

104-66, as amended, set out as a note under section 1113 of Title 31, Money and Finance. See, also, page 109 of House Document No. 103-7.

SUBCHAPTER VI—DESIGNATION OF LANDS  
UNSUITABLE FOR NONCOAL MINING

§ 1281. Designation procedures

(a) Review of Federal land areas for  
unsuitability for noncoal mining

With respect to Federal lands within any State, the Secretary of Interior may, and if so requested by the Governor of such State shall, review any area within such lands to assess whether it may be unsuitable for mining operations for minerals or materials other than coal, pursuant to the criteria and procedures of this section.

(b) Criteria considered in determining designations

An area of Federal land may be designated under this section as unsuitable for mining operations if (1) such area consists of Federal land of a predominantly urban or suburban character, used primarily for residential or related purposes, the mineral estate of which remains in the public domain, or (2) such area consists of Federal land where mining operations would have an adverse impact on lands used primarily for residential or related purposes.

(c) Petition for exclusion; contents; hearing; temporary land withdrawal

Any person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected shall have the right to petition the Secretary to seek exclusion of an area from mining operations pursuant to this section or the redesignation of an area or part thereof as suitable for such operations. Such petition shall contain allegations of fact with supporting evidence which would tend to substantiate the allegations. The petitioner shall be granted a hearing within a reasonable time and finding with reasons therefor upon the matter of their petition. In any instance where a Governor requests the Secretary to review an area, or where the Secretary finds the national interest so requires, the Secretary may temporarily withdraw the area to be reviewed from mineral entry or leasing pending such review: *Provided, however*, That such temporary withdrawal be ended as promptly as practicable and in no event shall exceed two years.

(d) Limitation on designations; rights preservation; regulations

In no event is a land area to be designated unsuitable for mining operations under this section on which mining operations are being conducted prior to the holding of a hearing on such petition in accordance with subsection (c) hereof. Valid existing rights shall be preserved and not affected by such designation. Designation of an area as unsuitable for mining operations under this section shall not prevent subsequent mineral exploration of such area, except that such exploration shall require the prior written consent of the holder of the surface estate, which consent shall be filed with the Secretary. The Secretary may promulgate, with respect to any designated area, regulations to minimize any adverse effects of such exploration.

(e) Statement

Prior to any designation pursuant to this section, the Secretary shall prepare a detailed statement on (i) the potential mineral resources of the area, (ii) the demand for such mineral resources, and (iii) the impact of such designation or the absence of such designation on the environment, economy, and the supply of such mineral resources.

(f) Area withdrawal

When the Secretary designates an area of Federal lands as unsuitable for all or certain types of mining operations for minerals and materials other than coal pursuant to this section he may withdraw such area from mineral entry or leasing, or condition such entry or leasing so as to limit such mining operations in accordance with his determination, if the Secretary also determines, based on his analysis pursuant to subsection (e), that the benefits resulting from such designation would be greater than the benefits to the regional or national economy which could result from mineral development of such area.

(g) Right to appeal

Any party with a valid legal interest who has appeared in the proceedings in connection with the Secretary's determination pursuant to this section and who is aggrieved by the Secretary's decision (or by his failure to act within a reasonable time) shall have the right of appeal for review by the United States district court for the district in which the pertinent area is located.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title VI, § 601, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 515.)

SUBCHAPTER VII—ADMINISTRATIVE AND  
MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

§ 1291. Definitions

For the purposes of this chapter—

(1) "alluvial valley floors" means the unconsolidated stream laid deposits holding streams where water availability is sufficient for sub-irrigation or flood irrigation agricultural activities but does not include upland areas which are generally overlain by a thin veneer of colluvial deposits composed chiefly of debris from sheet erosion, deposits by unconcentrated runoff or slope wash, together with talus, other mass movement accumulation and windblown deposits;

(2) "approximate original contour" means that surface configuration achieved by back-filling and grading of the mined area so that the reclaimed area, including any terracing or access roads, closely resembles the general surface configuration of the land prior to mining and blends into and complements the drainage pattern of the surrounding terrain, with all highwalls and spoil piles eliminated; water impoundments may be permitted where the regulatory authority determines that they are in compliance with section 1265(b)(8) of this title;

(3) "commerce" means trade, traffic, commerce, transportation, transmission, or communication among the several States, or between a State and any other place outside

thereof, or between points in the same State which directly or indirectly affect interstate commerce;

