



ABOUT THE OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING

The Office of Surface Mining is a small bureau (about 650 employees nationwide) of the U.S. Department of the Interior with responsibility, in cooperation with the states and Indian Tribes, to protect citizens and the environment during coal mining and reclamation, and to reclaim mines abandoned before 1977. Under authority of the Surface Mining Law¹, the Office of Surface Mining is organized around two principal requirements: regulating active coal mining and reclaiming abandoned mines. It is a field-oriented organization, with headquarters in Washington, D.C., three regional coordinating centers (in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Alton, Illinois; and Denver, Colorado), 10 field offices, and six area offices.

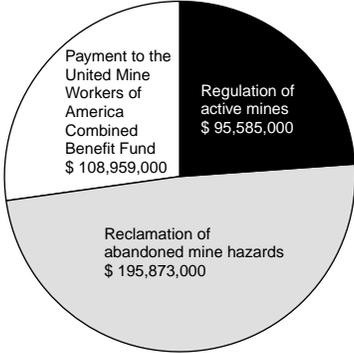
The current annual budget is approximately \$300 million. That sum enables the Office of Surface Mining to support the states' mining programs by granting funds for their regulation and enforcement and providing training and technical support. It also pays 100 percent of the costs for restoring abandoned mines that were left unreclaimed before the Law was passed in 1977. Funds for reclaiming abandoned mines come from tonnage-based reclamation fees paid by America's active coal mine operators.

In addition, the Office of Surface Mining operates programs to: eliminate environmental and economic impacts of acid mine drainage from abandoned coal mines, encourage reforestation of reclaimed mine land, develop techniques that can ensure reclamation of prime farmland soils, and publicly recognize outstanding reclamation by communicating the experience to others.

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Cover Photo: Topsoil is important in reestablishing native vegetation and crop, forage, and timber production. The removal and replacement of all topsoil is required by the Surface Mining Law unless it is demonstrated that selected subsoil or spoil is better suited to growing plants. Topsoil is removed as a separate layer before mining and is either spread on nearby regraded areas or, if necessary, temporarily stockpiled. Topsoil is spread to the appropriate depths for the approved postmining land use. At this mid-western reclaimed mine site, the land has been returned to crop production and is yielding production levels equal to the surrounding unmined areas.



Office of Surface Mining 2000 budget

1. Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA)

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the operations of the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining (OSM) for the period October 1, 1999, through September 30, 2000 (Fiscal Year 2000)¹. The report format is slightly different from previous years and the Annual Financial Accountability Report, compiled to meet the requirements of Section 306 of the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, has been published separately. The Financial Accountability Report is only available to the public in electronic format and is distributed on the CD-ROM version of this report and posted on the web site (www.osmre.gov/annualreport.htm) for those interested in the detailed financial accounting of the Office of Surface Mining.

This Annual Report was compiled to meet the specific requirements of Section 706 of the Surface Mining Law and includes results with measures and cost of accomplishments required by the Government Performance and Results Act.

Included in this report are activities carried out under several parts of the Law: Title IV, Abandoned Mine Reclamation; Title V, Control of the Environmental Impacts of Surface Coal Mining; and Title VII, Administrative and Miscellaneous Provisions. Surface Mining Law responsibilities of other bureaus and agencies have been omitted. Those responsibilities include Title III, State Mining and Mineral Resources and Research Institutes program, which was administered by the now abolished U.S. Bureau of Mines; Titles VIII and IX, the University Coal Research Laboratories and the Energy Resource Graduate Fellowships, which are administered by the Secretary of Energy; and Section 406, the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP), which is administered by the Secretary of Agriculture. Programmatic and financial information about those activities are reported directly to Congress by the agencies responsible for them.

This year's Annual Report contains updated tabular data corresponding to that found in Office of Surface Mining annual reports prepared since 1988. This allows a comparison of statistics from year to year. Changes to the 2000 report include: a stronger focus on the reporting costs and results of the Government Performance and Results Act and references (or links,

if you are reading the electronic version of this report) to additional, more detailed information that is available at the Office of Surface Mining web site. The report is organized in chapters that correspond to the four principal activities performed by the Office of Surface Mining. The four principal activities are:

1. Abandoned mine land reclamation
2. Regulation of active coal mines
3. Technology development and transfer
4. Financial management and administration

Statistics in this report are presented in English units. To convert these numbers into metric units use the following conversion factors:

Miles x 1.609 = Kilometers

Acres x 0.40469 = Hectares

Feet x 0.30473 = Meters

Gallons x 0.37854 = Liters

Tons x 0.90718 = Metric Tons

To meet the need for national and state-by-state statistical data and the growing demand for Office of Surface Mining operational and financial information, this report is available in electronic format on the Office of Surface Mining World Wide Web site. Printed copies of the Annual Report will be distributed to the public upon request.

A special companion CD-ROM containing all Office of Surface Mining Annual Reports (1978-2000), 2000 Reclamation Awards Video, and 2000 Annual Financial Report is also available upon request.

For information about Office of Surface Mining activities, news releases, publications, or to request additional copies of this report, visit the Office of Surface Mining web site at www.osmre.gov or contact:

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1. Throughout this document "2000" refers to Fiscal year 2000 (10/1/99 - 9/30/00), unless otherwise noted.



