



We approve experimental practices

the Applicant Violator System data base, thus beginning to fulfill the requirement in the Surface Mining Law that such violations be considered in making coal mine permitting decisions.

Applicant Violator System staff continued their effort to assist states with their implementation and operation of the system by providing training and investigative assistance. In addition, assistance was provided to field offices charged with oversight of state use and operation of the system by reviewing and analyzing reports and providing field offices with recommendations for improvement.

Pennsylvania Anthracite Program

Section 529 of the Surface Mining Law provides an exemption from federal performance standards for anthracite coal mining operations, provided the state law governing those operations was in effect on August 3, 1977. Pennsylvania is the only state with an established regulatory program qualifying for the exemption, and thus regulates anthracite mining independent of the Surface Mining Law program standards.

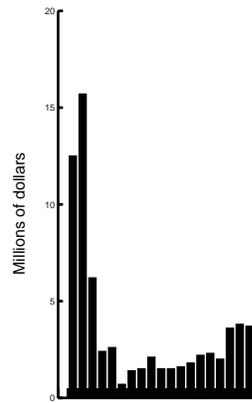
The Pennsylvania anthracite coal region is located in the northeast quarter of the state and covers approximately 3,300 square miles. More than 20 different anthracite coal beds vary in thickness from a few inches to 50 or 60 feet. The anthracite region is characterized by steeply pitching seams, some with dips steeper than 60 degrees. Such strata require specialized mining techniques and present unique challenges to ensure highwalls are eliminated and the area is restored to productive post-mining land use. The long

history of mining in the anthracite region has produced a legacy of abandoned mine land problems. However, because most active mining operations affect previously disturbed land, a large percentage of abandoned mine land is eventually restored to productive land use in connection with active mine reclamation.

In 1996³ the anthracite mining industry increased production⁴ to around 11.5 million net tons per year, approximately 14 percent of Pennsylvania's annual coal production. The reprocessing of anthracite culm banks accounts for almost three-quarters of the anthracite coal production. Some of this reprocessed coal helps to fuel eight cogeneration plants. Anthracite operators mined approximately 8.4 million tons from culm banks, 2.7 million tons from surface mines, and 0.4 million tons from underground mines.

Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection continues to carry out the provisions of the anthracite regulatory program successfully. State mine inspectors have achieved approximately 89 percent⁵ of the required complete and partial inspections. On 98 percent⁶ of the complete inspections conducted by state inspectors, the mine operations were in compliance with performance standards. The District Mining office in Pottsville continues to do outstanding work in the clean-up of the headwaters of Swatara Creek.

Small Operator Assistance Program (SOAP)



SOAP Grant Obligations 1978-1997

Section 401 (b)(1) of the Surface Mining Law authorizes up to 10 percent of the fees collected for the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund to be used to help qualified small mine operators obtain technical data needed for permit applications. Through 1991, operators producing fewer than 100,000 tons of coal per year were eligible for assistance. Beginning with Fiscal Year 1992, the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Act of 1990 increased the production limit from 100,000 to 300,000 tons for determining whether small operators qualify for assistance.

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3. Calendar year 1996.
 4. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Harrisburg, 1996 Annual Report on Mining Activities.
 5. Pottsville District Mining Office, Coal Inspection Exception Report, 01/01/97 thru 09/30/97.
 6. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Field Operations Data Base (LUMIS), Inspector-Citation Summary Report for Period 10/01/96 thru 09/30/97 -- Summary for Pottsville.

**TABLE 10
 SMALL-MINE OPERATOR ASSISTANCE
 1997 GRANT AWARDS***

State	1997	1996
Kentucky	\$1,215,475	\$1,383,690
Maryland	70,000	75,000
Ohio	225,000	240,000
Pennsylvania	1,200,000	1,400,000
Virginia	0	10,000
West Virginia	1,000,000	787,500
Total	\$3,710,475	\$3,896,190

*These figures do not include downward adjustments of prior-year awards.