

for which the reclamation is proposed, the relationship of the lands to be reclaimed and the proposed reclamation to surrounding areas, the specific criteria for ranking and identifying projects to be funded, and the legal authority and programmatic capability to perform such work in conformance with the provisions of this subchapter.

**(f) Annual application for support; contents**

On an annual basis, each State having an approved State Reclamation Plan may submit to the Secretary an application for the support of the State program and implementation of specific reclamation projects. Such annual requests shall include such information as may be requested by the Secretary including:

- (1) a general description of each proposed project;
- (2) a priority evaluation of each proposed project;
- (3) a statement of the estimated benefits in such terms as: number of acres restored, miles of stream improved, acres of surface lands protected from subsidence, population protected from subsidence, air pollution, hazards of mine and coal refuse disposal area fires;
- (4) an estimate of the cost for each proposed project;
- (5) in the case of proposed research and demonstration projects, a description of the specific techniques to be evaluated or objective to be attained;
- (6) an identification of lands or interest therein to be acquired and the estimated cost; and
- (7) in each year after the first in which a plan is filed under this subchapter, an inventory of each project funded under the previous year's grant: which inventory shall include details of financial expenditures on such project together with a brief description of each such project, including project locations, landowner's name, acreage, type of reclamation performed.

**(g) Costs**

The costs for each proposed project under this section shall include: actual construction costs, actual operation and maintenance costs of permanent facilities, planning and engineering costs, construction inspection costs, and other necessary administrative expenses.

**(h) Grant of funds**

Upon approval of State Reclamation Plan by the Secretary and of the surface mine regulatory program pursuant to section 1253 of this title, the Secretary shall grant, on an annual basis, funds to be expended in such State pursuant to section 1232(g) of this title and which are necessary to implement the State reclamation program as approved by the Secretary.

**(i) Program monitorship**

The Secretary, through his designated agents, will monitor the progress and quality of the program. The States shall not be required at the start of any project to submit complete copies of plans and specifications.

**(j) Annual report to Secretary**

The Secretary shall require annual and other reports as may be necessary to be submitted by

each State administering the approved State reclamation program with funds provided under this subchapter. Such reports shall include that information which the Secretary deems necessary to fulfill his responsibilities under this subchapter.

**(k) Eligible lands of Indian tribes**

Indian tribes having within their jurisdiction eligible lands pursuant to section 1234 of this title or from which coal is produced, shall be considered as a "State" for the purposes of this subchapter except for purposes of subsection (c) of this section with respect to the Navajo, Hopi and Crow Indian Tribes.

**(l) State liability**

No State shall be liable under any provision of Federal law for any costs or damages as a result of action taken or omitted in the course of carrying out a State abandoned mine reclamation plan approved under this section. This subsection shall not preclude liability for cost or damages as a result of gross negligence or intentional misconduct by the State. For purposes of the preceding sentence, reckless, willful, or wanton misconduct shall constitute gross negligence.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title IV, § 405, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 459; Pub. L. 100-71, title I, July 11, 1987, 101 Stat. 416; Pub. L. 101-508, title VI, §§ 6007, 6012(d)(1), (2), Nov. 5, 1990, 104 Stat. 1388-295, 1388-298.)

AMENDMENTS

1990—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 101-508, § 6012(d)(1), substituted "preparation" for "preparation".

Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 101-508, § 6012(d)(2), substituted "Upon approval" for "Upon approved".

Subsec. (l). Pub. L. 101-508, § 6007, added subsec. (l).

1987—Subsec. (k). Pub. L. 100-71, which directed the amendment of subsec. (k) by inserting "except for purposes of subsection (c) of this section with respect to the Navajo, Hopi and Crow Indian Tribes" at the end thereof, was executed by making the insertion before the period to reflect the probable intent of Congress.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1990 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 101-508 effective Oct. 1, 1991, see section 6014 of Pub. L. 101-508 set out as a note under section 1231 of this title.

GRANT OF FUNDS TO STATES UNDER SURFACE MINING CONTROL AND RECLAMATION ACT

Pub. L. 97-377, title I, § 150, Dec. 21, 1982, 96 Stat. 1918, provided that: "Within 60 days of receipt of a complete abandoned mine reclamation fund grant application from any eligible State under the provisions of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (91 Stat. 460) [Pub. L. 95-87, see Short Title note set out under section 1201 of this title] the Secretary of Interior shall grant to such State any and all funds available for such purposes in the applicable appropriations Act."

