

§22-3.

**"Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation Act."
All changes, except as noted, are pending OSM decision.**

ARTICLE 3. SURFACE COAL MINING AND RECLAMATION ACT.

§22-3-1. Short title.

This article shall be known and cited as the "Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation Act."

§22-3-2. Legislative findings and purpose; jurisdiction vested in Division of Environmental Protection; authority of ~~director~~ secretary; inter-departmental cooperation.

(a) The Legislature finds that it is essential to the economic and social well-being of the citizens of the state of West Virginia to strike a careful balance between the protection of the environment and the economical mining of coal needed to meet energy requirements.

(1) Further, the Legislature finds that there is great diversity in terrain, climate, biological, chemical and other physical conditions in parts of this nation where mining is conducted; that the state of West Virginia in particular needs an environmentally sound and economically healthy mining industry; and ~~by reason of the above~~ therefor it may be necessary for the ~~director~~ secretary to promulgate rules which vary from federal regulations as is provided for in sections 101 (f) and 201 (c)(9) of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended, "Public Law 95-87."

(2) Further, the Legislature finds that unregulated surface coal mining operations may result in disturbances of surface and underground areas that burden and adversely affect commerce, public welfare and safety by destroying or diminishing the utility of land for commercial, industrial, residential, recreational, agricultural and forestry purposes; by causing erosion and landslides; by contributing to floods; by polluting the water and river and stream beds; by destroying fish, aquatic life and wildlife habitats; by impairing natural beauty; by damaging the property of citizens; by creating hazards dangerous to life and property; and by degrading the quality of life in local communities, all where proper mining and reclamation is not practiced.

(3) Further, the Legislature finds that the reasonable control of blasting associated with surface mining within the State of West Virginia is in the public interest and will promote the protection of the citizens of the State of West Virginia and their property without sacrificing economic development. It is the policy of the State of West Virginia, in cooperation with other governmental agencies, public and private organizations, and the citizens of this state, to use reasonable means and measures to prevent harm from the effects of blasting to its property and citizens.

(b) Therefore, it is the purpose of this article to:

(1) Expand the established and effective statewide program to protect the public and the environment from the adverse effects of surface-mining operations;

(2) Assure that the rights of surface and mineral owners and other persons with legal interest in the land or appurtenances to land are adequately protected from the such operations;

(3) Assure that surface-mining operations are not conducted where reclamation as required by this article is not feasible;

(4) Assure that surface-mining operations are conducted in a manner to adequately protect the environment;

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(5) Assure that adequate procedures are undertaken to reclaim surface areas as contemporaneously as possible with the surface-mining operations;

(6) Assure that adequate procedures are provided for public participation where appropriate under this article;

(7) Assure the exercise of the full reach of state common law, statutory and constitutional powers for the protection of the public interest through effective control of surface-mining operations;

(8) Assure that the coal production essential to the nation's energy requirements and to the state's economic and social well-being is provided; and .

(9) Vest in the secretary the authority to enforce all of the laws, regulations and rules established to regulate blasting consistent with the authority granted in sections thirty-four through thirty-nine of this article.

(c) In recognition of these findings and purposes, the Legislature ~~hereby~~ vests authority in the ~~director~~ secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection to:

(1) Administer and enforce the provisions of this article as it relates to surface mining to accomplish the purposes of this article;

(2) Conduct hearings and conferences or appoint persons to conduct them in accordance with this article;

(3) Promulgate, administer and enforce rules pursuant to this article;

(4) Enter into a cooperative agreement with the secretary of the United States department of the interior to provide for state regulation of surface-mining operations on federal lands within West Virginia consistent with section 523 of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended; and

(5) Administer and enforce rules promulgated pursuant to this chapter to accomplish the requirements of programs under the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended.

(d) The ~~director~~ secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection and the director of the Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training shall cooperate with respect to each agency's programs and records to effect an orderly and harmonious administration of the provisions of this article. The ~~director~~ secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection may avail himself or herself of any services which may be provided by other state agencies in this state and other states or by agencies of the federal government, and may reasonably compensate them for ~~such~~ those services. Also, he or she may receive any federal funds, state funds or any other funds, and enter into cooperative agreements, for the reclamation of land affected by surface mining.

§22-3-3. Definitions.

As used in this article, unless used in a context that clearly requires a different meaning, the term:

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(a) "Adequate treatment" means treatment of water by physical, chemical or other approved methods in a manner so that the treated water does not violate the effluent limitations or cause a violation of the water quality standards established for the river, stream or drainway into which the water is released.

(b) "Affected area" means, when used in the context of surface-mining activities, all land and water resources within the permit area which are disturbed or utilized during the term of the permit in the course of surface-mining and reclamation activities. "Affected area" means, when used in the context of underground mining activities, all surface land and water resources affected during the term of the permit: (1) By surface operations or facilities incident to underground mining activities; or (2) by underground operations.

(c) "Adjacent areas" means, for the purpose of permit application, renewal, revision, review and approval, those land and water resources, contiguous to or near a permit area, upon which surface-mining and reclamation operations conducted within a permit area during the life of the operations may have an impact. "Adjacent areas" means, for the purpose of conducting surface-mining and reclamation operations, those land and water resources contiguous to or near the affected area upon which surface-mining and reclamation operations conducted within a permit area during the life of the operations may have an impact.

(d) "Applicant" means any person who has or should have applied for any permit pursuant to this article.

(e) "Approximate original contour" means that surface configuration achieved by the backfilling and grading of the mined areas 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: Provided, That water impoundments may be permitted pursuant to subdivision (8), subsection (b), section thirteen of this article: Provided, however, That minor deviations may be permitted in order to minimize erosion and sedimentation, retain moisture to assist revegetation, or to direct surface runoff.

(f) "Assessment officer" means an employee of the division, other than a surface-mining reclamation supervisor, inspector or inspector-in-training, appointed by the director to issue proposed penalty assessments and to conduct informal conferences to review notices, orders and proposed penalty assessments.

(g) "Breakthrough" means the release of water which has been trapped or impounded, or the release of air into any underground cavity, pocket or area as a result of surface-mining operations.

(h) "Coal processing wastes" means earth materials which are or have been combustible, physically unstable or acid-forming or toxic-forming, which are wasted or otherwise separated from product coal, and slurried or otherwise transported from coal processing plants after physical or chemical processing, cleaning or concentrating of coal.

(i) "Director" means the director of the division of environmental protection or other person to whom the director has delegated authority or duties pursuant to sections six or eight, article one of this chapter.

(j) "Disturbed area" means an area where vegetation, topsoil or overburden has been removed or placed by surface-mining operations, and reclamation is incomplete.

(k) "Division" means the division of Environmental Protection.

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(l) "Imminent danger to the health or safety of the public" means the existence of a condition or practice, or any violation of a permit or other requirement of this article, which condition, practice or violation could reasonably be expected to cause substantial physical harm or death to any person outside the permit area before the 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 the person to the danger during the time necessary for the abatement.

(m) "Minerals" means clay, coal, flagstone, gravel, limestone, manganese, sand, sandstone, shale, iron ore and any other metal or metallurgical ore.

(n) "Operation" means those activities conducted by an operator who is subject to the jurisdiction of this article.

(o) "Operator" means any person who is granted or who should obtain a permit to engage in any activity covered by this article and any rule promulgated under this article and includes any person who engages in surface-mining or surface-mining and reclamation operations, or both. The term shall also be construed in a manner consistent with the federal program pursuant to the federal Surface-Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended.

(p) "Permit" means a permit to conduct surface-mining operations pursuant to this article.

(q) "Permit area" means the area of land indicated on the approved proposal map submitted by the operator as part of the operator's application showing the location of perimeter markers and monuments and shall be readily identifiable by appropriate markers on the site.

(r) "Permittee" means a person holding a permit issued under this article.

(s) "Person" means any individual, partnership, firm, society, association, trust, corporation, other business entity or any agency, unit or instrumentality of federal, state or local government.

(t) "Prime farmland" has the same meaning as that prescribed by the United States 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.

(u) "Surface mine", "surface-mining" or "surface-mining operations" means:

(1) Activities conducted on the surface of lands for the removal of coal, or, subject to the requirements of section fourteen of this article, surface operations and surface impacts incident to an underground coal mine, including the drainage and discharge from the mine. The activities include: Excavation for the purpose of obtaining coal, including, but not limited to, common methods as contour, strip, auger, mountaintop removal, box cut, open pit and area mining; the uses of explosives and blasting; reclamation; in situ distillation or retorting, leaching or other chemical or physical processing; the cleaning, concentrating or other processing or preparation and loading of coal for commercial purposes at or near the mine site; and

(2) The areas upon which the above activities occur or where the activities disturb the natural land surface. The areas also include any adjacent land, the use of which is incidental to the 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 the activities and for haulage; and excavations, workings, impoundments, dams, ventilation

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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 the activities: Provided, That the activities do not include the extraction of coal incidental to the extraction of other minerals where coal does not exceed sixteen and two-thirds percent of the tonnage of minerals removed for purposes of commercial use or sale, or coal prospecting subject to section seven of this article. Surface-mining does not include any of the following:

- (i) Coal extraction authorized pursuant to a government-financed reclamation contract;
- (ii) Coal extraction authorized as an incidental part of development of land for commercial, residential, industrial, or civic use; or¹
- (iii) The reclamation of an abandoned or forfeited mine by a no cost reclamation contract.

(v) "Underground mine" means the surface effects associated with the shaft, slopes, drifts or inclines connected with excavations penetrating coal seams or strata and the equipment connected therewith which contribute directly or indirectly to the mining, preparation or handling of coal.

(w) "Significant, imminent environmental harm to land, air or water resources" means the existence of any condition or practice, or any violation of a permit or other requirement of this article, which condition, practice or violation could reasonably be expected to cause significant and imminent environmental harm to land, air or water resources. The term "environmental harm" means any adverse impact on land, air or water resources, including, but not limited to, plant, wildlife and fish, and the environmental harm is imminent if a condition or practice exists which is causing the harm or may reasonably be expected to cause the harm at any time before the end of the abatement time set by the director. An environmental harm is significant if that harm is appreciable and not immediately repairable.

(x) "Unanticipated event or condition" as used in section eighteen of this article means an event or condition in a remining operation that was not contemplated by the applicable surface coal mining and reclamation permit.

(y) "Lands eligible for remining" means those lands that would be eligible for expenditures under section four, article two of this chapter. Surface-mining operations on lands eligible for remining do not affect the eligibility of the lands for reclamation and restoration under article two of this chapter. In event the bond or deposit for lands eligible for remining is forfeited, funds available under article two of this chapter may be used to provide for adequate reclamation or abatement. However, if conditions constitute an emergency as provided in section 410 of the federal Surface-Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended, then those federal provisions apply.

(z) "Replacement of water supply" means with respect to water supplies contaminated, diminished, or interrupted, provision of water supply on both a temporary and permanent basis of equivalent quality and quantity. Replacement includes provision of an equivalent water delivery system and payment of operation and maintenance cost in excess of customary and reasonable delivery cost for the replaced water supplies.

¹ *Sec. 22-3-3(u)(2)(2): Coal extraction incidental to development of land for commercial, residential, industrial, or civic use. was not approved by OSM Federal Register / Tuesday, February 9, 1999 /*

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Upon agreement by the permittee and the water supply owner, the obligation to pay the costs may be satisfied by a one-time payment in an amount which covers the present annual operation and maintenance costs for a period agreed to by the permittee and the water supply owner.

§22-3-4. Reclamation; duties and functions of ~~director~~ secretary.

(a) The ~~director~~ secretary shall administer the provisions of this article relating to surface-mining operations. The ~~director~~ secretary has within his or her jurisdiction and supervision all lands and areas of the state, mined or susceptible of being mined, for the removal of coal and all other lands and areas of the state deforested, burned over, barren or otherwise denuded, unproductive and subject to soil erosion and waste. Included within ~~such the~~ lands and areas are lands seared and denuded by chemical operations and processes, abandoned coal mining areas, swamplands, lands and areas subject to flowage easements and backwaters from river locks and dams, and river, stream, lake and pond shore areas subject to soil erosion and waste. The jurisdiction and supervision exercised by the ~~director~~ secretary shall be consistent with other provisions of this chapter.

(b) The ~~director~~ secretary may:

(1) ~~Promulgate rules~~ Propose rules for promulgation, in accordance with the provisions of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code, to implement the provisions of this article: Provided, That the ~~director~~ secretary shall give notice by publication of the public hearing required in article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code: Provided, however, That any forms, handbooks or similar materials having the effect of a rule as defined in article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code were issued, developed or distributed by the director pursuant to or as a result of a rule are subject to the provisions of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code;

(2) Make investigations or inspections necessary to ensure complete compliance with the provisions of this code;

(3) Conduct hearings or appoint persons to conduct hearings under provisions of this article or rules adopted by the ~~director~~ secretary; and for the purpose of any investigation or hearing ~~hereunder under this article~~, the ~~director~~ secretary or his or her designated representative, may administer oaths or affirmations, subpoena witnesses, compel their attendance, take evidence and require production of any books, papers, correspondence, memoranda, agreements, or other documents or records relevant or material to the inquiry;

(4) Enforce the provisions of this article as provided ~~herein in this article~~;

(5) Appoint such advisory committees as may be of assistance to the ~~director~~ secretary in the development of programs and policies: Provided, that such advisory committees shall, in each instance, include members representative of the general public; and

(6) In relation to blasting on all surface-mining operations and all surface-blasting activities related to underground mining operations;

(A) Regulate blasting on all surface-mining operations;

(B) Implement and oversee the preblast survey process, as set forth in section thirteen-a, article three of this chapter;

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(C) Maintain and operate a system to receive and address questions, concerns and complaints relating to mining operations;

(D) Set the qualifications for individuals and firms performing preblast surveys;

(E) Educate, train examine and certify blasters; and

(F) Propose rules for legislative approval pursuant to the provisions of section fifteen, article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code for the implementation of sections thirty-four through thirty-nine of this article.

(c) (1) After the ~~director~~ secretary has adopted the rules required by this article, any person may petition the ~~director~~ secretary to initiate a proceeding for the issuance, amendment or appeal of a rule under this article.

(2) The petition shall be filed with the ~~director~~ secretary and shall set forth the facts which support the issuance, amendment or appeal of a rule under this article.

(3) The ~~director~~ secretary may hold a public hearing or may conduct such investigation or proceeding as he or she considers appropriate in order to determine whether the petition should be granted or denied.

(4) Within ninety days after filing of a petition described in subdivision (1) of this subsection, the ~~director~~ secretary shall either grant or deny the petition. If the ~~director~~ secretary grants the petition, he or she shall promptly commence an appropriate proceeding in accordance with the provisions of chapter twenty-nine-a of this code. If the ~~director~~ secretary denies the petition, he or she shall notify the petitioner in writing setting forth the reasons for the denial.

§22-3-5. Surface-mining reclamation supervisors and inspectors; appointment and qualifications; salary.

The director shall determine the number of surface-mining reclamation supervisors and inspectors needed to carry out the purposes of this article and appoint them as such. All such appointees shall be qualified civil service employees, but no person is eligible for such appointment until he or she has served in a probationary status for a period of six months to the satisfaction of the director.

Every surface-mining reclamation supervisor shall be paid not less than thirty thousand dollars per year. Every surface-mining reclamation inspector shall be paid not less than twenty-five thousand dollars per year.

§22-3-6. Duties of surface-mining reclamation inspectors and inspectors in training.

Except as otherwise provided in this article, surface-mining reclamation inspectors and inspectors in training shall make all necessary surveys and inspections of surface-mining operations required by the provisions of this article, shall administer and enforce all surface-mining laws and rules and shall perform such other duties and services as may be prescribed by the director. Such inspectors shall give particular attention to all conditions of each permit to ensure complete compliance therewith. Such inspectors shall note and describe all violations of this article and immediately report such violations to the director in writing, furnishing at the same time a copy of such report to the operator concerned.

