

APPENDIX G (1998)

ABANDONED MINE RECLAMATION

Introduction

Abandoned resource extraction activities (coal mines & non-coal mines, and oil & gas wells) degrades thousands of mile of streams and hundreds of thousands of acres of land in the Commonwealth. Comprehensive planning is necessary to determine the best course of action to remediate degradation from past resource extraction and to prevent degradation from future resource extraction activities.

- We believe that conservation districts are a vital local voice in mine land reclamation and should be involved in every active reclamation program. District involvement includes voicing local concerns, insuring the fulfillment of Chapter 102 requirements, making the public aware of the programs, and conducting local publicity efforts for reclamation projects. To the extent that districts' cooperating agencies can be employed to accelerate these reclamation efforts, DEP is encouraged to use their services.
- PA Bond Forfeiture Program: PACD supports a stronger role for conservation districts in the State's Bond Forfeiture reclamation program. We recommend that districts assist DEP in site evaluations and alternative reclamation plans; we also encourage the districts' participation in the Landowner Reclamation Program and the Reclaim PA initiative.
- We encourage DEP to fully cooperate with other agencies involved in reclamation of abandoned mine lands in Pennsylvania.
- We support the development strategy for Pennsylvania for abandoned mine reclamation and acid mine drainage abatement to include a revision of the Commonwealth's Mine Reclamation Plan and that the DEPARTMENT of Environmental Protection and PACD representatives meet to produce such a plan soon.
- We encourage the planting of appropriate vegetation and the use of PA DEP approved alternative soil amendments on abandoned mine lands during site reclamation as an effective measure to control soil erosion.
- PACD applauds the development and adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding between DEP (Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation and Bureau of Watershed Conservation), conservation districts, state conservation commission, and PACD which would establish a coordinated effort and process in the priority ranking and selection of reclamation sites, communication, and erosion and sediment pollution control.
- We urge conservation districts to adopt the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (DEP) and conservation districts regarding the prioritization and selection of abandoned mine sites for reclamation under the national abandoned mine land reclamation program. This MOU formalizes communication between districts and BAMR and initiates public meetings that will provide public education and the opportunity to gather meaningful community input.
- We request that agencies involved in distribution of the National Abandoned Mine Land Fund, namely the USDI-Office of Surface Mining, PA DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, and USDA-NRCS, work closely with conservation districts by notifying districts of project details such as but not limited to location, project cost, time frame, plan specifications, and additional related information pertinent to the expenditures of AML funds within individual counties well in advance of reclamation activities.

- We encourage development of reclamation plans that address water quality issues, abandoned mine lands, oil & gas issues, and the use of passive treatment technology where feasible.
- RAMP: PACD strongly supports the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) as authorized under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977. We urge Congress to appropriate the full 20 percent of the available reclamation monies to NRCS for carrying out the RAMP program. We support the National Coalition of Abandoned Mine Reclamation to work for the release of available reclamation funds.
- OSM Grants to States under Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act:
 - a. PACD encourages the DEPARTMENT of Environmental Protection to use Title IV funds for reclamation projects in all areas that threaten public health and safety.
 - b. PACD also opposes any change in the original regulations or intent of the Surface Mining Law in a manner in which AML funds distributed to Pennsylvania would be reduced.
- We request that NACD work with National Coalition and the Association of State Abandoned Mine Land Program Administrators to carry out the reauthorization of Title IV.
- We encourage remediation on a watershed basis through comprehensive planning.
- We promote active partnerships and the establishment of roles for partners to plan and implement remediation activities.
- We promote policies and incentives to encourage industry involvement and partnerships in planning and remediation activities.
- We promote the coordination of the new Nonpoint Source Pollution plan with BAMR's Comprehensive Plan for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, and Bureau of Mining & Reclamation Comprehensive Mine Reclamation Strategy.
- We encourage the creation and accurate GIS map of all resource extraction impacted lands and waters.
- We encourage the creation and maintenance of an accurate GIS map of all completed passive treatment projects with associated databases (attributes).
- We encourage DEP to emphasize a watershed approach for enforcement, permitting, inspection, etc.
- We promote the establishment of a means to determine the effectiveness of treatment measures.
- We encourage development of new organizations that focus on resource extraction remediation in highly impacted (high priority) watersheds.
- We encourage legislative policies that expedite remediation activities.
- We encourage development of new technologies or improvements in existing treatment technologies for prevention and treatment of resource extraction pollution.
- We encourage policies and regulations that reduce or eliminate the likelihood of degradation from future resource extraction activities.
- We support efforts to obtain, locate, promote, and encourage additional funding of remediation activities.
- We encourage legislation for state funding of abandoned mine drainage treatment.
- We encourage additional funding for DEP program to plug abandoned and orphan oil and gas wells.
- We encourage efforts, which educate the public about extent of degradation from resource extraction activities and the remediation measures used to treat degradation.