**§ 1236. Reclamation of rural lands**

**(a) Agreements with landowners for conservation treatment**

In order to provide for the control and prevention of erosion and sediment damages from unreclaimed mined lands, and to promote the conservation and development of soil and water resources of unreclaimed mined lands and lands affected by mining, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to enter into agreements of not

more than ten years with landowners (including owners of water rights), residents, and tenants, and individually or collectively, determined by him to have control for the period of the agreement of lands in question therein, providing for land stabilization, erosion, and sediment control, and reclamation through conservation treatment, including measures for the conservation and development of soil, water (excluding stream channelization), woodland, wildlife, and recreation resources, and agricultural productivity of such lands. Such agreements shall be made by the Secretary with the owners, including owners of water rights, residents, or tenants (collectively or individually) of the lands in question.

**(b) Conservation and development plans**

The landowner, including the owner of water rights, resident, or tenant shall furnish to the Secretary of Agriculture a conservation and development plan setting forth the proposed land uses and conservation treatment which shall be mutually agreed by the Secretary of Agriculture and the landowner, including owner of water rights, resident, or tenant to be needed on the lands for which the plan was prepared. In those instances where it is determined that the water rights or water supply of a tenant, landowner, including owner of water rights, resident, or tenant have been adversely affected by a surface or underground coal mine operation which has removed or disturbed a stratum so as to significantly affect the hydrologic balance, such plan may include proposed measures to enhance water quality or quantity by means of joint action with other affected landowners, including owner of water rights, residents, or tenants in consultation with appropriate State and Federal agencies.

**(c) Agreement to effect plan**

Such plan shall be incorporated in an agreement under which the landowner, including owner of water rights, resident, or tenant shall agree with the Secretary of Agriculture to effect the land uses and conservation treatment provided for in such plan on the lands described in the agreement in accordance with the terms and conditions thereof.

**(d) Financial and other assistance; determination by Secretary**

In return for such agreement by the landowner, including owner of water rights, resident, or tenant, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to furnish financial and other assistance to such landowner, including owner of water rights, resident, or tenant, in such amounts and subject to such conditions as the Secretary of Agriculture determines are appropriate in the public interest for carrying out the land use and conservation treatment set forth in the agreement. Grants made under this section, depending on the income-producing potential of the land after reclaiming, shall provide up to 80 per centum of the cost of carrying out such land uses and conservation treatment on not more than one hundred and twenty acres of land occupied by such owner, including water rights owners, resident, or tenant, or on not more than one hundred and twenty acres of land which has

been purchased jointly by such landowners, including water rights owners, residents, or tenants, under an agreement for the enhancement of water quality or quantity or on land which has been acquired by an appropriate State or local agency for the purpose of implementing such agreement; except the Secretary may reduce the matching cost share where he determines that (1) the main benefits to be derived from the project are related to improving offsite water quality, offsite esthetic values, or other offsite benefits, and (2) the matching share requirement would place a burden on the landowner which would probably prevent him from participating in the program: *Provided, however,* That the Secretary of Agriculture may allow for land use and conservation treatment on such lands occupied by any such owner in excess of such one hundred and twenty acre limitation up to three hundred and twenty acres, but in such event the amount of the grant to such landowner to carry out such reclamation on such lands shall be reduced proportionately. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section with regard to acreage limitations, the Secretary of Agriculture may carry out reclamation treatment projects to control erosion and improve water quality on all lands within a hydrologic unit, consisting of not more than 25,000 acres, if the Secretary determines that treatment of such lands as a hydrologic unit will achieve greater reduction in the adverse effects of past surface mining practices than would be achieved if reclamation was done on individual parcels of land.

**(e) Termination of agreements**

The Secretary of Agriculture may terminate any agreement with a landowner including water rights owners, operator, or occupier by mutual agreement if the Secretary of Agriculture determines that such termination would be in the public interest, and may agree to such modification of agreements previously entered into hereunder as he deems desirable to carry out the purposes of this section or to facilitate the practical administration of the program authorized herein.

**(f) Preservation and surrender of history and allotments**

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Agriculture, to the extent he deems it desirable to carry out the purposes of this section, may provide in any agreement hereinafter for (1) preservation for a period not to exceed the period covered by the agreement and an equal period thereafter of the cropland, crop acreage, and allotment history applicable to land covered by the agreement for the purpose of any Federal program under which such history is used as a basis for an allotment or other limitation on the production of such crop; or (2) surrender of any such history and allotments.