In 2000, the Office of Surface Mining was at an important crossroads, where we could look back at many long-term accomplishments as well as look forward to the exciting new initiatives.

On April 10, 2000, Secretary Babbitt appointed me Acting Director when Kathy Karpan became Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. This was my second time as Acting Director. Having been the Interior Department's Associate Solicitor for Surface Mining and Mineral Resources since 1993, I was familiar with the day-to-day operations of the Office of Surface Mining and all of the important issues.

During the past several years, one of the principal goals has been to make the Office of Surface Mining a model agency with better abandoned mine land reclamation, better protection of people and the environment, better service, and better program operations. We have achieved these goals and I am pleased to report that today the Office of Surface Mining and the services it performs are better than at any time since the passage of the Surface Mining Law in 1977. Fewer offsite impacts are being reported every year, and we are making tremendous gains in cleaning up the multitude of abandoned mine land problems.

Significant progress was made on the **Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative**. The primary focus of this Initiative is eliminating acid mine drainage from abandoned mines. In addition to providing grants for 16 on-the-ground projects, the Office of Surface Mining placed 23 summer interns in eight states during 2000.

The **Acid Mine Drainage Technology Initiative** focuses on both the remediation and prevention of acid mine drainage from future mining. Under this Initiative, the Acid Mine Drainage Technology Manual was distributed to the public. This is a handbook of remediation methods and a compilation of all known acid mine drainage clean-up technologies and experiments, including those that were not successful. Development of this manual is one of the first products of the Initiative, a partnership which includes the Office of Surface Mining, coal producing states, academia, the coal industry, and other government agencies and groups.

Through our **Reforestation Initiative**, the Office of Surface Mining has sponsored outreach and technology transfer events to promote a market-based approach to reclaim mined lands and increase carbon storage through reforestation. The environmental and economic benefits of this approach include higher quality reclamation, an increase in the number of sites reclaimed, economic opportunities, including employment for local communities, aesthetic and recreational improvements, sale of forest products by landowners or lessees, and the opportunity for reducing carbon through sequestration in forests. This activity is of interest to mine operators, utilities, land management companies, mining companies, and environmental organizations. Reforestation provides the opportunity to promote ecologically diverse and balanced forest ecosystems.

In March 2000, the Office of Surface Mining sponsored a brainstorming session on "Establishing Public-Private Partnerships to Restore Abandoned Mine Lands and Store Carbon." High ranking officials from the Departments of Interior and Energy, leaders of State regulatory and abandoned mine land programs, conservation and industry associations, and corporate environmental officials attended the session. Subsequent to this meeting, the

Office of Surface Mining established an initiative called AmeReclaim. The goal of AmeReclaim is to increase the quantity and quality of reclaimed mined lands at lower cost to the taxpayer by attracting companies and organizations to “adopt” abandoned mine lands, or make donations through state and tribal agencies to reclaim these lands using reforestation. On a voluntary basis, donors could report their carbon reduction efforts to the Energy Department’s Climate Challenge Program. During the summer, Office of Surface Mining, Department of Energy, and state officials visited potential pilot sites in Ohio and Pennsylvania. And, in September, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Energy to establish a framework to support the AmeReclaim initiative. In 2001, work will continue to identify and begin reclamation on promising sites.

Mountaintop mining. In June, the Office of Surface Mining issued a final policy clarifying allowable post mining land uses and related permitting requirements for mountaintop removal and steep slope mining operations that will not restore mined lands to their approximate original contour. This policy clarifies, for the first time, conditions under which these exceptions apply and the demonstrations that must be made before approval of a mountaintop removal variance.

Valid Existing Rights and Prohibition of Section 522(e) final rules. The Surface Mining Law prohibits coal mining operations in National Parks and other protected areas, but the prohibition does not apply to people who have “valid existing rights,” a term not defined in the Law. In December 1999, the Office of Surface Mining issued final rules that used the “good faith/all permits” standard for valid existing rights. This standard is the most environmentally protective and least disruptive to existing state regulatory programs. It is also the option most consistent with the primary purpose of the Law.

Besides lands in the National Park System, the new valid existing rights definition applies to lands in the

National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Trails System, the National Wilderness Preservation System, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and National Recreation Areas. It also applies to federal lands in national forests and to surface coal mining operations that would adversely affect historic sites and public parks. In addition, it applies to buffer areas around public roads, occupied dwellings, public parks, public buildings, and cemeteries.

In December, the Office of Surface Mining also published a related rule clarifying the existing regulatory position that subsidence due to underground coal mining is not a surface coal mining operation and, therefore, not prohibited in areas protected under the Law. Consequently, neither subsurface activities that may result in subsidence, nor actual subsidence, are prohibited on lands protected by section 522(e).

This rule maintained the status quo and best balances the competing environmental and economic considerations within the legal constraints of the Surface Mining Law. When the coal is mined, the coal operators must meet existing subsidence regulations to protect the homes of the nation’s coalfield residents from damage caused by underground mining, repair or compensate for damage that does occur to homes, and assure adequate domestic water supplies in a timely manner.

During 2000, we focused our efforts, and much of the progress described in this report shows the strength and effectiveness of this direction. As you read this report, I ask each of you to join us in implementing the Surface Mining Law. We welcome your comments and suggestions for improvement. If we all work together, we can have a safer and more environmentally sound place for coalfield families to live and work.

