

Landscape Contractor News

Mine sites to receive funds chosen

Seven sites where coal mines, long ago abandoned, now cause potential danger or health hazards to nearby residents have been chosen for reclamation by the U.S. Office of Surface Mining, an agency of the Interior Department. The government estimates that these projects will cost about \$5 million and the work will be done by coal operators with heavy equipment to repair underground mines and landscape contractors to reseed the land to make it usable again.

Some projects will require both kinds of reclamation. One site is near a school building used to teach 272 elementary and high school students in Scranton, S.D., where subsidence near old mining tunnels has created caverns easily accessible to the youngsters. Work to fill the subsidence and revegetate will take between 15-18 months.

The projects were announced May 16 and will get final approval sometime between mid-June and mid-August. These projects are just the beginning of an ambitious program to reclaim old mines which could easily total \$100 million in its first fiscal year. Contractors interested in bidding on the projects, which are located in seven states, can write the Office of Surface Mining for further information. Letters should be addressed to Paul Reeves, assistant director for abandoned mine lands, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 20240.

California tax cut may help landscapers

Landscape contractors in California should experience an upturn in business shortly if that state's voters approve a proposed constitutional amendment June 6 that could cut taxes up to \$7 billion a year.

The proposal would roll back real estate taxes to 1 percent of the 1975-76 assessed value and would prevent assessments from rising to current market value until the property changed hands. Approval of the proposal, referred to as the Jarvis-Gann amendment, would slash taxes paid by businesses and homeowners.

Such a large cut in taxes would probably have a beneficial effect on landscapers since it's believed much of the money would be used to improve corporate grounds and homeowners lots. "Hopefully they'll take the extra money and reinvest in their own business and improve the local surroundings," said Joe Brazin, executive secretary for the California Landscape and Irrigation Council, a group of landscape contractors engaged primarily in commercial and industrial work in 13 counties of Southern California. The landscapers hire union employees for their projects.

Denver erosion meeting planned

A symposium on erosion control and revegetation, coupled with an exhibition on equipment and supplies and followed by a two-day tour of reclamation/revegetation projects in the Rocky Mountains has been scheduled from August 1-5 at the Marriott Hotel in Denver, Colo.

The symposium will feature technical programs, including speakers from some of the largest firms engaged in reclamation projects.

The event is co-sponsored by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America and the High Altitude Revegetation Association. Information about the symposium is available from ALCA headquarters, 1750 Old Meadow Rd., McLean, Va. 22101.

"The public interest will not be served by the promulgation of requirements that compel industry to adopt one specific design which increases costs without commensurate benefits, eliminates any element of choice, and retards the incentive to develop new and innovative approaches to lawn mower safety," he told the commission.

The commission is proposing a requirement on future mowers that would include a "deadman control" device. This would shut off power completely or disengage the blade from the power source when the user releases the handle. The commission's staff is considering implementing this device through a blade brake/clutch mechanism.

McLaughlin told the commission that testing by his company indicates that blade/clutch devices presently on the market are not reliable.

Alternative designs addressing the blade contact hazard, which accounts for 68 percent of lawn mower injuries, say the commission, were also demonstrated. They include:

— A conventional walk-behind mower equipped with a control on the handle which requires continuous activation by the operator in order for the unit to run. When the operator releases the control, the blade stops. Starting and stopping controls would also be mounted on the handle.

— A conventional walk-behind mower modified to place the height-of-cut adjustment control in the handle. The unit also includes auxiliary side shields to reduce the possibility of foot contact with the blade.

— A conventional walk-behind mower that incorporates a blade interlock with the discharge chute, as well as an automatic latching mechanism to the discharge chute. The latching system prevents the removal of the grass bag unless the latch is unhinged.

EQUIPMENT

Jacobsen and Textron ink sale agreement

Textron, Inc., of Providence, R.I., has signed an agreement "in principle" with Allegheny Ludlum Industries to purchase Jacobsen Manufacturing and the sale should be completed by the end of May, Jacobsen officials have announced.

Allegheny Ludlum sold the firm so it could use that money to help buy Wilkinson Sword, one Jacobsen dealer said.