citizens of the Commonwealth while funds available through the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 are limited. To address the limited funds and to better serve the citizens of the Commonwealth, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has developed innovative approaches to achieve more reclamation of abandoned coal mine sites without costing taxpayers additional money.

Primarily, DEP has partnered with the active coal mining industry to use its resources for more cost-effective and efficient mine reclamation. Besides re-mining, the most productive way for industry to assist with mine reclamation, three other programs administered by DEP engage the private sector in reclamation activities.

Surety Reclamation

All mine operators in Pennsylvania are required to post a reclamation bond on active mining sites. These bonds, provided by a surety or insurance company, ensure that the mine site will be reclaimed once mining is completed. When reclamation of a site is considered satisfactory by DEP, the bonds are released and the mine operator is under no further financial obligation. If reclamation is not completed and the mine is left abandoned, the mine operator must forfeit the bonds and DEP can collect the bond amount to pay for the reclamation of the site.

When reclamation bonds for a mine site are forfeited by the mine operator for failing to complete reclamation, a third party, normally the surety company that provided the bond, may propose to complete the necessary reclamation. More recently under Act 43 of 1996, the surety company has the additional opportunity to complete reclamation after DEP has already collected the bond amount.

Surety reclamation, as it is called, has become a very effective tool in getting reclamation done quickly and at a cost that does not exceed the amount of reclamation bond posted for the site. No additional state or federal funding is needed for reclamation of abandoned sites once surety companies have agreed to take responsibility.

Reclamation-in-Lieu of Civil Penalties (Community Environmental Projects)

When a surface mine operator violates state mining regulations, DEP assesses a civil penalty or fine against the company. DEP routinely allows operators to perform mine reclamation or acid mine drainage cleanup instead of paying these civil penalties. The value of the reclamation performed at a site must exceed the amount of the assessed civil penalty and the operator must not be legally responsible for the site.

DEP allows violators this option because the end result is more timely and efficient reclamation. More environmental good is done through reclamation-in-lieu of civil penalties than from the state collecting monetary fines that may or may not be used for reclamation.

Government Financed Construction Contracts (GFCCs)

Pennsylvania's long history of mining has left thousands of acres of abandoned mine lands. A number of these abandoned sites lack sufficient spoil to allow for proper reclamation, have mine drainage discharges or contain large amounts of coal refuse making these sites expensive to reclaim and unattractive to re-mine.

GFCCs are contracts for reclamation between the state and an individual or company who will profit from the reclamation. The state pays nothing and in return gets land reclamation and water remediation as the end result of the contract. For example, under a GFCC, a company can mine and sell coal material from an abandoned coal refuse pile and then reclaim the site. The company profits from the sale of the coal material to an electrical cogeneration facility and the state receives free land reclamation. In addition, placement of excess active mine site spoil on adjacent abandoned mine lands for the purpose of reclamation is allowable under a GFCC.

GFCCs can also be signed when an individual, company or organization mines the remaining coal on an abandoned property and then reclaims the site. A portion of the cost of performing the reclamation or abatement is offset by the sale of the coal that must be removed to complete the construction project. The minimal volume of remaining coal on sites that qualify for GFCCs does not warrant the expense of obtaining a surface mining permit to perform the re-mining of the site.

Contact the following DEP offices for information about mining and reclamation or abandoned mine land issues:

Mineral Resources Management Central Office

Rachel Carson State Office Building
PO Box 2063
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063
Telephone: 717-783-5338

Bureau of Mining and Reclamation

Rachel Carson State Office Building
PO Box 8461
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8461
Telephone: 717-787-5103

Bureau of District Mining Operations

District Headquarters

3913 Washington Road
McMurray, PA 15317-2532
Telephone: 724-941-7100

Pottsville District Mining Office

5 W. Laurel Blvd.
Pottsville, PA 17901-2454
Telephone: 570-621-3118

Counties Served: Adams, Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Chester, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Juniata, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Luzerne, Mifflin, Monroe, Montgomery, Montour, Northampton, Northumberland, Perry, Pike, Philadelphia, Schuylkill, Snyder, Susquehanna, Union, Wayne, Wyoming and York

Hawk Run District Mining Office

Empire Road
PO Box 209
Hawk Run, PA 16840-0209
Telephone: 814-342-8200

Counties Served: Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Lycoming, Potter, Sullivan and Tioga

Knox District Mining Office

White Memorial Building, PO Box 669
Knox, PA 16232-0669
Telephone: 814-797-1191

Counties Served: Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren

Ebensburg District Mining Office

437 S. Center Street, PO Box 625
Ebensburg, PA 15931-0625
Telephone: 814-472-1900

Counties Served: Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, Indiana and Somerset

Greensburg District Mining Office

Armbrust Building, RD 2, Box 603C
Greensburg, PA 15601-0982
Telephone: 724-925-5500

Counties Served: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland

McMurray District Mining Office

3913 Washington Road
McMurray, PA 15317-2532
Telephone: 724-941-7100

Counties Served: All counties with underground bituminous mining and subsidence

Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation

Central Office

Rachel Carson State Office Building
PO Box 8476
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8476
Telephone: 717-783-2267

Wilkes-Barre District Office

2 Public Square, 5th Floor
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0790
Telephone: 570-826-2371
Counties Served: All anthracite counties

Ebensburg District Office

122 South Center Street
Ebensburg, PA 15931-0149
Telephone: 814-472-1800
Counties Served: All bituminous counties

This fact sheet and related environmental information are available electronically via Internet. For more information, visit us through the Pennsylvania homepage at www.state.pa.us or visit DEP directly at www.dep.state.pa.us (choose Subjects/Mining and Mineral Resources).