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§22-3-7. Notice of intention to prospect, requirements therefor; bonding; director's authority to deny or limit; postponement of reclamation; prohibited acts; exceptions.²

(a) Any person intending to prospect for coal in an area not covered by a surface-mining permit, in order to determine the location, quantity or quality of a natural coal deposit, making feasibility studies or for any other purpose, shall file with the secretary, at least fifteen days prior to commencement of any disturbance associated with prospecting, a notice of intention to prospect, which notice shall include a description of the prospecting area, the period of supposed prospecting and any other information as required by rules promulgated pursuant to this section: Provided, That prior to the commencement of prospecting, the secretary may issue an order denying or limiting permission to prospect where the secretary finds that prospecting operations will damage or destroy a unique natural area, or will cause serious harm to water quality, or that the operator has failed to satisfactorily reclaim other prospecting sites, or that there has been an abuse of prospecting by previous prospecting operations in the area.

(b) Notice of intention to prospect shall be made in writing on forms prescribed by the secretary and shall be signed and verified by the applicant. The notice shall be accompanied by

(1) a United States geological survey topographic map showing by proper marking the crop line and the name, where known, of the seam or seams to be prospected,

(2) a filing fee of \$2000.00 and

(3) a bond, or cash, or collateral securities or certificates of the same type and form and in the same manner as provided in section eleven of this article, in the amount of five hundred dollars per acre or fraction thereof for the total estimated disturbed area. If a bond is used, it shall be payable to the state of West Virginia and conditioned that the operator faithfully perform the requirements of this article as they relate to backfilling and revegetation of the disturbed area.

(c) Any person prospecting under the provisions of this section shall ensure that the prospecting operation is conducted in accordance with the performance standards in section thirteen of this article for all lands disturbed in explorations, including excavations, roads, drill holes, and the removal of necessary facilities and equipment.

(d) Information submitted to the secretary pursuant to this section as confidential, concerning trade secrets or privileged commercial or financial information, which relates to the competitive rights of the person or entity intended to prospect the described area, is not available for public examination.

(e) Any person who conducts any prospecting activities which substantially disturb the natural land surface in violation of this section or rules issued pursuant thereto is subject to the provisions of sections sixteen and seventeen of this article.

(f) An operator may not remove more than two hundred fifty tons of coal without the specific written approval of the secretary. Such approval shall be requested by the operator on forms prescribed by the secretary. The secretary shall promulgate rules governing such operations and setting forth information required in the application for approval. Each such application shall be accompanied by a two thousand dollar filing fee.

² In 2011 HB 2955 – filing fee of \$2000.00 for all Notice of intention to prospect – Approved, see Federal Register on Wednesday, June 29, 2011

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(g) The bond accompanying said notice of intention to prospect shall be released by the secretary when the operator demonstrates that a permanent species of vegetative cover is established.

(h) If an operator desires to mine the area currently being prospected, and has requested and received an appropriate surface mine application (S.M.A.) number, the secretary may permit the postponement of the reclamation of the area prospected. Any part of a prospecting operation, where reclamation has not been postponed as provided above, shall be reclaimed within a period of three months from disturbance.

(i) For the purpose of this section, the word "prospect" or "prospecting" does not include core drilling related solely to taxation or highway construction.

§22-3-8. Prohibition of surface mining without a permit; permit requirements; successor in interest; duration of permits; proof of insurance; termination of permits; permit fees.³

(a) No person may engage in surface-mining operations unless he or she has first obtained a permit from the secretary in accordance with the following:

(1) All permits issued pursuant to the requirements of this article shall be issued for a term not to exceed five years: Provided, That if the applicant demonstrates that a specified longer term is reasonably needed to allow the applicant to obtain necessary financing for equipment and the opening of the operation, and if the application is full and complete for such specified longer term, the secretary may extend a permit for such longer term: Provided, however, That subject to the prior approval of the secretary, with such approval being subject to the provisions of subsection (c), section eighteen of this article, a successor in interest to a permittee who applies for a new permit, or transfer of a permit, within thirty days of succeeding to such interest, and who is able to obtain the bond coverage of the original permittee, may continue surface-mining and reclamation operations according to the approved mining and reclamation plan of the original permittee until such successor's permit application or application for transfer is granted or denied.

(2) Proof of insurance is required on an annual basis.

(3) A permit terminates if the permittee has not commenced the surface-mining operations covered by such permit within three years of the date the permit was issued: Provided, That the secretary may grant reasonable extensions of time upon a timely showing that such extensions are necessary by reason of litigation precluding such commencement, or threatening substantial economic loss to the permittee, or by reason of conditions beyond the control and without the fault or negligence of the permittee: Provided, however, That with respect to coal to be mined for use in a synthetic fuel facility or specific major electric generating facility, the permittee shall be deemed to have commenced surface-mining operations at such time as the construction of the synthetic fuel or generating facility is initiated.

(4) Each application for a new surface-mining permit filed pursuant to this article shall be accompanied by a fee of \$3,500.00. All permit fees and renewal fees provided for in this section or elsewhere in this article shall be collected by the secretary and deposited with the treasurer of the state of West Virginia to the credit of the operating permit fees fund and shall be used, upon requisition of the secretary, for the administration of this article.

(5) Prior to the issuance of any permit, the secretary shall ascertain from the commissioner of the division of labor whether the applicant is in compliance with section fourteen, article five, chapter

³ In 2011 HB 2955 – SMA filing fee of \$3500 – Approved, see Federal Register on Wednesday, June 29, 2011

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twenty-one of this code. Upon issuance of the permit, the secretary shall forward a copy to the commissioner of the division of labor, who shall assure continued compliance under such permit.

(6) (A) Prior to the issuance of any permit the secretary shall ascertain from the Executive Director of Workforce West Virginia and the Insurance Commissioner whether the applicant is in compliance with the provisions of section five, article two, chapter twenty-three of this code with regard to any required subscription to the workers' compensation fund, the payment of premiums to the fund, the timely filing of payroll reports and the maintenance of an adequate premium deposit. If the applicant is delinquent or defaulted, or has been terminated by the Executive Director or the Insurance Commissioner the permit may not be issued until the applicant returns to compliance or is restored by Executive Director or the Insurance Commission under a reinstatement agreement: Provided, That in all such inquiries the Executive Director of Workforce West Virginia and the Insurance Commissioner shall make response to the Department of environmental protection within fifteen calendar days, otherwise failure to respond timely shall be considered to indicate the applicant is in compliance and such failure will not be used to preclude issuance of the permit.

(B) It is a requirement of this article that each operator maintain continued compliance with the provisions of section five, article two, chapter twenty-three of this code and provide proof of compliance to the secretary on an annual basis.

§22-3-9. Permit application requirements and contents.

(a) The surface-mining permit application shall contain:

(1) The names and addresses of: (A) The permit applicant; (B) the owner of record of the property, surface and mineral, to be mined; (C) the holders of record of any leasehold interest in the property; (D) any purchaser of record of the property under a real estate contract; (E) the operator, if different from the applicant; and (F) if any of these are business entities other than a single proprietor, the names and addresses of the principals, officers and resident agent;

(2) The names and addresses of the owners of record of all surface and subsurface areas contiguous to any part of the proposed permit area: Provided, That all residents living on property contiguous to the proposed permit area shall be notified by the applicant, by registered or certified mail, of such application on or before the first day of publication of the notice provided for in subdivision (6) of this subsection;

(3) A statement of any current surface-mining permits held by the applicant in the state and the permit number and each pending application;

(4) If the applicant is a partnership, corporation, association or other business entity, the following where applicable: The names and addresses of every officer, partner, resident agent, director or person performing a function similar to a director, together with the names and addresses of any person owning of record ten percent or more of any class of voting stock of the applicant; and a list of all names under which the applicant, officer, director, partner or principal shareholder previously operated a surface-mining operation in the United States within the five-year period preceding the date of submission of the application;

(5) A statement of whether the applicant, or any officer, partner, director, principal shareholder of the applicant, any subsidiary, affiliate or persons controlled by or under common control with the applicant, has ever been an officer, partner, director or principal shareholder in a company which has ever held a federal or state mining permit which in the five-year period prior to the date of submission of the

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application has been permanently suspended or revoked or has had a mining bond or similar security deposited in lieu of bond forfeited and, if so, a brief explanation of the facts involved;

(6) A copy of the applicant's advertisement to be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the locality of the proposed permit area at least once a week for four successive weeks on a form and in a manner prescribed by the secretary, which manner may be electronic. The advertisement shall contain in abbreviated form the information required by this section including the ownership and map of the tract location and boundaries of the proposed site so that the proposed operation is readily locatable by local residents, the location of the office of the ~~division~~ department where the application is available for public inspection and stating that written protests will be accepted by the ~~director~~ secretary until a certain date which is at least thirty days after the last publication of the applicant's advertisement;

(7) A description of the type and method of surface-mining operation that exists or is proposed, the engineering techniques used or proposed, and the equipment used or proposed to be used;

(8) The anticipated starting and termination dates of each phase of the surface-mining operation and the number of acres of land to be affected;

(9) A description of the legal documents upon which the applicant's legal right to enter and conduct surface-mining operations on the proposed permit area is based and whether that right is the subject of pending court litigation: Provided, That nothing in this article may be construed as vesting in the ~~director~~ secretary the jurisdiction to adjudicate property-rights disputes;

(10) The name of the watershed and location of the surface stream or tributary into which surface and pit drainage will be discharged;

(11) A determination of the probable hydrologic consequences of the mining and reclamation operations, both on and off the mine site, with respect to the hydrologic regime, quantity and quality of water in surface and groundwater systems, including the dissolved and suspended solids under seasonal flow conditions and the collection of sufficient data for the mine site and surrounding areas so that an assessment can be made by the ~~director~~ secretary of the probable cumulative impacts of all anticipated mining in the area upon the hydrology of the area, and particularly upon water availability: Provided, That this determination is not required until ~~such~~ the time as hydrologic information on the general area prior to mining is made available from an appropriate federal or state agency or, if existing and in the possession of the applicant, from the applicant: Provided, however, That the permit application shall not be approved until the information is available and is incorporated into the application;

(12) Accurate maps to an appropriate scale clearly showing: (A) The land to be affected as of the date of application; (B) the area of land within the permit area upon which the applicant has the legal right to enter and conduct surface-mining operations; and (C) all types of information set forth on enlarged topographical maps of the United States geological survey of a scale of 1:24,000 or larger, including all man-made features and significant known archaeological sites existing on the date of application. In addition to other things specified by the ~~director~~ secretary, the map shall show the boundary lines and names of present owners of record of all surface areas abutting the proposed permit area and the location of all structures within one thousand feet of the proposed permit area;

(13) Cross-section maps or plans of the proposed affected area, including the actual area to be mined, prepared by or under the direction of and certified by a person approved by the ~~director~~ secretary, showing pertinent elevation and location of test borings or core samplings, where required by the ~~director~~ secretary, and depicting the following information: (A) The nature and depth of the various strata or overburden; (B) the location of subsurface water, if encountered, and its quality; (C) the nature and

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thickness of any coal or rider seams above the seam to be mined; (D) the nature of the stratum immediately beneath the coal seam to be mined; (E) all mineral crop lines and the strike and dip of the coal to be mined, within the area of land to be affected; (F) existing or previous surface-mining limits; (G) the location and extent of known workings of any underground mines, including mine openings to the surface; (H) the location of any significant aquifers; (I) the estimated elevation of the water table; (J) the location of spoil, waste or refuse areas and topsoil preservation areas; (K) the location of all impoundments for waste or erosion control; (L) any settling or water treatment facility or drainage system; (M) constructed or natural drainways and the location of any discharges to any surface body of water on the area of land to be affected or adjacent thereto; and (N) adequate profiles at appropriate cross sections of the anticipated final surface configuration that will be achieved pursuant to the operator's proposed reclamation plan;

(14) A statement of the result of test borings or core samples from the permit area, including: (A) Logs of the drill holes; (B) the thickness of the coal seam to be mined and analysis of the chemical and physical properties of the coal; (C) the sulfur content of any coal seam; (D) chemical analysis of potentially acid or toxic forming sections of the overburden; and (E) chemical analysis of the stratum lying immediately underneath the coal to be mined: Provided, That the provisions of this subdivision may be waived by the ~~director~~ secretary with respect to the specific application by a written determination that such requirements are unnecessary;

(15) For those lands in the permit application which a reconnaissance inspection suggests may be prime farmlands, a soil survey shall be made or obtained according to standards established by the ~~secretary~~ Commissioner of Agriculture in order to confirm the exact location of ~~such~~ the prime farmlands;

(16) A reclamation plan as presented in section ten of this article;

(17) Information pertaining to coal seams, test borings, core samplings or soil samples as required by this section shall be made available to any person with an interest which is or may be adversely affected: Provided, That information which pertains only to the analysis of the chemical and physical properties of the coal, except information regarding mineral or elemental content which is potentially toxic to the environment, shall be kept confidential and not made a matter of public record;

(18) When requested by the ~~director~~ secretary, the climatological factors that are peculiar to the locality of the land to be affected, including the average seasonal precipitation, the average direction and velocity of prevailing winds, and the seasonal temperature ranges; and

(19) Other information that may be required by rules reasonably necessary to effectuate the purposes of this article.

(b) If the ~~director~~ secretary finds that the probable total annual production at all locations of any coal surface-mining operator will not exceed three hundred thousand tons, the determination of probable hydrologic consequences including the engineering analyses and designs necessary as required by this article or rules promulgated thereunder; the development of cross-section maps and plans as required by this article or rules promulgated thereunder; the geologic drilling and statement of results of test borings and core samplings as required by this article or rules promulgated thereunder; preblast surveys required by this article or rules promulgated thereunder; the collection of site-specific resource information and production of protection and enhancement plans for fish and wildlife habitats and other environmental values required by this article or rules promulgated thereunder; and the collection of archaeological and historical information required by this article and rules promulgated thereunder and any other archaeological and historical information required by the federal department of the interior and the preparation of plans that may be necessitated thereby shall, upon the written request of the operator, be performed by a qualified public or private laboratory designated by the ~~director~~ secretary and a reasonable

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cost of the preparation of ~~such the~~ determination and statement shall be assumed by the ~~division~~ department from funds provided by the United States department of the interior pursuant to the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended.

(c) Before the first publication of the applicant's advertisement as provided in this section, each applicant for a surface-mining permit shall file, except for that information pertaining to the coal seam itself, a copy of the application for public inspection in the nearest office of the ~~division~~ department as specified in the applicant's advertisement.

(d) Each applicant for a permit shall be required to submit to the ~~director~~ secretary as a part of the permit application a certificate issued by an insurance company authorized to do business in this state covering the surface-mining operation for which the permit is sought, or evidence that the applicant has satisfied state self-insurance requirements. The policy shall provide for personal injury and property damage protection in an amount adequate to compensate any persons damaged as a result of surface coal mining and reclamation operations, including use of explosives, and entitled to compensation under the applicable provisions of state law. The policy shall be maintained in full force and effect during the terms of the permit or any renewal, including the length of all reclamation operations.

(e) Each applicant for a surface-mining permit shall submit to the ~~director~~ secretary as part of the permit application a blasting plan where explosives are to be used, which shall outline the procedures and standards by which the operator will meet the provisions of the blasting performance standards.

(f) The applicant shall file as part of the permit application a schedule listing all notices of violation, bond forfeitures, permit revocations, cessation orders or permanent suspension orders resulting from a violation of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended, this article or any law or regulation of the United States or any department or agency of any state pertaining to air or environmental protection received by the applicant in connection with any surface-mining operation during the three-year period prior to the date of application, and indicating the final resolution of any notice of violation, forfeiture, revocation, cessation or permanent suspension.

(g) Within five working days of receipt of an application for a permit, the ~~director~~ secretary shall notify the operator in writing, stating whether the application is administratively complete and whether the operator's advertisement may be published. If the application is not administratively complete, the ~~director~~ secretary shall state in writing why the application is not administratively complete.

§22-3-10. Reclamation plan requirements.