(4) "Federal lands" means any land, including mineral interests, owned by the United States without regard to how the United States acquired ownership of the land and without regard to the agency having responsibility for management thereof, except Indian lands: *Provided*, That for the purposes of this chapter lands or mineral interests east of the one hundredth meridian west longitude owned by the United States and entrusted to or managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority shall not be subject to sections 1304 (Surface Owner Protection) and 1305 (Federal Lessee Protection) of this title.<sup>1</sup>

(5) "Federal lands program" means a program established by the Secretary pursuant to section 1273 of this title to regulate surface coal mining and reclamation operations on Federal lands;

(6) "Federal program" means a program established by the Secretary pursuant to section 1254 of this title to regulate surface coal mining and reclamation operations on lands within a State in accordance with the requirements of this chapter;

(7) "fund" means the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund established pursuant to section 1231 of this title;

(8) "imminent danger to the health and safety of the public" means the existence of any condition or practice, or any violation of a permit or other requirement of this chapter in a surface coal mining and reclamation operation, which condition, practice, or violation could reasonably be expected to cause substantial physical harm to persons outside the permit area before such condition, practice, or violation can be abated. A reasonable expectation of death or serious injury before abatement exists if a rational person, subjected to the same conditions or practices giving rise to the peril, would not expose himself or herself to the danger during the time necessary for abatement;

(9) "Indian lands" means all lands, including mineral interests, within the exterior boundaries of any Federal Indian reservation, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and including rights-of-way, and all lands including mineral interests held in trust for or supervised by an Indian tribe;

(10) "Indian tribe" means any Indian tribe, band, group, or community having a governing body recognized by the Secretary;

(11) "lands within any State" or "lands within such State" means all lands within a State other than Federal lands and Indian lands;

(12) "Office" means the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement established pursuant to subchapter II;

(13) "operator" means any person, partnership, or corporation engaged in coal mining who removes or intends to remove more than two hundred and fifty tons of coal from the earth by coal mining within twelve consecutive calendar months in any one location;

(14) "other minerals" means clay, stone, sand, gravel, metalliferous and nonmetalliferous ores, and any other solid material or substances of commercial value excavated in solid form from natural deposits on or in the earth, exclusive of coal and those minerals which occur naturally in liquid or gaseous form;

(15) "permit" means a permit to conduct surface coal mining and reclamation operations issued by the State regulatory authority pursuant to a State program or by the Secretary pursuant to a Federal program;

(16) "permit applicant" or "applicant" means a person applying for a permit;

(17) "permit area" means the area of land indicated on the approved map submitted by the operator with his application, which area of land shall be covered by the operator's bond as required by section 1259 of this title and shall be readily identifiable by appropriate markers on the site;

(18) "permittee" means a person holding a permit;

(19) "person" means an individual, partnership, association, society, joint stock company, firm, company, corporation, or other business organization;

(20) the term "prime farmland" shall have the same meaning as that previously prescribed by the Secretary of Agriculture on the basis of such factors as moisture availability, temperature regime, chemical balance, permeability, surface layer composition, susceptibility to flooding, and erosion characteristics, and which historically have been used for intensive agricultural purposes, and as published in the Federal Register.<sup>1</sup>

(21) "reclamation plan" means a plan submitted by an applicant for a permit under a State program or Federal program which sets forth a plan for reclamation of the proposed surface coal mining operations pursuant to section 1258 of this title;

(22) "regulatory authority" means the State regulatory authority where the State is administering this chapter under an approved State program or the Secretary where the Secretary is administering this chapter under a Federal program;

(23) "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior, except where otherwise described;

(24) "State" means a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam;

(25) "State program" means a program established by a State pursuant to section 1253 of this title to regulate surface coal mining and reclamation operations, on lands within such State in accord with the requirements of this chapter and regulations issued by the Secretary pursuant to this chapter;

(26) "State regulatory authority" means the department or agency in each State which has primary responsibility at the State level for administering this chapter;

(27) "surface coal mining and reclamation operations" means surface mining operations and all activities necessary and incident to the reclamation of such operations after August 3, 1977;

<sup>1</sup> So in original. The period probably should be a semicolon.