**(g) Rules and regulations**

The Secretary of Agriculture shall be authorized to issue such rules and regulations as he determines are necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

**(h) Utilization of Natural Resources Conservation Service**

In carrying out the provisions of this section, the Secretary of Agriculture shall utilize the services of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**(i) Authorization of appropriations**

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Agriculture, from amounts in the Treasury other than amounts in the fund, such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title IV, § 406, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 460; Pub. L. 97-98, title XV, § 1551, Dec. 22, 1981, 95 Stat. 1344; Pub. L. 101-508, title VI, §§ 6008, 6012(c), (d)(3), Nov. 5, 1990, 104 Stat. 1388-295, 1388-298; Pub. L. 109-432, div. C, title II, § 204, Dec. 20, 2006, 120 Stat. 3016.)

AMENDMENTS

2006—Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 109-432, § 204(a), substituted “Natural Resources Conservation Service” for “Soil Conservation Service”.

Subsec. (i). Pub. L. 109-432, § 204(b), added subsec. (i). 1990—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 101-508, § 6012(d)(3), which directed the substitution of “(including owners)” for “including owners” was executed the first time that phrase appeared to reflect the probable intent of Congress, because the parenthetical statement concluding with “water rights)” was enacted without an opening parenthesis.

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 101-508, § 6008, struck out “experimental” before “reclamation treatment projects” in last sentence.

Subsec. (i). Pub. L. 101-508, § 6012(c), repealed subsec. (i) which read as follows: “Funds shall be made available to the Secretary of Agriculture for the purposes of this section, as provided in section 1231 of this title.”

1981—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 97-98 inserted provisions that notwithstanding any other provision of this section with regard to acreage limitations, the Secretary may carry out experimental reclamation treatment projects to control erosion and improve water quality on all lands within a hydrologic unit, consisting of not more than 25,000 acres, if the Secretary determines that treatment of such lands as a hydrologic unit will achieve greater reduction in the adverse effects of past surface mining practices than would be achieved if reclamation was done on individual parcels of land.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1990 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 101-508 effective Oct. 1, 1991, see section 6014 of Pub. L. 101-508 set out as a note under section 1231 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1981 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 97-98 effective Dec. 22, 1981, see section 1801 of Pub. L. 97-98, set out as an Effective Date note under section 4301 of Title 7, Agriculture.

**§ 1237. Acquisition and reclamation of land adversely affected by past coal mining practices**

**(a) Findings of fact; notice; right of entry**

If the Secretary or the State pursuant to an approved State program, makes a finding of fact that—

(1) land or water resources have been adversely affected by past coal mining practices; and

(2) the adverse effects are at a stage where, in the public interest, action to restore, reclaim, abate, control, or prevent should be taken; and

(3) the owners of the land or water resources where entry must be made to restore, reclaim, abate, control, or prevent the adverse effects of past coal mining practices are not known, or readily available; or

(4) the owners will not give permission for the United States, the States, political subdivisions, their agents, employees, or contractors to enter upon such property to restore, reclaim, abate, control, or prevent the adverse effects of past coal mining practices;

then, upon giving notice by mail to the owners if known or if not known by posting notice upon the premises and advertising once in a newspaper of general circulation in the municipality in which the land lies, the Secretary, his agents, employees, or contractors, or the State pursuant to an approved State program, shall have the right to enter upon the property adversely affected by past coal mining practices and any other property to have access to such property to do all things necessary or expedient to restore, reclaim, abate, control, or prevent the adverse effects. Such entry shall be construed as an exercise of the police power for the protection of public health, safety, and general welfare and shall not be construed as an act of condemnation of property nor of trespass thereon. The moneys expended for such work and the benefits accruing to any such premises so entered upon shall be chargeable against such land and shall mitigate or offset any claim in or any action brought by any owner of any interest in such premises for any alleged damages by virtue of such entry: *Provided, however*, That this provision is not intended to create new rights of action or eliminate existing immunities.

**(b) Studies or exploratory work**

The Secretary, his agents, employees, or contractors or the State pursuant to an approved State program, shall have the right to enter upon any property for the purpose of conducting studies or exploratory work to determine the existence of adverse effects of past coal mining practices and to determine the feasibility of restoration, reclamation, abatement, control, or prevention of such adverse effects. Such entry shall be construed as an exercise of the police power for the protection of public health, safety, and general welfare and shall not be construed as an act of condemnation of property nor trespass thereon.

**(c) Requirements for acquisition of affected land**

The Secretary or the State pursuant to an approved State program, may acquire any land, by purchase, donation, or condemnation, which is adversely affected by past coal mining practices if the Secretary determines that acquisition of such land is necessary to successful reclamation and that—

(1) the acquired land, after restoration, reclamation, abatement, control, or prevention of the adverse effects of past coal mining practices, will serve recreation and historic purposes, conservation and reclamation purposes or provide open space benefits; and

(2) permanent facilities such as a treatment plant or a relocated stream channel will be constructed on the land for the restoration,