(a) Each reclamation plan submitted as part of a surface-mining permit application shall include, in the degree of detail necessary to demonstrate that reclamation required by this article can be accomplished, a statement of:

(1) The identification of the lands subject to surface mining over the estimated life of these operations and the size, sequence and timing of the operations for which it is anticipated that individual permits for mining will be sought;

(2) The condition of the land to be covered by the permit prior to any mining, including: (A) The uses existing at the time of the application and, if the land has a history of previous mining, the uses which preceded any mining; (B) the capability of the land prior to any mining to support a variety of uses, giving consideration to soil and foundation characteristics, topography and vegetation cover and, if applicable, a soil survey prepared pursuant to subdivision (15), subsection (a), section nine of this article; and (C) the best information available on the productivity of the land prior to mining, including appropriate

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classification as prime farmlands, and the average yield of food, fiber, forage or wood products from the lands obtained under high levels of management;

(3) The use which is proposed to be made of the land following reclamation, including a discussion of the utility and capacity of the reclaimed land to support a variety of alternative uses, including, but not limited to, renewable and alternative energy uses, residential uses, highway uses, industrial uses, commercial uses, agricultural uses, public facility uses or recreational facility uses and the relationship of the use to existing land use policies and plans, and the comments of any owner of the surface, other state agencies and local governments, which would have to initiate, implement, approve or authorize the proposed use of the land following reclamation;

(A) The post-mining land use proposed in any reclamation plan for lands proposed to be mined by surface mining methods shall comport with the land use that is specified in the approved master land use plan for the area as provided in section nine, article two-a, chapter five-b of this code: *Provided*, That the secretary may approve an alternative post-mining land use where the applicant demonstrates that:

(i) The proposed post-mining land use is a higher and better use than the land use specified in the approved master land use plan;

(ii) Site-specific conditions make attainment of a post-mining land use which comports with the land use that is specified in the approved master land use plan for the area impractical; or

(iii) The post-mining land use specified in the approved master land use plan would substantially interfere with the future extraction of mineable coal, as that term is defined in 110 CSR 1 or a successor rule, from the land to be mined.

(B) Existing permits with approved reclamation plans may be modified by the operator through an appropriate permit revision to include a post-mining land use which comports with the land use that is specified in the approved master land use plan for the area as provided in section nine, article two-a, chapter five-b of this code;

(C) By complying with a master land use plan that has been approved in accordance with article two-a, chapter five-b of this code, a post-mining land use satisfies the requirements for an alternative post-mining land use and satisfies the variance requirements set forth in subsection (c), section thirteen, article three, chapter twenty-two of this code if applicable to the proposed use;

(4) A detailed description of how the proposed postmining land use is to be achieved and the necessary support activities which may be needed to achieve the proposed land use;

(5) The engineering techniques proposed to be used in mining and reclamation and a description of the major equipment; a plan for the control of surface water drainage and of water accumulation; a plan where appropriate, for backfilling, soil stabilization and compacting, grading, revegetation and a plan for soil reconstruction, replacement and stabilization pursuant to the performance standards in subdivision (7), subsection (b), section thirteen of this article for those food, forage and forest lands identified therein; and a statement as to how the operator plans to comply with each of the applicable requirements set out in section thirteen or fourteen of this article;

(6) A detailed estimated timetable for the accomplishment of each major step in the reclamation plan;

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(7) The consideration which has been given to conducting surface-mining operations in a manner consistent with surface owner plans and applicable state and local land use plans and programs;

(8) The steps to be taken to comply with applicable air and water quality laws and rules and any applicable health and safety standards;

(9) The consideration which has been given to developing the reclamation plan in a manner consistent with local physical environmental and climatological conditions;

(10) All lands, interests in lands or options on the interests held by the applicant or pending bids on interests in lands by the applicant, which lands are contiguous to the area to be covered by the permit;

(11) A detailed description of the measures to be taken during the surface-mining and reclamation process to assure the protection of: (A) The quality of surface and groundwater systems, both on and off-site, from adverse effects of the surface-mining operation; (B) the rights of present users to the water; and (C) the quantity of surface and groundwater systems, both on and off-site, from adverse effects of the surface-mining operation or to provide alternative sources of water where the protection of quantity cannot be assured;

(12) The results of tests borings which the applicant has made at the area to be covered by the permit, or other equivalent information and data in a form satisfactory to the director, including the location of subsurface water, and an analysis of the chemical properties, including acid forming properties of the mineral and overburden: Provided, That information which pertains only to the analysis of the chemical and physical properties of the coal, except information regarding the mineral or elemental contents which are potentially toxic in the environment, shall be kept confidential and not made a matter of public record;

(13) The consideration which has been given to maximize the utilization and conservation of the solid fuel resource being recovered so that re-affecting the land in the future can be minimized; and

(14) Any other requirements as the director may prescribe by rule.

(b) A reclamation plan ~~approved but not implemented or~~ pending approval as of the effective date of this section may be amended by the operator to provide for a revised reclamation plan consistent post-mining land use that comports with the provisions of this subsection a master land use plan that has been approved in accordance with article two-a, chapter five-b of this code.

(c) The reclamation plan shall be available to the public for review except for those portions thereof specifically exempted in subsection (a) of this section.

(d) The amendments to this section by the first extraordinary session of the Legislature in 2009 are effective upon the approval of the corresponding amendments to West Virginia's state program, as that term is defined in the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, 30 U. S. C. §1291, by the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.

§22-3-11. Bonds; amount and method of bonding; bonding requirements; special reclamation tax and fund; prohibited acts; period of bond liability.

(a) After a surface-mining permit application has been approved pursuant to this article, but before a permit has been issued, each operator shall furnish a penal bond, on a form to be prescribed and furnished by the secretary, payable to the state of West Virginia and conditioned upon the operator faithfully performing all of the requirements of this article and of the permit. The penal amount of the bond shall be

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not less than one thousand dollars nor more than five thousand dollars for each acre or fraction of an acre: Provided, that the minimum amount of bond furnished for any type of reclamation bonding shall be ten thousand dollars. The bond shall cover (1) the entire permit area, or (2) that increment of land within the permit area upon which the operator will initiate and conduct surface-mining and reclamation operations within the initial term of the permit. If the operator chooses to use incremental bonding, as succeeding increments of surface mining and reclamation operations are to be initiated and conducted within the permit area, the operator shall file with the secretary an additional bond or bonds to cover the increments in accordance with this section: Provided, however, That once the operator has chosen to proceed with bonding either the entire permit area or with incremental bonding, the operator shall continue bonding in that manner for the term of the permit.

(b) The period of liability for bond coverage begins with issuance of a permit and continues for the full term of the permit plus any additional period necessary to achieve compliance with the requirements in the reclamation plan of the permit.

(c) (1) The form of the bond shall be approved by the secretary and may include, at the option of the operator, surety bonding, collateral bonding (including cash and securities), establishment of an escrow account, self-bonding or a combination of these methods. If collateral bonding is used, the operator may elect to deposit cash, or collateral securities or certificates as follows: Bonds of the United States or its possessions, of the federal land bank, or of the homeowners' loan corporation; full faith and credit general obligation bonds of the state of West Virginia, or other states, and of any county, district or municipality of the state of West Virginia or other states; or certificates of deposit in a bank in this state, which certificates shall be in favor of the department. The cash deposit or market value of the securities or certificates shall be equal to or greater than the penal sum of the bond. The secretary shall, upon receipt of any deposit of cash, securities or certificates, promptly place the same with the treasurer of the state of West Virginia whose duty it is to receive and hold the deposit in the name of the state in trust for the purpose for which the deposit is made when the permit is issued. The operator making the deposit is entitled from time to time to receive from the state treasurer, upon the written approval of the secretary, the whole or any portion of any cash, securities or certificates so deposited, upon depositing with him or her in lieu thereof, cash or other securities or certificates of the classes specified having value equal to or greater than the sum of the bond.

(2) The secretary may approve an alternative bonding system if it will (A) reasonably assure that sufficient funds will be available to complete the reclamation, restoration and abatement provisions for all permit areas which may be in default at any time, and (B) provide a substantial economic incentive for the permittee to comply with all reclamation provisions.

(d) The secretary may accept the bond of the applicant itself without separate surety when the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the secretary the existence of a suitable agent to receive service of process and a history of financial solvency and continuous operation sufficient for authorization to self-insure.

(e) It is unlawful for the owner of surface or mineral rights to interfere with the present operator in the discharge of the operator's obligations to the state for the reclamation of lands disturbed by the operator.

(f) All bond releases shall be accomplished in accordance with the provisions of section twenty-three of this article.

(g) (1) The special reclamation fund previously created is continued. The Special Reclamation Water Trust Fund is created within the State Treasury into and from which moneys shall be paid for the purpose of assuring a reliable source of capital and operating expenses for the treatment of water discharges from

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forfeited sites where the secretary has obtained or applied for an NPDES permit as of the effective date of this article. The moneys accrued in both funds, any interest earned thereon and yield from investments by the State Treasurer or West Virginia Investment Management Board, are reserved solely and exclusively for the purposes set forth in this section and section seventeen, article one of this chapter.

(2) The funds shall be administered by the secretary who is authorized to expend the moneys in both funds for the reclamation and rehabilitation of lands which were subjected to permitted surface-mining operations and abandoned after August 3, 1977, ~~the third day of August, one thousand nine hundred seventy seven~~ where the amount of the bond posted and forfeited on the land is less than the actual cost of reclamation, and where the land is not eligible for abandoned mine land reclamation funds under article two of this chapter. ~~The secretary shall develop a long range planning process for selection and prioritization of sites to be reclaimed so as to avoid inordinate short term obligations of the assets in both funds of such magnitude that the solvency of either is jeopardized. The secretary may use both funds for the purpose of designing, constructing and maintaining water treatment systems when they are required for a complete reclamation of the affected lands described in this subsection.~~ The secretary may also expend an amount not to exceed ten percent of the total annual assets in both funds to implement and administer the provisions of this article and, as they apply to the surface mine board, articles one and four, chapter twenty-two-b of this code.

(3) (A) A tax credit shall be granted against the tax imposed by subsection (i) of this section to any mine operator who performs reclamation or remediation at a bond forfeiture site which otherwise would have been reclaimed using funds from the Special Reclamation Fund or Special Reclamation Water Trust Fund. The amount of credit shall be determined as provided in this section.

(B) The amount of a reclamation tax credit granted under this subsection shall be equal to the amount that the Tax Commissioner determines, based on the project costs, as shown in the records of the secretary, that would have been spent from the Special Reclamation Fund or Special Reclamation Water Trust Fund to accomplish the reclamation or remediation performed by the mine operator, including expenditures for water treatment.

(C) To Claim the credit, the mine operator shall from time to time file with the Tax Commissioner a written application seeking the amount of the credit earned. Within thirty days of receipt of the application, the Tax Commissioner shall issue a certification of the amount of tax credit, if any, to be allocated to the eligible taxpayer. Should the amount of the credit certified by less than the amount applied for, the Tax Commissioner shall set forth in writing the reason for the difference. Should no certification be issued within the thirty-day period, the application will be deemed certified. Any decision by the Tax Commissioner is appealable pursuant to the provisions of the "West Virginia Tax Procedure and Administration Act." Set forth in article ten, chapter eleven of the code. Applications for certification of the proposed tax credit shall contain the information and be in the detail and form as required by the Tax Commissioner.

(h) The Tax Commissioner may promulgate rules for legislative approval pursuant to the provisions of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code to carry out the purposes of this subdivision two, subsection (g) of this section.

(i) (1) Rate, deposits and review.

(A) For tax periods commencing on and after the first day of July, 2009 every person conducting coal surface mining shall remit a special reclamation tax of fourteen and four-tenths cents per ton of clean coal mined the proceeds of which shall be allocated by the secretary for deposit in the Special Reclamation Fund and the Special Reclamation Water Trust Fund.

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(B) For tax periods commencing on and after July 1, 2012, the rate of tax specified in paragraph (A) of this subdivision is discontinued and is replaced by the rate of tax specified in this paragraph (B). For tax periods commencing on and after July 1, 2012, every person conducting coal surface mining shall remit a special reclamation tax of twenty-seven and nine-tenths cents per ton of clean coal mined, the proceeds of which shall be allocated by the secretary for deposit in the Special Reclamation Fund and the Special Reclamation Water Trust Fund. Of that amount, fifteen cents per ton of clean coal mined shall be deposited in the Special Reclamation Water Trust Fund.

(C) The tax shall be levied upon each ton of clean coal severed or clean coal obtained from refuse pile and slurry pond recovery or clean coal from other mining methods extracting a combination of coal and waste material as part of a fuel supply.

(D) Beginning with the tax period commencing on July 1, 2009 and every two years thereafter, the special reclamation tax shall be reviewed by the Legislature to determine whether the tax should be continued: Provided, That the tax may not be reduced until the Special Reclamation Fund and Special Reclamation Water Trust Fund have sufficient moneys to meet the reclamation responsibilities of the state established in this section.

(2) In managing the Special Reclamation Program, the secretary shall:

(A) Pursue cost effective alternative water treatment strategies; and

(B) Conduct formal actuarial studies every two years and conduct informal reviews annually on the Special Reclamation Fund.

(3) Prior to December 31, 2008, the secretary shall:

(A) Determine the feasibility of creating an alternate program, on a voluntary basis, for financially sound operators by which those operators pay an increased tax into the Special Reclamation Fund in exchange for a maximum per acre bond that is less than the maximum established in subsection (a) of this section;

(B) Determine the feasibility of creating an incremental bonding program by which operators can post a reclamation bond for those areas actually disturbed within a permit area, but for less than all of the proposed disturbance and obtain incremental release of portions of that bond as reclamation advances so that the released bond can be applied to approved future disturbance; and

(C) Determine the feasibility for sites requiring water reclamation by creating a separate water reclamation security account or bond for the costs so that the existing reclamation bond in place may be released to the extent it exceeds the costs of water reclamation.

(3) If the secretary determines that the alternative program, the incremental bonding program or the water reclamation account or bonding programs reasonably assure that sufficient funds will be available to complete the reclamation of a forfeited site and that the Special Reclamation Fund will remain fiscally stable, the secretary is authorized to propose legislative rules in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code to implement an alternate program, a water reclamation account or bonding program or other funding mechanisms or a combination thereof.

(j) This special reclamation tax shall be collected by the state tax commissioner in the same manner, at the same time, and upon the same tonnage as the minimum severance tax imposed by article twelve-b,

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chapter eleven of this code is collected: Provided, That under no circumstance shall the special reclamation tax be construed to be an increase in either the minimum severance tax imposed by said article twelve-b or the severance tax imposed by article thirteen of said chapter eleven.

(k) Every person liable for payment of the special reclamation tax shall pay the amount due without notice or demand for payment.

(l) The tax commissioner shall provide to the secretary a quarterly listing of all persons known to be delinquent in payment of the special reclamation tax. The secretary may take such delinquencies into account in making determinations on the issuance, renewal or revision of any permit.

(m) The tax commissioner shall deposit the moneys collected with the treasurer of the state of West Virginia to the credit of the Special Reclamation Fund and Special Reclamation Water Trust Fund.

(n) At the beginning of each quarter, the secretary shall advise the state tax commissioner and the governor of the assets, excluding payments, expenditures and liabilities, in both funds.

(o) To the extent that this section modified any powers, duties, functions and responsibilities of the department that may require approval of one or more federal agencies or officials in order to avoid disruption of the federal-state relationship involved in the implementation of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, 30 U. S. C. §1270 by the state, the modifications will become effective upon the approval of the modifications by the appropriate federal agency or official.

§22-3-11a. Special reclamation tax; clarification of imposition of tax; procedures for collection and administration of tax; application of Tax Procedure and Administration Act and Tax Crimes and Penalties Act.

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature to clarify that from the date of its enactment, the special reclamation tax imposed pursuant to the provisions of section eleven of this article is intended to be in addition to any other taxes imposed on persons conducting coal surface mining operations including, but not limited to the tax imposed by section thirty-two of this article, the tax imposed by article twelve-b, chapter eleven of this code, the taxes imposed by article thirteen-a of said chapter and the tax imposed by article thirteen-v of said chapter.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provisions of section eleven of this article to the contrary, under no circumstance shall an exemption from the taxes imposed by article twelve-b, thirteen-a or thirteen-v, chapter eleven of this code be construed to be an exemption from the tax imposed by section eleven of this article.