(28) “surface coal mining operations” means—

(A) activities conducted on the surface of lands in connection with a surface coal mine or subject to the requirements of section 1266 of this title surface operations and surface impacts incident to an underground coal mine, the products of which enter commerce or the operations of which directly or indirectly affect interstate commerce. Such activities include excavation for the purpose of obtaining coal including such common methods as contour, strip, auger, mountaintop removal, box cut, open pit, and area mining, the uses of explosives and blasting, and in situ distillation or retorting, leaching or other chemical or physical processing, and the cleaning, concentrating, or other processing or preparation, loading of coal for interstate commerce at or near the mine site: *Provided, however*, That such activities do not include the extraction of coal incidental to the extraction of other minerals where coal does not exceed 16% per centum of the tonnage of minerals removed for purposes of commercial use or sale or coal explorations subject to section 1262 of this title; and

(B) the areas upon which such activities occur or where such activities disturb the natural land surface. Such areas shall also include any adjacent land the use of which is incidental to any such activities, all lands affected by the construction of new roads or the improvement or use of existing roads to gain access to the site of such activities and for haulage, and excavations, workings, impoundments, dams, ventilation shafts, entryways, refuse banks, dumps, stockpiles, overburden piles, spoil banks, culm banks, tailings, holes or depressions, repair areas, storage areas, processing areas, shipping areas and other areas upon which are sited structures, facilities, or other property or materials on the surface, resulting from or incident to such activities; and<sup>2</sup>

(29) “unwarranted failure to comply” means the failure of a permittee to prevent the occurrence of any violation of his permit or any requirement of this chapter due to indifference, lack of diligence, or lack of reasonable care, or the failure to abate any violation of such permit or the chapter due to indifference, lack of diligence, or lack of reasonable care;

(30) “lignite coal” means consolidated lignitic coal having less than 8,300 British thermal units per pound, moist and mineral matter free;

(31) the term “coal laboratory”, as used in subchapter VIII, means a university coal research laboratory established and operated pursuant to a designation made under section 1311 of this title;

(32) the term “institution of higher education” as used in subchapters VIII and IX, means any such institution as defined by section 1001<sup>3</sup> of title 20;

(33) the term “unanticipated event or condition” as used in section 1260(e) of this title

means an event or condition encountered in a remining operation that was not contemplated by the applicable surface coal mining and reclamation permit; and

(34) the term “lands eligible for remining” means those lands that would otherwise be eligible for expenditures under section 1234 of this title or under section 1232(g)(4) of this title.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title VII, §701, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 516; Pub. L. 102-486, title XXV, §2503(c), Oct. 24, 1992, 106 Stat. 3103; Pub. L. 105-244, title I, §102(a)(10), Oct. 7, 1998, 112 Stat. 1620.)

### Editorial Notes

#### REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in text, was in the original “this Act”, meaning Pub. L. 95-87, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 445, which enacted this chapter and amended section 1114 of Title 18, Crimes and Criminal Procedure. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1201 of this title and Tables.

Section 1001 of title 20, referred to in par. (32), was in the original “section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1968” and was translated as reading “section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965”, meaning section 101 of Pub. L. 89-329, to reflect the probable intent of Congress because section 101 was added to the Higher Education Act of 1965 by Pub. L. 105-244.

#### AMENDMENTS

1998—Par. (32). Pub. L. 105-244 substituted “section 1001” for “section 1141(a)”.

1992—Pars. (33), (34). Pub. L. 102-486 added pars. (33) and (34).

### Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

#### EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1998 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 105-244 effective Oct. 1, 1998, except as otherwise provided in Pub. L. 105-244, see section 3 of Pub. L. 105-244, set out as a note under section 1001 of Title 20, Education.

### § 1292. Other Federal laws

#### (a) Construction of chapter as superseding, amending, modifying, or repealing certain laws

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as superseding, amending, modifying, or repealing the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 21a), the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-47), or any of the following Acts or with any rule or regulation promulgated thereunder, including, but not limited to—

(1) The Federal Metal and Nonmetallic Mine Safety Act (30 U.S.C. 721-740).

(2) The Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 742) [30 U.S.C. 801 et seq.].

(3) The Federal Water Pollution Control Act (79 Stat. 903), as amended [33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.], the State laws enacted pursuant thereto, or other Federal laws relating to preservation of water quality.

(4) The Clean Air Act, as amended [42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.].

(5) The Solid Waste Disposal Act [42 U.S.C. 6901 et seq.].

(6) The Refuse Act of 1899 (33 U.S.C. 407).

<sup>2</sup>So in original. The word “and” probably should not appear.

<sup>3</sup>See References in Text note below.