

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Clean Air Act, referred to in subsec. (a), is act July 14, 1955, ch. 360, 69 Stat. 322, as amended, which is classified generally to chapter 85 (§7401 et seq.) of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 7401 of Title 42 and Tables.

The Water Pollution Control Act, referred to in subsec. (a), probably means act June 30, 1948, ch. 758, 62 Stat. 1155, known as the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended generally by Pub. L. 92-500, §2, Oct. 18, 1972, 86 Stat. 816, which is classified generally to chapter 26 (§1251 et seq.) of Title 33, Navigation and Navigable Waters. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1251 of Title 33 and Tables.

The Department of Energy Organization Act, referred to in subsec. (a), is Pub. L. 95-91, Aug. 4, 1977, 91 Stat. 565, as amended, which is classified principally to chapter 84 (§7101 et seq.) of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 7101 of Title 42 and Tables.

§ 1304. Surface owner protection

(a) Applicability

The provisions of this section shall apply where coal owned by the United States under 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.