(c) When coal included in the measure of the tax imposed by section eleven of this article is exempt from the tax imposed by article twelve-b, chapter eleven of this code, the tax imposed by section eleven of this article shall be paid to the tax commissioner in accordance with the provisions of sections four through fourteen, inclusive, article twelve-b, chapter eleven of this code, which provisions are hereby incorporated by reference in this article.

(d) *General procedure and administration.* -- Each and every provision of the "West Virginia Tax Procedure and Administration Act" set forth in article ten, chapter eleven of the code applies to the special tax imposed by section eleven of this article with like effect as if such act were applicable only to the special tax imposed by said section eleven and were set forth in extenso in this article, notwithstanding the provisions of section three of said article ten.

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(e) *Tax crimes and penalties.* -- Each and every provision of the "West Virginia Tax Crimes and Penalties Act" set forth in article nine of said chapter eleven applies to the special tax imposed by section eleven of this article with like effect as if such act were applicable only to the special tax imposed by said section eleven and set forth in extenso in this article, notwithstanding the provisions of section two of said article nine.

§22-3-12. Site-specific bonding; legislative rule; contents of legislative rule; legislative intent; expiration of rule; reporting.

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of section eleven of this article, the director may establish and implement a site-specific bonding system in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(b) A legislative rule proposed or promulgated pursuant to this section must provide, at a minimum, for the following:

(1) The penal amount of a bond shall be not less than one thousand dollars nor more than five thousand dollars per acre or fraction thereof.

(2) Every bond, subject to the limitations of subdivision (1) of this subsection, shall reflect a relative potential cost of reclamation associated with the activities proposed to be permitted, which cost would not otherwise be reflected by bonds calculated by merely applying a specific dollar amount per acre for the permit.

(3) Every bond, subject to the provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection, shall also reflect an analysis under the legislative rule of various factors, as applicable, which affect the cost of reclamation, including, but not limited to: (A) The general category of mining, whether surface or underground; (B) mining techniques and methods proposed to be utilized; (C) support facilities, fixtures, improvements and equipment; (D) topography and geology; and (E) the potential for degrading or improving water quality.

(c) A legislative rule proposed or promulgated pursuant to the provisions of this section may, in addition to the requirements of subsection (b) of this section, provide for a consideration of other factors determined to be relevant by the secretary. For example, the rule may provide for the following:

(1) A consideration as to whether the bond relates to a new permit application, a renewal of an existing permit, an application for an incidental boundary revision, or the reactivation of an inactive permit;

(2) A consideration of factors which may result in environmental enhancement, as in a case where remining may improve water quality or reduce or eliminate existing highwalls, or a permitted operation may create or improve wetlands; or

(3) An analysis of various factors related to the specific permit applicant, including, but not limited to: (A) The prior mining experience of the applicant with the activities sought to be permitted; and (B) the history of the applicant as it relates to prior compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements designed to protect, maintain or enhance the environment in this or any other state.

(d) It is the intent of the Legislature that a legislative rule proposed or promulgated pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be constructed so that when the findings of fact by the division of environmental protection with respect to the proposed mining activity and the particular permit applicant coincide with the particular factors or criteria to be considered and analyzed under the rule, the rule will direct a conclusion as to the amount of the bond to be required, subject to rebuttal and refutation of the

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findings by the applicant. To the extent practicable, the rule shall limit subjectivity and discretion by the secretary and the division in fixing the amount of the bond.

§22-3-13. General environmental protection performance standards for surface-mining; variances.

(a) Any permit issued by the ~~director~~secretary pursuant to this article to conduct surface-mining operations shall require that the surface-mining operations meet all applicable performance standards of this article and other requirements set forth in legislative rules proposed by the ~~director~~secretary.

(b) The following general performance standards are applicable to all surface mines and require the operation, at a minimum to:

(1) Maximize the utilization and conservation of the solid fuel resource being recovered to minimize re-affecting the land in the future through surface-mining;

(2) Restore the land affected to a condition capable of supporting the uses which it was capable of supporting prior to any mining, or higher or better uses of which there is reasonable likelihood so long as the use or uses do not present any actual or probable hazard to public health or safety or pose any actual or probable threat of water diminution or pollution, and the permit applicants' declared proposed land use following reclamation is not deemed to be impractical or unreasonable, inconsistent with applicable land use policies and plans, involves unreasonable delay in implementation, or is violative of federal, state or local law;

(3) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, with respect to all surface mines, backfill, compact where advisable to ensure stability or to prevent leaching of toxic materials, and grade in order to restore the approximate original contour: Provided, That in surface-mining which is carried out at the same location over a substantial period of time where the operation transects the coal deposit, and the thickness of the coal deposits relative to the volume of the overburden is large and where the operator demonstrates that the overburden and other spoil and waste materials at a particular point in the permit area or otherwise available from the entire permit area is insufficient, giving due consideration to volumetric expansion, to restore the approximate original contour, the operator, at a minimum, shall backfill, grade and compact, where advisable, using all available overburden and other spoil and waste materials to attain the lowest practicable grade, but not more than the angle of repose, to provide adequate drainage and to cover all acid-forming and other toxic materials, in order to achieve an ecologically sound land use compatible with the surrounding region: Provided, however, That in surface-mining where the volume of overburden is large relative to the thickness of the coal deposit and where the operator demonstrates that due to volumetric expansion the amount of overburden and other spoil and waste materials removed in the course of the mining operation is more than sufficient to restore the approximate original contour, the operator shall, after restoring the approximate contour, backfill, grade and compact, where advisable, the excess overburden and other spoil and waste materials to attain the lowest grade, but not more than the angle of repose, and to cover all acid-forming and other toxic materials, in order to achieve an ecologically sound land use compatible with the surrounding region and, the overburden or spoil shall be shaped and graded in a way as to prevent slides, erosion and water pollution and is revegetated in accordance with the requirements of this article: Provided further, That the ~~director~~secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code, governing variances to the requirements for return to approximate original contour or highwall elimination and where adequate material is not available from surface-mining operations permitted after the effective date of this article for: (A) Underground mining operations existing prior to the third day of August, one thousand nine hundred seventy-seven; or (B) for areas upon which surface-mining prior to the first day of July, one thousand nine hundred seventy-seven, created highwalls;

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(4) Stabilize and protect all surface areas, including spoil piles, affected by the surface-mining operation to effectively control erosion and attendant air and water pollution;

(5) Remove the topsoil from the land in a separate layer, replace it on the backfill area, or if not utilized immediately, segregate it in a separate pile from other spoil and, when the topsoil is not replaced on a backfill area within a time short enough to avoid deterioration of the topsoil, maintain a successful vegetative cover by quick growing plants or by other similar means in order to protect topsoil from wind and water erosion and keep it free of any contamination by other acid or toxic material: Provided, That if topsoil is of insufficient quantity or of poor quality for sustaining vegetation, or if other strata can be shown to be more suitable for vegetation requirements, then the operator shall remove, segregate and preserve in a like manner any other strata which is best able to support vegetation;

(6) Restore the topsoil or the best available subsoil which is best able to support vegetation;

(7) Ensure that all prime farmlands are mined and reclaimed in accordance with the specifications for soil removal, storage, replacement and reconstruction established by the United States secretary of agriculture and the soil conservation service pertaining thereto. The operator, at a minimum, shall: (A) Segregate the A horizon of the natural soil, except where it can be shown that other available soil materials will create a final soil having a greater productive capacity, and if not utilized immediately, stockpile this material separately from other spoil, and provide needed protection from wind and water erosion or contamination by other acid or toxic material; (B) segregate the B horizon of the natural soil, or underlying C horizons or other strata, or a combination of the horizons or other strata that are shown to be both texturally and chemically suitable for plant growth and that can be shown to be equally or more favorable for plant growth than the B horizon, in sufficient quantities to create in the regraded final soil a root zone of comparable depth and quality to that which existed in the natural soil, and if not utilized immediately, stockpile this material separately from other spoil and provide needed protection from wind and water erosion or contamination by other acid or toxic material; (C) replace and regrade the root zone material described in paragraph (B) of this subdivision, with proper compaction and uniform depth over the regraded spoil material; and (D) redistribute and grade in a uniform manner the surface soil horizon described in paragraph (A) of this subdivision;

(8) Create, if authorized in the approved surface-mining and reclamation plan and permit, permanent impoundments of water on mining sites as part of reclamation activities in accordance with rules promulgated by the ~~director~~secretary;

(9) Where augering is the method of recovery, seal all auger holes with an impervious and noncombustible material in order to prevent drainage except where the ~~director~~secretary determines that the resulting impoundment of water in the auger holes may create a hazard to the environment or the public welfare and safety: Provided, That the ~~director~~secretary may prohibit augering if necessary to maximize the utilization, recoverability or conservation of the mineral resources or to protect against adverse water quality impacts;

(10) Minimize the disturbances to the prevailing hydrologic balance at the mine site and in associated off-site areas and to the quality and quantity of water in surface and groundwater systems both during and after surface-mining operations and during reclamation by: (A) Avoiding acid or other toxic mine drainage by such measures as, but not limited to: (i) Preventing or removing water from contact with toxic producing deposits; (ii) treating drainage to reduce toxic content which adversely affects downstream water upon being released to water courses; and (iii) casing, sealing or otherwise managing boreholes, shafts and wells and keep acid or other toxic drainage from entering ground and surface waters; (B) conducting surface-mining operations so as to prevent to the extent possible, using the best technology currently available, additional contributions of suspended solids to streamflow or runoff outside the permit

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area, but in no event shall contributions be in excess of requirements set by applicable state or federal law; (C) constructing an approved drainage system pursuant to paragraph (B) of this subdivision, prior to commencement of surface-mining operations, the system to be certified by a person approved by the ~~director~~ secretary to be constructed as designed and as approved in the reclamation plan; (D) avoiding channel deepening or enlargement in operations requiring the discharge of water from mines; (E) unless otherwise authorized by the ~~director~~ secretary, cleaning out and removing temporary or large settling ponds or other siltation structures after disturbed areas are revegetated and stabilized, and depositing the silt and debris at a site and in a manner approved by the ~~director~~ secretary; (F) restoring recharge capacity of the mined area to approximate premining conditions; and (G) any other actions prescribed by the ~~director~~ secretary;

(11) With respect to surface disposal of mine wastes, tailings, coal processing wastes and other wastes in areas other than the mine working excavations: (A) Stabilize all waste piles in designated areas through construction in compacted layers, including the use of noncombustible and impervious materials if necessary, and assure the final contour of the waste pile will be compatible with natural surroundings and that the site will be stabilized and revegetated according to the provisions of this article; and (B) assure that the construction of any coal waste pile or other coal waste storage area utilizes appropriate technologies, such as capping or the use of liners, or any other demonstrated technologies or measures which are consistent with good engineering practices, to prevent an acid mine drainage discharge;

(12) Design, locate, construct, operate, maintain, enlarge, modify and remove or abandon, in accordance with standards and criteria developed pursuant to subsection (f) of this section, all existing and new coal mine waste piles consisting of mine wastes, tailings, coal processing wastes or other liquid and solid wastes, and used either temporarily or permanently as dams or embankments;

(13) Refrain from surface-mining within five hundred feet of any active and abandoned underground mines in order to prevent breakthroughs and to protect health or safety of miners: Provided, That the ~~director~~ secretary shall permit an operator to mine near, through or partially through an abandoned underground mine or closer to an active underground mine if: (A) The nature, timing and sequencing of the approximate coincidence of specific surface mine activities with specific underground mine activities are coordinated jointly by the operators involved and approved by the ~~director~~ secretary; and (B) the operations will result in improved resource recovery, abatement of water pollution or elimination of hazards to the health and safety of the public: Provided, however, That any breakthrough which does occur shall be sealed;

(14) Ensure that all debris, acid-forming materials, toxic materials or materials constituting a fire hazard are treated or buried and compacted, or otherwise disposed of in a manner designed to prevent contamination of ground or surface waters, and that contingency plans are developed to prevent sustained combustion: Provided, That the operator shall remove or bury all metal, lumber, equipment and other debris resulting from the operation before grading release;

(15) Ensure that explosives are used only in accordance with existing state and federal law and the rules promulgated by the ~~director~~ secretary, which shall include provisions to:

(A) Maintain for a period of at least three years and make available for public inspection, upon written request, a log detailing the location of the blasts, the pattern and depth of the drill holes, the amount of explosives used per hole and the order and length of delay in the blasts; and ;

(B) Require that all blasting operations be conducted by persons certified by the ~~office of explosives and blasting~~ Division of Mining and Reclamation.

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(16) Ensure that all reclamation efforts proceed in an environmentally sound manner and as contemporaneously as practicable with the surface-mining operations. Time limits shall be established by the ~~director~~ secretary requiring backfilling, grading and planting to be kept current: Provided, That where surface-mining operations and underground mining operations are proposed on the same area, which operations must be conducted under separate permits, the ~~director~~ secretary may grant a variance from the requirement that reclamation efforts proceed as contemporaneously as practicable to permit underground mining operations prior to reclamation:

(A) If the ~~director~~ secretary finds in writing that:

(i) The applicant has presented, as part of the permit application, specific, feasible plans for the proposed underground mining operations;

(ii) The proposed underground mining operations are necessary or desirable to assure maximum practical recovery of the mineral resource and will avoid multiple disturbance of the surface;

(iii) The applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated that the plan for the underground mining operations conforms to requirements for underground mining in the jurisdiction and that permits necessary for the underground mining operations have been issued by the appropriate authority;

(iv) The areas proposed for the variance have been shown by the applicant to be necessary for the implementing of the proposed underground mining operations;

(v) No substantial adverse environmental damage, either on-site or off-site, will result from the delay in completion of reclamation as required by this article; and

(vi) Provisions for the off-site storage of spoil will comply with subdivision (22), subsection (b) of this section;

(B) If the ~~director~~ secretary has promulgated specific rules to govern the granting of the variances in accordance with the provisions of this subparagraph and has imposed any additional requirements as the ~~director~~ secretary considers necessary;

(C) If variances granted under the provisions of this paragraph are reviewed by the ~~director~~ secretary not more than three years from the date of issuance of the permit: Provided, That the underground mining permit shall terminate if the underground operations have not commenced within three years of the date the permit was issued, unless extended as set forth in subdivision (3), section eight of this article; and

(D) If liability under the bond filed by the applicant with the ~~director~~ secretary pursuant to subsection (b), section eleven of this article is for the duration of the underground mining operations and until the requirements of subsection (g), section eleven and section twenty-three of this article have been fully complied with;

(17) Ensure that the construction, maintenance and postmining conditions of access and haulroads into and across the site of operations will control or prevent erosion and siltation, pollution of water, damage to fish or wildlife or their habitat, or public or private property: Provided, That access roads constructed for and used to provide infrequent service to surface facilities, such as ventilators or monitoring devices, are exempt from specific construction criteria provided adequate stabilization to control erosion is achieved through alternative measures;

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(18) Refrain from the construction of roads or other access ways up a stream bed or drainage channel or in proximity to the channel so as to significantly alter the normal flow of water;

(19) Establish on the regraded areas, and all other lands affected, a diverse, effective and permanent vegetative cover of the same seasonal variety native to the area of land to be affected or of a fruit, grape or berry producing variety suitable for human consumption and capable of self-regeneration and plant succession at least equal in extent of cover to the natural vegetation of the area, except that introduced species may be used in the revegetation process where desirable or when necessary to achieve the approved postmining land use plan;

(20) Assume the responsibility for successful revegetation, as required by subdivision (19) of this subsection, for a period of not less than five growing seasons, as defined by the ~~director~~secretary, after the last year of augmented seeding, fertilizing, irrigation or other work in order to assure compliance with subdivision (19) of this subsection: Provided, That when the ~~director~~secretary issues a written finding approving a long-term agricultural postmining land use as a part of the mining and reclamation plan, the director may grant exception to the provisions of subdivision (19) of this subsection: Provided, however, That when the director approves an agricultural postmining land use, the applicable five growing seasons of responsibility for revegetation begins on the date of initial planting for the agricultural postmining land use;

