

The Land Reclamation Report

Old strip mine becomes classroom for Ohio school

An abandoned 50-acre strip mine has become a place for more than 100 students in mining and reclamation at Belmont Technical College, in St. Clairsville, Ohio, to study heavy equipment and reclamation technology.

The mine, stripped prior to the 1972 Ohio law, has sheer walls, no topsoil, and many pond areas. The land was purchased from R&F Coal Co. Following reclamation performed by the students, the area will revert to public use for hunting and fishing. A grant of \$240,000 has been provided for the project by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and should cover nearly 75 percent of the cost. Coal companies are lending the students heavy equipment. Students hope to compare

plots covered with lime and fertilizer, topsoil, sludge and fly ash.

Report estimates \$2 billion needed for abandoned sites

A report by the Division of Reclamation of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources estimates that more money than currently available is needed to reclaim severely impacted land in Ohio. At a cost of \$8,000 per acre, the report claims that the Office of Surface Mining funding, if provided, will not meet the task over the 15 life of the program. OSM funds may total \$8-10 million per year for the fifteen year period.

The report recommends how the state program will be organized and how sites will be selected for funding. Eligible sites include abandoned strip

mined land, open mine shafts, underground mine openings, mine-related landslides on public and private property, and research and demonstration projects.

OSM enforcement authority clarified in new rules

Final rules clarifying the Office of Surface Mining's authority to enforce violations by coal mine operators of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 were published in the Federal Register on October 10.

An earlier decision by the Interior Department's Board of Appeals appeared to restrict OSM's enforcement authority. The new rules eliminated confusing language and replaced sanction authority.

Alabama small operators get \$2.5 million in aid

A grant from the OSM will provide funds to consulting firms and laboratories to make it easier for small mine operators to obtain the data needed for surface mining permits in Alabama. The cost of such data was thought to be beyond the means of the large number of small operators in the state. Small operators are defined as producing less than 100,000 tons of coal per year. Data required by the Surface Mining Act is needed before operators can receive permits to mine.

Ore waste reclamation faces Minnesota test

A \$170,000 grant from the Interior Department's Bureau of Mines has been awarded to Barr Engineering Co., Minneapolis, to observe the survival of ten plant species on tailings from ore processing.

Release of toxic elements and the effect of weathering on the tailings will also be observed.

Tailings disposal is a major concern in the Iron Belt area of Minnesota and now there is great demand for mining copper and nickel in the area. The success and cost of the reclamation will greatly affect future mining in the area.

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