

land the surface rights to which are owned by a surface owner as defined in this section is to be mined by methods other than underground mining techniques.

**(b) Lease of coal deposits governed by section 201 of this title**

Any coal deposits subject to this section shall be offered for lease pursuant to section 201(a) of this title.

**(c) Consent to lease by surface owner**

The Secretary shall not enter into any lease of Federal coal deposits until the surface owner has given written consent to enter and commence surface mining operations and the Secretary has obtained evidence of such consent. Valid written consent given by any surface owner prior to August 3, 1977, shall be deemed sufficient for the purposes of complying with this section.

**(d) Preferences**

In order to minimize disturbance to surface owners from surface coal mining of Federal coal deposits and to assist in the preparation of comprehensive land-use plans required by section 201(a) of this title, the Secretary shall consult with any surface owner whose land is proposed to be included in a leasing tract and shall ask the surface owner to state his preference for or against the offering of the deposit under his land for lease. The Secretary shall, in his discretion but to the maximum extent practicable, refrain from leasing coal deposits for development by methods other than underground mining techniques in those areas where a significant number of surface owners have stated a preference against the offering of the deposits for lease.

**(e) "Surface owner" defined**

For the purpose of this section the term "surface owner" means the natural person or persons (or corporation, the majority stock of which is held by a person or persons who meet the other requirements of this section) who—

- (1) hold legal or equitable title to the land surface;
- (2) have their principal place of residence on the land; or personally conduct farming or ranching operations upon a farm or ranch unit to be affected by surface coal mining operations; or receive directly a significant portion of their income, if any, from such farming or ranching operations; and
- (3) have met the conditions of paragraphs (1) and (2) for a period of at least three years prior to the granting of the consent.

In computing the three-year period the Secretary may include periods during which title was owned by a relative of such person by blood or marriage during which period such relative would have met the requirements of this subsection.

**(f) Exception**

This section shall not apply to Indian lands.

**(g) Effect on property rights of United States or any other landowner**

Nothing in this section shall be construed as increasing or diminishing any property rights by the United States or by any other landowner.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title VII, §714, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 524.)

**§ 1305. Federal lessee protection**

In those instances where the coal proposed to be mined by surface coal mining operations is owned by the Federal Government and the surface is subject to a lease or a permit issued by the Federal Government, the application for a permit shall include either:

- (1) the written consent of the permittee or lessee of the surface lands involved to enter and commence surface coal mining operations on such land, or in lieu thereof;
- (2) evidence of the execution of a bond or undertaking to the United States or the State, whichever is applicable, for the use and benefit of the permittee or lessee of the surface lands involved to secure payment of any damages to the surface estate which the operations will cause to the crops, or to the tangible improvements of the permittee or lessee of the surface lands as may be determined by the parties involved, or as determined and fixed in an action brought against the operator or upon the bond in a court of competent jurisdiction. This bond is in addition to the performance bond required for reclamation under this chapter.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title VII, §715, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 525.)

**§ 1306. Effect on rights of owner of coal in Alaska to conduct surface mining operations**

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as increasing or diminishing the rights of any owner of coal in Alaska to conduct or authorize surface coal mining operations for coal which has been or is hereafter conveyed out of Federal ownership to the State of Alaska or pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.]: *Provided*, That such surface coal mining operations meet the requirements of this chapter.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title VII, §716, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 526.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, referred to in text, is Pub. L. 92-203, Dec. 18, 1971, 85 Stat. 688, as amended, which is classified generally to chapter 33 (§1601 et seq.) of Title 43, Public Lands. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1601 of Title 43 and Tables.

**§ 1307. Water rights and replacement**

(a) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as affecting in any way the right of any person to enforce or protect, under applicable law, his interest in water resources affected by a surface coal mining operation.

(b) The operator of a surface coal mine shall replace the water supply of an owner of interest in real property who obtains all or part of his supply of water for domestic, agricultural, industrial, or other legitimate use from an underground or surface source where such supply has been affected by contamination, diminution, or interruption proximately resulting from such surface coal mine operation.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title VII, §717, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 526.)