On lands eligible for remining assume the responsibility for successful revegetation, as required by subdivision (19) of this subsection, for a period of not less than two growing seasons, as defined by the director after the last year of augmented seeding, fertilizing, irrigation or other work in order to assure compliance with subdivision (19) of this subsection;

(21) Protect off-site areas from slides or damage occurring during surface-mining operations and not deposit spoil material or locate any part of the operations or waste accumulations outside the permit area: Provided, That spoil material may be placed outside the permit area, if approved by the ~~director~~secretary after a finding that environmental benefits will result from the placing of spoil material outside the permit area;

(22) Place all excess spoil material resulting from surface-mining activities in a manner that: (A) Spoil is transported and placed in a controlled manner in position for concurrent compaction and in a way as to assure mass stability and to prevent mass movement; (B) the areas of disposal are within the bonded permit areas and all organic matter is removed immediately prior to spoil placements; (C) appropriate surface and internal drainage system or diversion ditches are used to prevent spoil erosion and movement; (D) the disposal area does not contain springs, natural water courses or wet weather seeps, unless lateral drains are constructed from the wet areas to the main underdrains in a manner that filtration of the water into the spoil pile will be prevented; (E) if placed on a slope, the spoil is placed upon the most moderate slope among those upon which, in the judgment of the ~~director~~secretary, the spoil could be placed in compliance with all the requirements of this article, and is placed, where possible, upon, or above, a natural terrace, bench or berm, if placement provides additional stability and prevents mass movement; (F) where the toe of the spoil rests on a downslope, a rock toe buttress, of sufficient size to prevent mass movement, is constructed; (G) the final configuration is compatible with the natural drainage pattern and surroundings and suitable for intended uses; (H) the design of the spoil disposal area is certified by a qualified registered professional engineer in conformance with professional standards; and (I) all other provisions of this article are met: Provided, That where the excess spoil material consists of at least eighty percent, by volume, sandstone, limestone or other rocks that do not slake in water and will not degrade to soil material, the ~~director~~secretary may approve alternate methods for disposal of excess spoil material, including fill placement by dumping in a single lift, on a site specific basis: Provided, however, That the services of a qualified registered professional engineer experienced in the design and construction of earth and rockfill

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embankment are utilized: Provided further, That the approval may not be unreasonably withheld if the site is suitable;

(23) Meet any other criteria necessary to achieve reclamation in accordance with the purposes of this article, taking into consideration the physical, climatological and other characteristics of the site;

(24) To the extent possible, using the best technology currently available, minimize disturbances and adverse impacts of the operation on fish, wildlife and related environmental values, and achieve enhancement of these resources where practicable; and

(25) Retain a natural barrier to inhibit slides and erosion on permit areas where outcrop barriers are required: Provided, That constructed barriers may be allowed where: (A) natural barriers do not provide adequate stability; (B) natural barriers would result in potential future water quality deterioration; and (C) natural barriers would conflict with the goal of maximum utilization of the mineral resource: Provided, however, That at a minimum, the constructed barrier shall be of sufficient width and height to provide adequate stability and the stability factor shall equal or exceed that of the natural outcrop barrier: Provided further, That where water quality is paramount, the constructed barrier shall be composed of impervious material with controlled discharge points: and

~~(26) The director shall promulgate for review and consideration by the West Virginia Legislature legislative rules or emergency rules during the 2016 Regular Session of the West Virginia Legislature, revisions to rules for contemporaneous reclamation as required under subdivision (16), subsection (b) of this section. The secretary shall specifically consider the adoption of federal standards codified at 30 C.F.R. §§816.100-116 (1983) and 30 C.F.R. §§17.100-116 (1983) when proposing revisions to the state rule.~~

(c) (1) ~~The director~~secretary may prescribe procedures pursuant to which he or she may permit surface-mining operations for the purposes set forth in subdivision (3) of this subsection.

(2) Where an applicant meets the requirements of subdivisions (3) and (4) of this subsection, a permit without regard to the requirement to restore to approximate original contour set forth in subsection (b) or (d) of this section may be granted for the surface-mining of coal where the mining operation will remove an entire coal seam or seams running through the upper fraction of a mountain, ridge or hill, except as provided in subparagraph (A), subdivision (4) of this subsection, by removing all of the overburden and creating a level plateau or a gently rolling contour with no highwalls remaining, and capable of supporting postmining uses in accordance with the requirements of this subsection.

(3) In cases where an industrial, commercial, agricultural, commercial forestry, residential or public facility including recreation lands use is proposed for the postmining use of the affected land, the ~~director~~secretary may grant a permit for a surface-mining operation of the nature described in subdivision (2) of this subsection where: (A) The proposed postmining land use is determined to constitute an equal or better use of the affected land, as compared with premining use; (B) the applicant presents specific plans for the proposed postmining land use and appropriate assurances that the use will be: (i) Compatible with adjacent land uses; (ii) practicable with respect to achieving the proposed use; (iii) obtainable according to data regarding expected need and market; (iv) supported by commitments from public agencies where appropriate; (v) practicable with respect to private financial capability for completion of the proposed use; (vi) planned pursuant to a schedule attached to the reclamation plan so as to integrate the mining operation and reclamation with the postmining land use; and (vii) designed by a person approved by the ~~director~~secretary in conformance with standards established to assure the stability, drainage and configuration necessary for the intended use of the site; (C) the proposed use would be compatible with adjacent land uses, and existing state and local land use plans and programs; (D) the ~~director~~secretary provides the county commission of the county in which the land is located and any state or federal agency which the ~~director~~

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secretary, in his or her discretion, determines to have an interest in the proposed use, an opportunity of not more than sixty days to review and comment on the proposed use; and (E) all other requirements of this article will be met.

(4) In granting any permit pursuant to this subsection, the ~~director~~secretary shall require that: (A) A natural barrier be retained to inhibit slides and erosion on permit areas where outcrop barriers are required: Provided, That constructed barriers may be allowed where: (i) Natural barriers do not provide adequate stability; (ii) natural barriers would result in potential future water quality deterioration; and (iii) natural barriers would conflict with the goal of maximum utilization of the mineral resource: Provided, however, That, at a minimum, the constructed barrier shall be sufficient in width and height to provide adequate stability and the stability factor shall equal or exceed that of the natural outcrop barrier: Provided further, That where water quality is paramount, the constructed barrier shall be composed of impervious material with controlled discharge points; (B) the reclaimed area is stable; (C) the resulting plateau or rolling contour drains inward from the outcrops except at specific points; (D) no damage will be done to natural watercourses; (E) spoil will be placed on the mountaintop bench as is necessary to achieve the planned postmining land use: And provided further, That all excess spoil material not retained on the mountaintop shall be placed in accordance with the provisions of subdivision (22), subsection (b) of this section; and (F) ensure stability of the spoil retained on the mountaintop and meet the other requirements of this article.

(5) All permits granted under the provisions of this subsection shall be reviewed not more than three years from the date of issuance of the permit; unless the applicant affirmatively demonstrates that the proposed development is proceeding in accordance with the terms of the approved schedule and reclamation plan.

(d) In addition to those general performance standards required by this section, when surface-mining occurs on slopes of twenty degrees or greater, or on lesser slopes as may be defined by rule after consideration of soil and climate, no debris, abandoned or disabled equipment, spoil material or waste mineral matter will be placed on the natural downslope below the initial bench or mining cut: Provided, That soil or spoil material from the initial cut of earth in a new surface-mining operation may be placed on a limited specified area of the downslope below the initial cut if the permittee can establish to the satisfaction of the ~~director~~secretary that the soil or spoil will not slide and that the other requirements of this section can still be met.

(e) The ~~director~~secretary may propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code, that permit variances from the approximate original contour requirements of this section: Provided, That the watershed control of the area is improved: Provided, however, That complete backfilling with spoil material is required to completely cover the highwall, which material will maintain stability following mining and reclamation.

(f) The ~~director~~secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code, for the design, location, construction, maintenance, operation, enlargement, modification, removal and abandonment of new and existing coal mine waste piles. In addition to engineering and other technical specifications, the standards and criteria developed pursuant to this subsection shall include provisions for review and approval of plans and specifications prior to construction, enlargement, modification, removal or abandonment; performance of periodic inspections during construction; issuance of certificates of approval upon completion of construction; performance of periodic safety inspections; and issuance of notices and orders for required remedial or maintenance work or affirmative action: Provided, That whenever the ~~director~~secretary finds that any coal processing waste pile constitutes an imminent danger to human life, he or she may, in addition to all other remedies and without the necessity of obtaining the permission of any person prior or present who operated or operates a pile or the landowners involved, enter upon the premises where any coal processing waste pile exists and

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may take or order to be taken any remedial action that may be necessary or expedient to secure the coal processing waste pile and to abate the conditions which cause the danger to human life: Provided, however, That the cost reasonably incurred in any remedial action taken by the ~~director~~ secretary under this subsection may be paid for initially by funds appropriated to the division for these purposes, and the sums so expended shall be recovered from any responsible operator or landowner, individually or jointly, by suit initiated by the attorney general at the request of the ~~director~~ secretary. For purposes of this subsection "operates" or "operated" means to enter upon a coal processing waste pile, or part of a coal processing waste pile, for the purpose of disposing, depositing, dumping coal processing wastes on the pile or removing coal processing waste from the pile, or to employ a coal processing waste pile for retarding the flow of or for the impoundment of water.

(g) The secretary shall promulgate for review and consideration by the West Virginia Legislature during the 2017 Regular Session of the West Virginia Legislature revisions to the rules for minimizing the disturbances to the prevailing hydrologic balance at a mine site and in associated off-site areas both during and after surface mining operations and during reclamation as required under subdivision (10), subsection (b) of this section, including specifically the rules for stormwater runoff and control plans. The secretary shall specifically conform these rules to the federal standards codified at 30 C.F.R §816.41 (1983) and 30 C.F.R. §816.45-47 (1983) when proposing revisions to the state rule. The secretary shall not propose rules more stringent than the federal standards codified at 30 C.F.R §816.41 (1983) and 30 C.F.R. §816.45-47 (1983) when proposing revisions to the state rule.

§22-3-13a. Pre-blast survey requirements.

(a) At least thirty days prior to commencing blasting, as defined in section twenty-two-a of this article, an operator or an operator's designee shall make the following notifications in writing to all owners and occupants of man-made dwellings or structures that the operator or operator's designee will perform pre-blast surveys in accordance with subsection (~~f~~ e) of this section:

~~(1) For surface-mining operations that are less than two hundred acres in a single permitted area or less than three hundred acres of contiguous or nearly contiguous area of two or more permitted areas the required notifications shall be to all owners and occupants of man-made dwellings or structures within 5/10 of a mile one-half mile of the permitted area or areas; and~~

~~(2) For all other surface mining operations, the required notifications shall be to all owners and occupants of man-made dwellings or structures within five tenths of a mile of the permitted area or areas or seven tenths of a mile of the proposed blasting site, whichever is greater.~~

~~(3) For permitted surface disturbance of underground mines, the required notifications shall be to all owners and occupants of man-made dwellings or structures within five tenths of a mile of the permitted surface area or areas.~~

(2) For blasting associated with permitted surface disturbance of underground mines and blasting associated with specified construction, including but not limited to, haul roads, shafts, and/or drainage structures, the operator may send a written request to the secretary asking that , the required notifications shall be limited to all owners and occupants of man-made dwellings or structures within five-tenths of a mile one-half mile of the permitted surface area or areas proposed blasting area.

~~(b) Within thirty days of the effective date of this section, any operator identified in subdivision (2), subsection (a) of this section, that has already completed pre-blast surveys for man-made dwellings or structures within five tenths of a mile of the permit area and has commenced operations by the effective date of this section, shall notify in writing all additional owners and occupants of man-made dwellings or~~

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~~structures within seven tenths of a mile of the proposed blasting site. Except for those dwellings or structures for which the operator secures a written waiver or executes an affidavit in accordance with the requirements of subsection (e) of this section, the operator or the operator's designee must perform the additional pre-blast surveys in accordance with subsection (f) of this section within ninety days of the effective date of this section.~~

(b) ~~An occupant or~~ owner of a man-made dwelling or structure within the areas described in subdivisions (1) or (2) ~~of subsection (a) of this section, may waive the right to a pre-blast survey in writing. If a dwelling is occupied by a person other than the owners both the owner and the occupant must waive the right to a pre-blast survey in writing.~~ If an occupant or owner of a man-made dwelling or structure refuses to allow the operator or the operator's designee access to the dwelling or structure and refuses to waive in writing the right to a pre-blast survey or to the extent that access to any portion of the structure, underground water supply or well is impossible or impractical under the circumstances, the pre-blast survey shall indicate that access was refused, impossible or impractical. The operator or the operator's designee shall execute a sworn affidavit explaining the reasons and circumstances surrounding the refusals. ~~The office of explosives and blasting secretary shall~~ may not determine the pre-blast survey to be incomplete because it indicates that access to a particular structure, underground water supply or well was refused, impossible or impractical. The operator shall send copies of all written waivers and affidavits executed pursuant to this subsection to the ~~office of explosives and blasting secretary.~~

(c) If a pre-blast survey was waived by the owner and was within the requisite area and the property was sold, the new owner may request a pre-blast survey from the operator.

(d) An owner within the requisite area may request, from the operator, a pre-blast survey on structures constructed after the original pre-blast survey.

(e) The pre-blast survey shall include:

(1) The names, addresses or description of structure location and telephone numbers of the owner and the residents of the structure being surveyed and the structure number from the permit blasting map;

(2) The current home insurer of the owner and the residents of the structure;

(3) The names, addresses and telephone numbers of the surface-mining operator and the permit number;

(4) The current general liability insurer of the surface-mining operator;

(5) The name, address and telephone number of the person or firm performing the pre-blast survey;

(6) The current general liability insurer of the person or firm performing the pre-blast survey;

(7) The date of the pre-blast survey and the date it was mailed or delivered to the ~~office of explosives and blasting secretary.~~

(8) A general description of the structure and its appurtenances including, but not limited to: (A) The number of stories; (B) the construction materials for the frame and the exterior and interior finish; (C) the type of construction including any unusual or substandard construction; and (D) the approximate age of the structure;

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(9) A general description of the survey methods and the direction of progression of the survey, including a key to abbreviations used;

(10) Written documentation and drawings, videos or photographs of the pre-blast defects and other physical conditions of all structures, appurtenances and water sources which could be affected by blasting;

(11) Written documentation and drawings, videos or photographs of the exterior and interior of the structure to indicate pre-blast defects and condition;

(12) Written documentation and drawings, videos or photographs of the exterior and interior of any appurtenance of the structure to indicate pre-blast defects and condition;

(13) Sufficient exterior and interior photographs or videos, using a variety of angles, of the structure and its appurtenances to indicate preblast defects and the condition of the structure and appurtenances;

(14) Written documentation and drawings, videos or photographs of any unusual or substandard construction technique and materials used on the structure or its appurtenances or both structure and appurtenances;

(15) Written documentation relating to the type of water supply, including a description of the type of system and treatment being used, an analysis of untreated water supplies, a water analysis of water supplies other than public utilities, and information relating to the quantity and quality of water;

(16) When the water supply is a well, written documentation, where available, relating to the type of well; the well log; the depth, age and type of casing or lining; the static water level; flow data; the pump capacity; the drilling contractor; and the source or sources of the documentation;

(17) A description of any portion of the structure and appurtenances not documented or photographed and the reasons;

(18) The signature of the person performing the survey; and

(19) Any other information required by the chief which additional information shall be established by rule in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code.

