

207.22 Acquisition and reclamation of land.

1. *a.* The division, pursuant to a state program approved by the secretary, may take action as provided in paragraph "*b*" of this subsection if it finds all of the following:

(1) Land or water resources have been adversely affected by past coal mining practices.

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

(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 will not give permission for the United States, this state, 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.

b. Upon giving notice by mail to the owners if known or by posting notice upon the premises and advertising once in a local newspaper of general circulation if not known, the division may enter upon the property adversely affected by past coal mining practices and any other property to have access to the property to do all things necessary or expedient to restore, reclaim, abate, control, or prevent the adverse effects. The entry shall be construed as an exercise of the police power for the protection of public health, safety, and general welfare and not as an act of condemnation of property or trespass. The moneys expended for the work and the benefits accruing to the property shall be chargeable against such property and shall mitigate or offset any claim on or any action brought by an owner of any interest in the property for any alleged damages because of the entry. This provision does not create new rights of action or eliminate existing immunities.

2. The division may enter upon a 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. The entry shall be construed as an exercise of the police power for the protection of public health, safety, and general welfare and not as an act of condemnation of property or trespass.

3. The division 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 the land is necessary to successful reclamation and that:

a. 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 spaces benefits and that permanent facilities such as a treatment plant or a relocated stream channel will be constructed on the land for the restoration, reclamation, abatement, control, or prevention of the adverse effects of past coal mining practices; or

b. Acquisition of coal refuse disposal sites and all coal refuse thereon will serve the purposes of Title IV of Pub. L. No. 95-87 or that public ownership is desirable to meet emergency situations and prevent recurrences of the adverse effect of past coal mining practices.

4. Title to all lands acquired pursuant to this section shall be in the name of this state. The price paid for land acquired under this section shall reflect the market value of the land as adversely affected by past coal mining practices.

5. If land acquired pursuant to this section is deemed to be suitable for industrial, commercial, agricultural, residential, or recreational development, the division with authorization from the secretary may sell the land by public sale under a system of competitive bidding, at not less than fair market value and under rules

promulgated to insure that the lands are put to proper use consistent with local land use plans.

6. The division if requested after appropriate public notice shall hold a public hearing with the appropriate notice, in the county of the lands acquired pursuant to this section. The hearings shall be held at a time that affords local citizens and governments the maximum opportunity to participate in the decision concerning the use or disposition of the lands.

7. The division may co-operate with the secretary in acquiring land by purchase, donation, or condemnation to assist the housing of people disabled as the result of employment in the mines or incidental work, persons displaced by acquisition of land pursuant to this section, or persons dislocated as the result of adverse effects of coal mining practices which constitute an emergency as determined by the secretary. The fund provided under this section shall not be used to pay the actual construction costs of housing.

[C81, § 83.22]

C93, § 207.22

2002 Acts, ch 1119, §145