

Fiscal TOPICS

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Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund

Purpose and History

There are over 12,000 acres of abandoned coal sites in Iowa that are eligible to be reclaimed under the federal [Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act](#). The Soil Conservation Division of the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (DALs) is the primary agency for the Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Program. This is a federal program administered by the DALs. Federal funds are received by the DALs for reclamation projects and are deposited into the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund. The Program was established in 1983 by the federal Secretary of the Interior and operates in cooperation with the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM).

Abandoned mined land includes any land, water, and surrounding watersheds that are contaminated from the extraction or processing of coal, ores, and minerals. Landowners applying for federal financial assistance to clean up or reclaim the land must own land that has an abandoned coal site where mining took place prior to 1977. There are over 230 sites in Iowa, with the majority located in the southeastern portion of the state.

The DALs Abandoned Mined Land Reclamation Program maintains a joint inventory of abandoned sites with the OSM and develops a list of potential sites where the land can be reclaimed. This includes an environmental assessment of the land and a reclamation design. Priority is given to projects that eliminate health and safety hazards.

The Soil Conservation Division receives annual federal funds to pay for the reclamation of abandoned mined land. Completed projects provide improved water and air quality and reduce sediment deposit and clogging of streams. Employees of the Abandoned Mined Land Reclamation Program work with landowners to develop a design that allows the land to be used in a productive manner. Examples of completed projects involving reclaimed land sites include pastures, recreational areas, wildlife habitat areas, and wetlands.

Private and public landowners can participate in the Program. The DALs also works with a number of state and federal agencies, such as the federal Army Corps of Engineers, the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the federal Fish and Wildlife Service, the State Office of Historical Preservation, and other agencies.

Funding History

The amount that the DALs receives annually in federal funds varies from year to year; however, the average amount received for the past 10 years is \$450,000.

Related Statutes

Iowa Code section [207.21](#)

Iowa Administrative Code [27—50](#)

More Information

Mines and Minerals Bureau:

<http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/MinesAndMinerals/abandonedMinedLandReclamation.asp>

OSM Mid-Continent Regional Coordinating Center: www.mcrcc.osmre.gov

Iowa General Assembly: <http://www.legis.iowa.gov/index.aspx>

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