~~(f) Except for additional pre-blast surveys prepared within one hundred twenty days of the effective date of this section, pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the~~ The pre-blast survey shall be submitted to the ~~office of explosives and blasting~~ secretary at least fifteen days prior to the commencement of any production blasting. The ~~office of explosives and blasting~~ secretary shall review each pre-blast survey as to form and completeness only and notify the operator of any deficiencies. *Provided*, That once all required surveys have been reviewed and accepted by the ~~office of explosives and blasting~~ secretary, blasting may commence sooner than fifteen days after submittal. The ~~office of explosives and blasting~~ secretary shall provide a copy of the pre-blast survey to the owner and occupant.

~~(h) The surface mining operator shall file notice of the pre-blast survey or the waiver in the office of the county clerk of the county commission of the county where the man-made dwelling or structure is located to notify the public that a pre-blast survey has been conducted or waived. The notice shall be on a form prescribed by the office of explosives and blasting.~~

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(g) The secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code dealing with preblast survey requirements and setting the qualifications for individuals and firms performing preblast surveys.

~~— (i) The chief of the office of explosives and blasting shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with article three, chapter twenty nine a of this code, dealing with pre blast survey requirements and setting the qualifications for individuals and firms performing pre-blast surveys.~~

(h) The provisions of this section do not apply to the extraction of minerals by underground mining methods.

§22-3-14. General environmental protection performance standards for the surface effects of underground mining; application of other provisions of article to surface effects of underground mining.

(a) The director shall promulgate separate rules directed toward the surface effects of underground coal mining operations, embodying the requirements in subsection (b) of this section: Provided, That in adopting such rules, the director shall consider the distinct difference between surface coal mines and underground coal mines in West Virginia. Such rules may not conflict with or supersede any provision of the federal or state coal mine health and safety laws or any rule issued pursuant thereto.

(b) Each permit issued by the director pursuant to this article and relating to underground coal mining shall require the operation at a minimum to:

(1) Adopt measures consistent with known technology in order to prevent subsidence causing material damage to the extent technologically and economically feasible, maximize mine stability and maintain the value and reasonably foreseeable use of overlying surface lands, except in those instances where the mining technology used requires planned subsidence in a predictable and controlled manner: Provided, That this subsection does not prohibit the standard method of room and pillar mining;

(2) Seal all portals, entryways, drifts, shafts or other openings that connect the earth's surface to the underground mine workings when no longer needed for the conduct of the mining operations in accordance with the requirements of all applicable federal and state law and rules promulgated pursuant thereto;

(3) Fill or seal exploratory holes no longer necessary for mining and maximize to the extent technologically and economically feasible, if environmentally acceptable, return of mine and processing waste, tailings and any other waste incident to the mining operation to the mine workings or excavations;

(4) With respect to surface disposal of mine wastes, tailings, coal processing wastes and other wastes in areas other than the mine workings or excavations, stabilize all waste piles created by the operator from current operations through construction in compacted layers, including the use of incombustible and impervious materials, if necessary, and assure that any leachate therefrom will not degrade surface or groundwaters below water quality standards established pursuant to applicable federal and state law and that the final contour of the waste accumulation will be compatible with natural surroundings and that the site is stabilized and revegetated according to the provisions of this section;

(5) Design, locate, construct, operate, maintain, enlarge, modify and remove or abandon, in accordance with the standards and criteria developed pursuant to subsection (f), section thirteen of this article, all existing and new coal mine waste piles consisting of mine wastes, tailings, coal processing wastes and solid wastes and used either temporarily or permanently as dams or embankments;

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(6) Establish on regraded areas and all other disturbed areas a diverse and permanent vegetative cover capable of self-regeneration and plant succession and at least equal in extent of cover to the natural vegetation of the area within the time period prescribed in subdivision (20), subsection (b), section thirteen of this article;

(7) Protect off-site areas from damages which may result from such mining operations;

(8) Eliminate fire hazards and otherwise eliminate conditions which constitute a hazard to health and safety of the public;

(9) Minimize the disturbance of the prevailing hydrologic balance at the mine site and in associated off-site areas and to the quantity and the quality of water in surface and groundwater systems both during and after mining operations and during reclamation by: (A) Avoiding acid or other toxic mine drainage by such measures as, but not limited to: (i) Preventing or removing water from contact with toxic producing deposits; (ii) treating drainage to reduce toxic content which adversely affects downstream water before being released to water courses; and (iii) casing, sealing or otherwise managing boreholes, shafts and wells to keep acid or other toxic drainage from entering ground and surface waters; and (B) conducting mining operations so as to prevent, to the extent possible using the best technology currently available, additional contributions of suspended solids to streamflow or runoff outside the permit area, but in no event shall the contributions be in excess of requirements set by applicable state or federal law, and avoiding channel deepening or enlargement in operations requiring the discharge of water from mines: Provided, That in recognition of the distinct differences between surface and underground mining the monitoring of water from underground coal mine workings shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Clean Water Act of 1977;

(10) With respect to other surface impacts of underground mining not specified in this subsection, including 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, 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, operate in accordance with the standards established under section thirteen of this article for such effects which result from surface-mining operations: Provided, That the director shall make such modifications in the requirements imposed by this subdivision as are necessary to accommodate the distinct difference between surface and underground mining in West Virginia;

(11) To the extent possible using the best technology currently available, minimize disturbances and adverse impacts of the operation on fish, aquatic life, wildlife and related environmental values, and achieve enhancement of such resources where practicable; and

(12) Unless otherwise permitted by the director and in consideration of the relevant safety and environmental factors, locate openings for all new drift mines working in acid producing or iron producing coal seams in a manner as to prevent a gravity discharge of water from the mine.

(c) In order to protect the stability of the land, the director shall suspend underground mining under urbanized areas, cities, towns and communities and adjacent to industrial or commercial buildings, major impoundments or permanent streams if he or she finds imminent danger to inhabitants of the urbanized areas, cities, towns or communities.

(d) The provisions of this article relating to permits, bonds, insurance, inspections, reclamation and enforcement, public review and administrative and judicial review are also applicable to surface operations and surface impacts incident to an underground mine with such modifications by rule to the permit

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application requirements, permit approval or denial procedures and bond requirements as are necessary to accommodate the distinct difference between surface mines and underground mines in West Virginia.

§22-3-15. Inspections; monitoring; right of entry; inspection of records; identification signs; progress maps.

(a) The director shall cause to be made inspections of surface-mining operations as are necessary to effectively enforce the requirements of this article and for such purposes the director or his or her authorized representative shall without advance notice and upon presentation of appropriate credentials: (A) Have the right of entry to, upon or through surface-mining operations or any premises in which any records required to be maintained under subdivision (1), subsection (b) of this section are located; and (B) at reasonable times and without delay, have access to and copy any records and inspect any monitoring equipment or method of operation required under this article.

(b) For the purpose of enforcement under this article, in the administration and enforcement of any permit under this article, or for determining whether any person is in violation of any requirement of this article:

(1) The director shall, at a minimum, require any operator to: (A) Establish and maintain appropriate records; (B) make monthly reports to the division; (C) install, use and maintain any necessary monitoring equipment or methods consistent with subdivision (11), subsection (a), section nine of this article; (D) evaluate results in accordance with such methods, at such locations, intervals and in such manner as the director prescribes; and (E) provide any other information relative to surface-mining operations as the director finds reasonable and necessary; and

(2) For those surface-mining operations which remove or disturb strata that serve as aquifers which significantly ensure the hydrologic balance of water use either on or off the mining site, the director shall require that: (A) monitoring sites be established to record the quantity and quality of surface drainage above and below the mine site as well as in the potential zone of influence; (B) monitoring sites be established to record level, amount and samples of groundwater and aquifers potentially affected by the surface-mining and also below the lowermost mineral seam to be mined; (C) records or well logs and borehole data be maintained; and (D) monitoring sites be established to record precipitation. The monitoring, data collection and analysis required by this section shall be conducted according to standards and procedures set forth by the director in order to assure their reliability and validity.

(c) All surface-mining operations shall be inspected at least once every thirty days. The inspections shall be made on an irregular basis without prior notice to the operator or the operator's agents or employees, except for necessary on-site meetings with the operator. The inspections shall include the filing of inspection reports adequate to enforce the requirements, terms and purposes of this article.

(d) Each permittee shall maintain at the entrances to the surface-mining operations a clearly visible monument which sets forth the name, business address and telephone number of the permittee and the permit number of the surface-mining operations.

(e) Copies of any records, reports, inspection materials or information obtained under this article by the director shall be made immediately available to the public at central and sufficient locations in the county, multicounty or state area of mining so that they are conveniently available to residents in the areas of mining unless specifically exempted by this article.

(f) Within thirty days after service of a copy of an order of the director upon an operator by registered or certified mail, the operator shall furnish to the director five copies of a progress map prepared by or

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under the supervision of a person approved by the director showing the disturbed area to the date of such map. Such progress map shall contain information identical to that required for both the proposed and final maps required by this article, and shall show in detail completed reclamation work as required by the director. Such progress map shall include a geologic survey sketch showing the location of the operation, shall be properly referenced to a permanent landmark, and shall be within such reasonable degree of accuracy as may be prescribed by the director. If no land has been disturbed by operations during the preceding year, the operator shall notify the director of that fact.

(g) Whenever on the basis of available information, including reliable information from any person, the director has cause to believe that any person is in violation of this article, any permit condition or any rule promulgated under this article, the director shall immediately order state inspection of the surface-mining operation at which the alleged violation is occurring unless the information is available as a result of a prior state inspection. The director shall notify any person who supplied such reliable information when the state inspection will be carried out. Such person may accompany the inspector during the inspection.

(h) When requested by the permittee, the director may provide for a compliance conference with his or her authorized representative to review the compliance status of any coal exploration or surface-coal mining and reclamation operation. Any such conference may not constitute an inspection as defined in this section.

§22-3-16. Cessation of operation by order of inspector; informal conference; imposition of affirmative obligations; appeal.

(a) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this article, a surface-mining reclamation inspector has the authority to issue a cessation order for any portion of a surface-mining operation when an inspector determines that any condition or practice exists, or that any permittee is in violation of any requirements of this article or any permit condition required by this article, which condition, practice or violation also creates an imminent danger to the health or safety of the public, or is causing or can reasonably be expected to cause significant, imminent environmental harm to land, air or water resources. The cessation order takes effect immediately. Unless waived in writing, an informal conference shall be held at or near the site relevant to the violation set forth in the cessation order within twenty-four hours after the order becomes effective or such order shall expire. The conference shall be held before a surface-mining reclamation supervisor who shall, immediately upon conclusion of said hearing, determine when and if the operation or portion thereof may resume. Operators who believe they are aggrieved by the decision of the surface-mining reclamation supervisor may immediately appeal to the director, setting forth reasons why the operation should not be halted. The director forthwith shall determine when the operation or portion thereof may be resumed.

(b) The cessation order remains in effect until the director determines that the condition, practice or violation has been abated, or until modified, vacated or released by the director. Where the director finds that the ordered cessation of any portion of a surface coal mining operation will not completely abate the imminent danger to health or safety of the public or the significant imminent environmental harm to land, air or water resources, the director shall, in addition to the cessation order, impose affirmative obligations on the operator requiring the operator to take whatever steps the director determines necessary to abate the imminent danger or the significant environmental harm.

(c) Any cessation order issued pursuant to this section or any other provision of this article may be released by any inspector. An inspector shall be readily available to terminate a cessation order upon abatement of the violation.

§22-3-17. Notice of violation; procedure and actions; enforcement; permit revocation and bond forfeiture; civil and criminal penalties; appeals to the board; prosecution; injunctive relief.

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(a) If any of the requirements of this article, rules promulgated pursuant thereto or permit conditions have not been complied with, the director shall cause a notice of violation to be served upon the operator or the operator's duly authorized agent. A copy of the notice shall be handed to the operator or the operator's duly authorized agent in person or served by certified mail addressed to the operator at the permanent address shown on the application for a permit. The notice shall specify in what respects the operator has failed to comply with this article, rules or permit conditions and shall specify a reasonable time for abatement of the violation not to exceed thirty days. If the operator has not abated the violation within the time specified in the notice, or any reasonable extension thereof, not to exceed sixty days, the director shall order the cessation of the operation or the portion thereof causing the violation, unless the operator affirmatively demonstrates that compliance is unattainable due to conditions totally beyond the control of the operator. If a violation is not abated within the time specified or any extension thereof, or any cessation order is issued, a mandatory civil penalty of not less than seven hundred fifty dollars per day per violation shall be assessed. A cessation order remains in effect until the director determines that the violation has been abated or until modified, vacated or terminated by the director or by a court. In any cessation order issued under this subsection, the director shall determine the steps necessary to abate the violation in the most expeditious manner possible and shall include the necessary measures in the order.

(b) If the director determines that a pattern of violations of any requirement of this article or any permit condition exists or has existed, as a result of the operator's lack of reasonable care and diligence, or that the violations are willfully caused by the operator, the director shall immediately issue an order directing the operator to show cause why the permit should not be suspended or revoked and giving the operator thirty days in which to request a public hearing. If a hearing is requested, the director shall inform all interested parties of the time and place of the hearing. Any hearing under this section shall be recorded and is subject to the provisions of chapter twenty-nine-a of this code. Within sixty days following the public hearing, the director shall issue and furnish to the permittee and all other parties to the hearing a written decision, and the reasons therefor, concerning suspension or revocation of the permit. Upon the operator's failure to show cause why the permit should not be suspended or revoked, the director shall immediately suspend or revoke the operator's permit. If the permit is revoked, the director shall initiate procedures in accordance with rules promulgated by the director to forfeit the entire amount of the operator's bond, or other security posted pursuant to section eleven or twelve of this article, and give notice to the attorney general, who shall collect the forfeiture without delay: Provided, That the entire proceeds of such forfeiture shall be deposited with the treasurer of the state of West Virginia to the credit of the special reclamation fund. All forfeitures collected shall be deposited in the special reclamation fund and shall be expended back upon the areas for which the bond was posted: Provided, however, That any excess therefrom shall remain in the special reclamation fund.

Within one year following the notice of permit revocation, subject to the discretion of the director and based upon a petition for reinstatement, the revoked permit may be reinstated. The reinstated permit may be assigned to any person who meets the permit eligibility requirements of this article.

(c) Any person engaged in surface-mining operations who violates any permit condition or who violates any other provision of this article or rules promulgated pursuant thereto may also be assessed a civil penalty. The penalty may not exceed five thousand dollars. Each day of continuing violation may be deemed a separate violation for purposes of penalty assessments. In determining the amount of the penalty, consideration shall be given to the operator's history of previous violations at the particular surface-mining operation, the seriousness of the violation, including any irreparable harm to the environment and any hazard to the health or safety of the public, whether the operator was negligent, and the demonstrated good faith of the operator charged in attempting to achieve rapid compliance after notification of the violation.

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(d) (1) Upon the issuance of a notice or order pursuant to this section, the assessment officer shall, within thirty days, set a proposed penalty assessment and notify the operator in writing of such proposed penalty assessment. The proposed penalty assessment must be paid in full within thirty days of receipt or, if the operator wishes to contest either the amount of the penalty or the fact of violation, an informal conference with the assessment officer may be requested within fifteen days or a formal hearing before the surface mine board may be requested within thirty days. The notice of proposed penalty assessment shall advise the operator of the right to an informal conference and a formal hearing pursuant to this section. When an informal conference is requested, the operator has fifteen days from receipt of the assessment officer's decision to request a formal hearing before the board.

(A) When an informal conference is held, the assessment officer has authority to affirm, modify or vacate the notice, order or proposed penalty assessment.

(B) When a formal hearing is requested, the amount of the proposed penalty assessment shall be forwarded to the director for placement in an escrow account. Formal hearings shall be of record and subject to the provisions of article five, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code. Following the hearing the board shall affirm, modify or vacate the notice, order or proposed penalty assessment and, when appropriate, incorporate an assessment order requiring that the assessment be paid.

(2) Civil penalties owed under this section may be recovered by the director in the circuit court of Kanawha County. Civil penalties collected under this article shall be deposited with the treasurer of the state of West Virginia to the credit of the special reclamation fund established in section eleven of this article. If, through the administrative or judicial review of the proposed penalty it is determined that no violation occurred or that the amount of the penalty should be reduced, the director shall within thirty days remit the appropriate amount to the person, with interest at the rate of six percent or at the prevailing United States department of the treasury rate, whichever is greater. Failure to forward the money to the director within thirty days is a waiver of all legal rights to contest the violation or the amount of the penalty.

(e) Any person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected by any order of the director or the surface mine board may file an appeal only in accordance with the provisions of article one, chapter twenty-two-b of this code, within thirty days after receipt of the order.

(f) The filing of an appeal or a request for an informal conference or formal hearing provided for in this section does not stay execution of the order appealed from. Pending completion of the investigation and conference or hearing required by this section, the applicant may file with the director a written request that the director grant temporary relief from any notice or order issued under section sixteen or seventeen of this article, together with a detailed statement giving reasons for granting such relief. The director shall issue an order or decision granting or denying such relief expeditiously: Provided, That where the applicant requests relief from an order for cessation of surface-mining and reclamation operations, the decision on the request shall be issued within five days of its receipt. The director may grant such relief, under such conditions as he or she may prescribe if:

(1) All parties to the proceedings have been notified and given an opportunity to be heard on a request for temporary relief;

(2) The person requesting the relief shows that there is a substantial likelihood that they will prevail on the merits in the final determination of the proceedings;

(3) The relief will not adversely affect the public health or safety or cause significant imminent environmental harm to land, air or water resources; and

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(4) The relief sought is not the issuance of a permit where a permit has been denied, in whole or in part, by the director.

(g) Any person who willfully and knowingly violates a condition of a permit issued pursuant to this article or rules promulgated pursuant thereto, or fails or refuses to comply with any order issued under said article and rules or any order incorporated in a final decision issued by the director, is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than ten thousand dollars, or imprisoned in the county jail not more than one year, or both fined and imprisoned.

(h) Whenever a corporate operator violates a condition of a permit issued pursuant to this article, rules promulgated pursuant thereto, or any order incorporated in a final decision issued by the director, any director, officer or agent of the corporation who willfully and knowingly authorized, ordered or carried out the failure or refusal, is subject to the same civil penalties, fines and imprisonment that may be imposed upon a person under subsections (c) and (g) of this section.

(i) Any person who knowingly makes any false statement, representation or certification, or knowingly fails to make any statement, representation or certification in any application, petition, record, report, plan or other document filed or required to be maintained pursuant to this article or rules promulgated pursuant thereto, is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than ten thousand dollars, or imprisoned in the county jail not more than one year, or both fined and imprisoned.

(j) Whenever any person: (A) Violates or fails or refuses to comply with any order or decision issued by the director under this article; or (B) interferes with, hinders or delays the director in carrying out the provisions of this article; or (C) refuses to admit the director to the mine; or (D) refuses to permit inspection of the mine by the director; or (E) refuses to furnish any reasonable information or report requested by the director in furtherance of the provisions of this article; or (F) refuses to permit access to, and copying of, such records as the director determines necessary in carrying out the provisions of this article; or (G) violates any other provisions of this article, the rules promulgated pursuant thereto, or the terms and conditions of any permit, the director, the attorney general or the prosecuting attorney of the county in which the major portion of the permit area is located may institute a civil action for relief, including a permanent or temporary injunction, restraining order or any other appropriate order, in the circuit court of Kanawha County or any court of competent jurisdiction to compel compliance with and enjoin such violations, failures or refusals. The court or the judge thereof may issue a preliminary injunction in any case pending a decision on the merits of any application filed without requiring the filing of a bond or other equivalent security.

(k) Any person who, except as permitted by law, willfully resists, prevents, impedes or interferes with the director or any of his or her agents in the performance of duties pursuant to this article is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not more than five thousand dollars or by imprisonment for not more than one year, or both.

§22-3-18. Approval, denial, revision and prohibition of permit.

(a) Upon the receipt of a complete surface-mining application or significant revision or renewal thereof, including public notification and an opportunity for a public hearing, the director shall grant, require revision of, or deny the application for a permit within sixty days and notify the applicant in writing of the decision. The applicant for a permit, or revision of a permit, has the burden of establishing that the application is in compliance with all the requirements of this article and the rules promulgated hereunder.

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(b) No permit or significant revision of a permit may be approved unless the applicant affirmatively demonstrates and the director finds in writing on the basis of the information set forth in the application or from information otherwise available which shall be documented in the approval and made available to the applicant that:

(1) The permit application is accurate and complete and that all the requirements of this article and rules thereunder have been complied with;

(2) The applicant has demonstrated that reclamation as required by this article can be accomplished under the reclamation plan contained in the permit application;

(3) The assessment of the probable cumulative impact of all anticipated mining in the area on the hydrologic balance, as specified in section nine of this article, has been made by the director and the proposed operation has been designed to prevent material damage to the hydrologic balance outside the permit area;

(4) The area proposed to be mined is not included within an area designated unsuitable for surface-mining pursuant to section twenty-two of this article or is not within an area under administrative study by the director for such designation; and

(5) In cases where the private mineral estate has been severed from the private surface estate, the applicant has submitted: (A) The written consent of the surface owner to the extraction of coal by surface-mining; or (B) a conveyance that expressly grants or reserves the right to extract the coal by surface-mining; or (C) if the conveyance does not expressly grant the right to extract coal by surface-mining, the surface subsurface legal relationship shall be determined in accordance with applicable law: Provided, That nothing in this article shall be construed to authorize the director to adjudicate property rights disputes.

(c) Where information available to the division indicates that any surface-mining operation owned or controlled by the applicant is currently in violation of this article or other environmental laws or rules, the permit may not be issued until the applicant submits proof that such violation has been corrected or is in the process of being corrected to the satisfaction of the director or the department or agency which has jurisdiction over the violation, and no permit may be issued to any applicant after a finding by the director, after an opportunity for hearing, that the applicant or the operator specified in the application controls or has controlled mining operations with a demonstrated pattern of willful violations of this article or of other state or federal programs implementing the federal Surface-Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended, of such nature and duration with such irreparable damage to the environment as to indicate an intent not to comply with the provisions of this article or the federal Surface-Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, as amended: Provided, That if the director finds that the applicant is or has been affiliated with, or managed or controlled by, or is or has been under the common control of, other than as an employee, a person who has had a surface-mining permit revoked or bond or other security forfeited for failure to reclaim lands as required by the laws of this state, he or she may not issue a permit to the applicant: Provided, however, That subject to the discretion of the director and based upon a petition for reinstatement, permits may be issued to any applicant if:

(1) After the revocation or forfeiture, the operator whose permit has been revoked or bond forfeited has paid into the special reclamation fund any additional sum of money determined by the director to be adequate to reclaim the disturbed area;

(2) the violations which resulted in the revocation or forfeiture have not caused irreparable damage to the environment; and

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(3) the director is satisfied that the petitioner will comply with this article.

(d) (1) In addition to finding the application in compliance with subsection (b) of this section, if the area proposed to be mined contains prime farmland, the director may, pursuant to rules promulgated hereunder, grant a permit to mine on prime farmland if the operator affirmatively demonstrates that the operator has the technological capability to restore such mined area, within a reasonable time, to equivalent or higher levels of yield as nonmined prime farmland in the surrounding area under equivalent levels of management, and can meet the soil reconstruction standards in subdivision (7), subsection (b), section thirteen of this article. Except for compliance with subsection (b) of this section, the requirements of this subdivision apply to all permits issued after the third day of August, one thousand nine hundred seventy-seven.

(2) Nothing in this subsection applies to any permit issued prior to the third day of August, one thousand nine hundred seventy-seven, or to any revisions or renewals thereof, or to any existing surface-mining operations for which a permit was issued prior to said date.

(e) If the director finds that the overburden on any part of the area of land described in the application for a permit is such that experience in the state with a similar type of operation upon land with similar overburden shows that one or more of the following conditions cannot feasibly be prevented: (1) Substantial deposition of sediment in stream beds; (2) landslides; or (3) acid-water pollution, the director may delete such part of the land described in the application upon which such overburden exists.

(f) The prohibition of subsection (c) of this section may not apply to a permit application due to any violation resulting from an unanticipated event or condition at a surface coal mine eligible for remining under a permit held by the applicant.

§22-3-19. Permit revision and renewal requirements; incidental boundary revisions; requirements for transfer; assignment and sale of permit rights; operator reassignment and procedures to obtain inactive status.⁴

(a) (1) Any valid permit issued pursuant to this article carries with it the right of successive renewal upon expiration with respect to areas within the boundaries of the existing permit. The holders of the permit may apply for renewal and the renewal shall be issued: Provided, That on application for renewal, the burden is on the opponents of renewal, unless it is established that and written findings by the secretary are made that: (A) The terms and conditions of the existing permit are not being satisfactorily met: Provided, however, That if the permittee is required to modify operations pursuant to mining or reclamation requirements which become applicable after the original date of permit issuance, the permittee shall be provided an opportunity to submit a schedule allowing a reasonable period to comply with such revised requirements; (B) the present surface-mining operation is not in compliance with the applicable environmental protection standards of this article; (C) the renewal requested substantially jeopardizes the operator's continuing responsibility on existing permit areas; (D) the operator has not provided evidence that the bond in effect for said operation will continue in effect for any renewal requested as required pursuant to sections eleven or twelve of this article; or (E) any additional revised or updated information as required pursuant to rules promulgated by the secretary has not been provided.

(2) If an application for renewal of a valid permit includes a proposal to extend the surface-mining operation beyond the boundaries authorized in the existing permit, that portion of the application for renewal which addresses any new land area is subject to the full standards of

⁴ In 2011 HB 2955 changed fees for renewals, revisions, transfers, etc. – Approved, see Federal Register on Wednesday, June 29, 2011

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this article, which includes, but is not limited to: (A) Adequate bond; (B) a map showing the disturbed area and facilities; and (C) a reclamation plan.

(3) Any permit renewal shall be for a term not to exceed the period of time for which the original permit was issued. Application for permit renewal shall be made at least one hundred twenty days prior to the expiration of the valid permit.

(4) Any renewal application for an active permit shall be on forms prescribed by the secretary and shall be accompanied by a filing fee of \$3000. The application shall contain such information as the secretary requires pursuant to rule.

(b)(1) During the term of the permit, the permittee may submit to the secretary an application for a revision of the permit, together with a revised reclamation plan.

(2) An application for a significant revision of a permit is subject to all requirements of this article and rules promulgated pursuant thereto and shall be accompanied by a filing fee of \$2000.

(3) Any extension to an area already covered by the permit, except incidental boundary revisions, shall be made by application for another permit. If the permittee desires to add the new area to his or her existing permit in order to have existing areas and new areas under one permit, the secretary may so amend the original permit: Provided, That the application for the new area is subject to all procedures and requirements applicable to applications for original permits under this article and a filing fee of \$550..

(c) The secretary shall review outstanding permits of a five-year term before the end of the third year of the permit. Other permits shall be reviewed within the time established by rules. The secretary may require reasonable revision or modification of the permit following review: Provided, That such revision or modification shall be based upon written findings and shall be preceded by notice to the permittee of an opportunity for hearing.

(d) No transfer, assignment or sale of the rights granted under any permit issued pursuant to this article shall be made without the prior written approval of the secretary, application for which shall be accompanied by a filing fee of \$1,500 for transfer or \$1,500 for assignment.

(e) Each request for inactive status shall be submitted on forms prescribed by the secretary, shall be accompanied by a filing fee of \$2000, and shall be granted in accordance with the procedure established in the *Surface Mining and Reclamation Rule*.

~~(f) The secretary shall promulgate for review and consideration by the West Virginia Legislature legislative rules or emergency rules during the 2016 Regular Session of the West Virginia Legislature revisions to rules for granting inactive status under this article. The secretary shall specifically consider the adoption of federal standards codified at 30 C.F.R. §816.131 (1979) and 30 C.F.R. §817.131 (1979).~~

§22-3-20. Public notice; written objections; public hearings; informal conferences.

(a) At the time of submission of an application for a surface-mining permit or a significant revision of an existing permit pursuant to the provisions of this article, the applicant shall submit to the department a copy of the required advertisement for public notice on a form and in a manner prescribed by the secretary, which manner may be electronic. ~~At the time of submission, the applicant shall place the advertisement in a local newspaper of general circulation in the county of the proposed surface mining operation at least once a week for four consecutive weeks.~~ The secretary shall notify various appropriate federal and state agencies as well as local governmental bodies, planning agencies and sewage and water treatment authorities or

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water companies in the locality in which the proposed surface-mining operation will take place, notifying them of the operator's intention to mine on a particularly described tract of land and indicating the application number and where a copy of the proposed mining and reclamation plan may be inspected. These local bodies, agencies, authorities or companies may submit written comments within a reasonable period established by the secretary on the mining application with respect to the effect of the proposed operation on the environment which is within their area of responsibility. ~~Such The~~ comments shall be immediately transmitted by the secretary to the applicant and to the appropriate office of the department. The secretary shall provide the name and address of each applicant to the commissioner of the division of labor who shall within fifteen days from receipt notify the secretary as to the applicant's compliance, if necessary, ~~with~~ pursuant to section fourteen, article five, chapter twenty-one of this code.

(b) Any person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected, or the officer or head of any federal, state or local governmental agency, has the right to file written objections to the proposed initial or revised permit application for a surface-mining operation with the secretary within ~~thirty~~ thirty 30 days after the last publication of the advertisement required in ~~subsection (a) §22-3-20(a)~~ of this ~~section code~~. ~~Such The~~ objections shall be immediately transmitted to the applicant by the secretary and shall be made available to the public. If written objections are filed and an informal conference requested within ~~thirty 30~~ days of the last publication of the above notice, the secretary shall then hold a conference in the locality of the proposed mining within ~~three weeks~~ a reasonable time after the close of the public comment period. Those requesting the conference shall be notified and the date, time and location of the informal conference shall also be advertised by the secretary ~~in a newspaper of general circulation in the locality on a form and in a manner prescribed by the secretary, which manner may be electronic.~~ at least two weeks prior to the scheduled conference date. The secretary may arrange with the applicant, upon request by any party to the conference proceeding, access to the proposed mining area for the purpose of gathering information relevant to the proceeding. An electronic or stenographic record shall be made of the conference proceeding unless waived by all parties. ~~Such The~~ record shall be maintained and shall be accessible to the parties at their respective expense until final release of the applicant's bond or other security posted in lieu thereof. The secretary's authorized agent ~~will~~ shall preside over the conference. In the event all parties requesting the informal conference stipulate agreement prior to the conference and withdraw their request, a conference need not be held.

§22-3-21. Decision of secretary on permit application; hearing thereon.

(a) If an informal conference has been held, the secretary shall issue and furnish the applicant for a permit and persons who were parties to the informal conference with the written finding granting or denying the permit, in whole or in part, and stating the reasons therefor within ~~thirty sixty~~ days of the informal conference, notwithstanding the requirements of subsection (a), section eighteen of this article.

(b) If the application is approved, the permit shall be issued. If the application is disapproved, specific reasons therefor must be set forth in the notification. Within thirty days after the applicant is notified of the secretary's decision, the applicant or any person with an interest which is or may be adversely affected may request a hearing before the surface mine board as provided in article one, chapter twenty-two-b of this code to review the secretary's decision.

§22-3-22. Designation of areas unsuitable for surface mining; petition for removal of designation; prohibition of surface mining on certain areas; exceptions; taxation of minerals underlying land designated unsuitable.

(a) The director shall establish a planning process to enable objective decisions based upon competent and scientifically sound data and information as to which, if any, land areas of this state are unsuitable for all or certain types of surface-mining operations pursuant to the standards set forth in subdivisions (1) and

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(2) of this subsection: Provided, That such designation shall not prevent prospecting pursuant to section seven of this article on any area so designated.

(1) Upon petition pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the director shall designate an area as unsuitable for all or certain types of surface-mining operations, if it determines that reclamation pursuant to the requirements of this article is not technologically and economically feasible.

(2) Upon petition pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, a surface area may be designated unsuitable for certain types of surface-mining operations, if the operations: (A) Conflict with existing state or local land use plans or programs; (B) affect fragile or historic lands in which the operations could result in significant damage to important historic, cultural, scientific and aesthetic values and natural systems; (C) affect renewable resource lands, including significant aquifers and aquifer recharge areas, in which the operations could result in a substantial loss or reduction of long-range productivity of water supply, food or fiber products; or (D) affect natural hazard lands in which the operations could substantially endanger life and property. Such lands shall include lands subject to frequent flooding and areas of unstable geology.

(3) The director shall develop a process which includes: (A) The review of surface-mining lands; (B) a data base and an inventory system which will permit proper evaluation of the capacity of different land areas of the state to support and permit reclamation of surface-mining operations; (C) a method for implementing land use planning decisions concerning surface-mining operations; and (D) proper notice and opportunities for public participation, including a public hearing prior to making any designation or redesignation pursuant to this section.

(4) Determinations of the unsuitability of land for surface mining, as provided for in this section, shall be integrated as closely as possible with present and future land use planning and regulation processes at federal, state and local levels.

(5) The requirements of this section do not apply to lands on which surface-mining operations were being conducted on the third day of August, one thousand nine hundred seventy-seven, or under a permit issued pursuant to this article, or where substantial legal and financial commitments in the operations were in existence prior to the fourth day of January, one thousand nine hundred seventy-seven.

(b) Any person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected has the right to petition the director to have an area designated as unsuitable for surface-mining operations or to have such a designation terminated. The petition shall contain allegations of fact with supporting evidence which would tend to establish the allegations. After receipt of the petition, the director shall immediately begin an administrative study of the area specified in the petition. Within ten months after receipt of the petition, the director shall hold a public hearing in the locality of the affected area after appropriate notice and publication of the date, time and location of the hearing. After the director or any person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected has filed a petition and before the hearing required by this subsection, any person may intervene by filing allegations of fact with supporting evidence which would tend to establish the allegations. Within sixty days after the hearing, the director shall issue and furnish to the petitioner and any other party to the hearing, a written decision regarding the petition and the reasons therefor. In the event that all the petitioners stipulate agreement prior to the requested hearing and withdraw their request, the hearing need not be held.

(c) Prior to designating any land areas as unsuitable for surface-mining operations, the director shall prepare a detailed statement on: (1) The potential coal resources of the area; (2) the demand for the coal resources; and (3) the impact of the designation on the environment, the economy and the supply of coal.

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(d) After the third day of August, one thousand nine hundred seventy-seven, and subject to valid existing rights, no surface-mining operations, except those which existed on that date, shall be permitted:

(1) On any lands in this state within the boundaries of units of the national park system, the national wildlife refuge systems, the national system of trails, the national wilderness preservation system, the wild and scenic rivers system, including study rivers designated under section five-a of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and national recreation areas designated by act of Congress;

(2) Which will adversely affect any publicly owned park or places included in the national register of historic sites, or national register of natural landmarks unless approved jointly by the director and the federal, state or local agency with jurisdiction over the park, the historic site or natural landmark;

(3) Within one hundred feet of the outside right-of-way line on any public road, except where mine access roads or haulage roads join such right-of-way line, and except that the director may permit the roads to be relocated or the area affected to lie within one hundred feet of the road if, after public notice and an opportunity for a public hearing in the locality, the director makes a written finding that the interests of the public and the landowners affected thereby will be protected;

(4) Within three hundred feet from any occupied dwelling, unless waived by the owner thereof, or within three hundred feet of any public building, school, church, community or institutional building, public park, or within one hundred feet of a cemetery; or

(5) On any federal lands within the boundaries of any national forest: Provided, That surface coal mining operations may be permitted on the lands if the secretary of the interior finds that there are no significant recreational, timber, economic or other values which may be incompatible with the surface-mining operations: Provided, however, That the surface operations and impacts are incident to an underground coal mine.

(e) Notwithstanding any other provision of this code, the coal underlying any lands designated unsuitable for surface-mining operations under any provisions of this article or underlying any land upon which mining is prohibited by any provisions of this article shall be assessed for taxation purposes according to their value and the Legislature hereby finds that the coal has no value for the duration of the designation or prohibition unless suitable for underground mining not in violation of this article: Provided, That the owner of the coal shall forthwith notify the proper assessing authorities if the designation or prohibition is removed so that the coal may be reassessed.

§22-3-22a. Blasting restrictions; site specific blasting design requirement.

(a) For purposes of this section, the term "production blasting" means blasting that removes the overburden to expose underlying coal seams and shall not include construction blasting.

(b) For purposes of this section, the term "construction blasting" means blasting to develop haul roads, mine access roads, coal preparation plants, drainage structures, or underground coal mine sites and shall not include production blasting.

(c) For purposes of this section, the term "protected structure" means any of the following structures that are situated outside the permit area: An occupied dwelling, a temporarily unoccupied dwelling which has been occupied within the past ninety days, a public building, a structure for commercial purposes, a school, a church, a community or institutional building, a public park or a water well.

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(d) Production blasting is prohibited within three hundred feet of a protected structure or within one hundred feet of a cemetery.

(e) Blasting within one thousand feet of a protected structure shall have a site-specific blast design approved by the ~~office of explosives and blasting~~ Division of Mining and Reclamation. The site-specific blast design shall limit the type of explosives and detonating equipment, the size, the timing and frequency of blasts to do the following:

(1) prevent injury to persons;

(2) prevent damage to public and private property outside the permit area;

(3) prevent adverse impacts on any underground mine;

(4) prevent change in the course, channel or availability of ground or surface water outside the permit area; and

(5) reduce dust outside the permit area.

In the development of a site-specific blasting plan consideration shall be given, but is not limited to, the physical condition, type and quality of construction of the protected structure, the current use of the protected structure and the concerns of the owner or occupant living in the protected structures identified in the blasting schedule notification area.

(f) An owner or occupant of a protected structure may waive the blasting prohibition within three hundred feet. If a protected structure is occupied by a person other than the owner, both the owner and the occupant of the protected structure shall waive the blasting prohibition within three hundred feet in writing. The operator shall send copies of all written waivers executed pursuant to this subsection to the ~~office of explosives and blasting~~ Division of Mining and Reclamation. Written waivers executed and filed with the ~~office of explosives and blasting~~ Division of Mining and Reclamation are valid during the life of the permit or any renewals of the permit and are enforceable against any subsequent owners or occupants of the protected structure.

(g) The provisions of this section shall not apply to the following: (1) Underground coal mining operations; (2) the surface operations and surface impacts incident to an underground coal mine; and (3) the extraction of minerals by underground mining methods or the surface impacts of the underground mining methods: Provided, That nothing contained in this section may be construed to exempt any coal mining operation from the general performance standards as contained in section thirteen of this article and any rules promulgated pursuant to this section.

§22-3-23. Release of bond or deposits; application; notice; duties of director; public hearings; final maps on grade release.

(a) The permittee may file a request with the director for the release of a bond or deposit. The permittee shall publish an advertisement regarding the request for release in the same manner as is required of advertisements for permit applications. A copy of the advertisement shall be submitted to the director as part of any bond release application and shall contain a notification of the precise location of the land affected, the number of acres, the permit and the date approved, the amount of the bond filed and the portion sought to be released, the type and appropriate dates of reclamation work performed and a description of the results achieved as they relate to the permittee's approved reclamation plan. In addition, as part of any bond release application, the permittee shall submit copies of letters which the permittee has sent to

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adjoining property owners, local government bodies, planning agencies, sewage and water treatment authorities or water companies in the locality in which the surface-mining operation is located, notifying them of the permittee's intention to seek release from the bond. Any request for grade release shall also be accompanied by final maps.

(b) Upon receipt of the application for bond release, the director, within thirty days, taking into consideration existing weather conditions, shall conduct an inspection and evaluation of the reclamation work involved. The evaluation shall consider, among other things, the degree of difficulty to complete any remaining reclamation, whether pollution of surface and subsurface water is occurring, the probability of continuance or future occurrence of the pollution and the estimated cost of abating the pollution. The director shall notify the permittee in writing of his or her decision to release or not to release all or part of the bond or deposit within sixty days from the date of the initial publication of the advertisement if no public hearing is requested. If a public hearing is held, the director's decision shall be issued within thirty days thereafter.

(c) If the director is satisfied that reclamation covered by the bond or deposit or portion thereof has been accomplished as required by this article, he or she may release said bond or deposit, in whole or in part, according to the following schedule:

(1) When the operator completes the backfilling, regrading and drainage control of a bonded area in accordance with the operator's approved reclamation plan, the release of sixty percent of the bond or collateral for the applicable bonded area:

(2) After revegetation has been established on the regraded mined lands in accordance with the approved reclamation plan. When determining the amount of bond to be released after successful revegetation has been established, the secretary shall retain that amount of bond for the revegetated area which would be sufficient for a third party to cover the cost of reestablishing revegetation and for the period specified for operator responsibility in section thirteen of this article. No part of the bond or deposit shall be released under this subsection so long as the lands to which the release would be applicable are contributing suspended solids to streamflow or runoff outside the permit area in excess of the requirements set by subdivision (10), subsection (b), section thirteen of this article or until soil productivity for prime farm lands has returned to equivalent levels of yield as nonmined land of the same soil type in the surrounding area under equivalent management practices as determined from the soil survey performed pursuant to subdivision (15), subsection (a), section nine of this article. Where a silt dam is to be retained as a permanent impoundment pursuant to subdivision (8), subsection (b), section thirteen of this article, the portion of bond may be released under this subdivision so long as provisions for sound future maintenance by the operator or the landowner have been made with the secretary.

(3) When the operator has completed successfully all surface coal mining and reclamation activities, the release of the remaining portion of the bond, but not before the expiration of the period specified for operator responsibility in section thirteen of this article: *Provided*, That no bond shall be fully released until all reclamation requirements of this article are fully met: *Proved, however*,

(d) If the ~~director~~ secretary disapproves the application for release of the bond or portion thereof, the director shall notify the permittee, in writing, stating the reasons for disapproval and recommending corrective actions necessary to secure the release and notifying the operator of the right to a hearing.

(e) When any application for total or partial bond release is filed with the ~~director~~ secretary, he or she shall notify the municipality in which a surface-mining operation is located by registered or certified mail at least thirty days prior to the release of all or a portion of the bond.

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(f) Any person with a valid legal interest which is or may be adversely affected by release of the bond or the responsible officer or head of any federal, state or local governmental agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental, social or economic impact involved in the operation, or is authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards with respect to the operations, has the right to file written objections to the proposed bond release and request a hearing with ~~the director~~ secretary within thirty days after the last publication of the permittee's advertisement. If written objections are filed and a hearing requested, the ~~director~~ secretary shall inform all of the interested parties of the time and place of the hearing and shall hold a public hearing in the locality of the surface-mining operation proposed for bond release within three weeks after the close of the public comment period. The date, time and location of the public hearing shall also be advertised by the director in a newspaper of general circulation in the same locality.

(g) Without prejudice to the rights of the objectors, the applicant, or the responsibilities of the ~~director~~ secretary pursuant to this section, the ~~director~~ secretary may hold an informal conference to resolve any written objections and satisfy the hearing requirements of this section thereby.

(h) For the purpose of the hearing, the ~~director~~ secretary has the authority and is hereby empowered to administer oaths, subpoena witnesses and written or printed materials, compel the attendance of witnesses, or production of materials, and take evidence including, but not limited to, inspections of the land affected and other surface-mining operations carried on by the applicant in the general vicinity. A verbatim record of each public hearing required by this section shall be made and a transcript made available on the motion of any party or by order of the director at the cost of the person requesting the transcript.

(i) The secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval during the 2018 regular session of the Legislature in accordance with the provisions of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of the code and revisions to the Legislative Rule entitled West Virginia Surface Mining Reclamation Rule, Title 38, Series 2 of the West Virginia Code of State Rules, to implement the revisions to this article made during the 2017 legislative session. The secretary shall specifically consider the adoption of corresponding federal standards codified at 30 C.F.R. 700 *et. seq.*

§22-3-24. Water rights and replacement; waiver of replacement.

(a) Nothing in this article affects in any way the rights of any person to enforce or protect, under applicable law, the person's interest in water resources affected by a surface-mining operation.

(b) Any operator shall replace the water supply of an owner of interest in real property who obtains all or part of the owner's supply of water for domestic, agricultural, industrial or other legitimate use from an underground or surface source where such supply has been affected by contamination, diminution or interruption proximately caused by such surface-mining operation, unless waived by said owner.

(c) There is a rebuttable presumption that a mining operation caused damage to an owner's underground water supply if the inspector determines the following: (1) Contamination, diminution or damage to an owner's underground water supply exists; and (2) a pre-blast survey was performed, consistent with the provisions of section thirteen-a of this article, on the owner's property including the underground water supply that indicated that contamination, diminution or damage to the underground water supply did not exist prior to the mining conducted at the mining operation.

(d) The operator conducting the mining operation shall: (1) Provide an emergency drinking water supply within twenty-four hours; (2) provide temporary water supply within seventy-two hours; (3) within thirty days begin activities to establish a permanent water supply or submit a proposal to the secretary outlining the measures and timetables to be utilized in establishing a permanent supply. The total time for

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providing a permanent water supply may not exceed two years. If the operator demonstrates that providing a permanent replacement water supply cannot be completed within two years, the secretary may extend the time frame on case-by-case basis; and (4) pay all reasonable costs incurred by the owner in securing a water supply.

(e) An owner aggrieved under the provisions of subsections (b) or (c) of this section, may seek relief in court or pursuant to the provisions of section five, article three-a of this chapter.

(f) The director shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with the provisions of article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code, to implement the requirements of this section.

(g) The provisions of subsection (c) of this section shall not apply to the following: (1) Underground coal mining operations; (2) the surface operations and surface impacts incident to an underground coal mine; and (3) the extraction of minerals by underground mining methods or the surface impacts of the underground mining methods.

(h) Notwithstanding the denial of the operator of responsibility for the damage of the owners water supply or the status of any appeal on determination of liability for the damage to the owners water supply, the operator may not discontinue providing the required water service until authorized by the division.

Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (g), on and after the effective date of the amendment and reenactment of this section during the regular legislative session of two thousand six, the provisions of this section shall apply to all mining operations, for water replacement claims resulting from mining operations regardless of when the claim arose.

§22-3-25. Citizen suits; order of court; damages.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, any person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected may commence a civil action in the circuit court of the county to which the surface-mining operation is located on the person's own behalf to compel compliance with this article:

(1) Against the state of West Virginia or any other governmental instrumentality or agency thereof, to the extent permitted by the West Virginia constitution and by law, which is alleged to be in violation of the provisions of this article or any rule, order or permit issued pursuant thereto, or against any other person who is alleged to be in violation of any rule, order or permit issued pursuant to this article; or

(2) Against the director, division, surface mine board or appropriate division employees, to the extent permitted by the West Virginia constitution and by law, where there is alleged a failure of the above to perform any act or duty under this article which is not discretionary.

(b) No action may be commenced:

(1) Under subdivision (1), subsection (a) of this section: (A) Prior to sixty days after the plaintiff has given notice in writing of the violation to the director or to any alleged violator, or (B) if the director has commenced and is diligently prosecuting a civil action in a circuit court to require compliance with the provisions of this article or any rule, order or permit issued pursuant to this article; or

(2) Under subdivision (2), subsection (a) of this section prior to sixty days after the plaintiff has given notice in writing of such action to the director, except that such action may be brought immediately after such notification in the case where the violation or order complained of constitutes an imminent threat to the health or safety of the plaintiff or would immediately affect a legal interest of the plaintiff.

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(c) Any action respecting a violation of this article or the rules thereunder may be brought in any appropriate circuit court. In such action under this section, the director, if not a party, may intervene as a matter of right.

(d) The court in issuing any final order in any action brought pursuant to subsection (a) of this section may award costs of litigation, including reasonable attorney and expert witness fees, to any party whenever the court determines such award is appropriate. The court may, if a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction is sought, require the filing of a bond or equivalent security.

(e) Nothing in this section restricts any right which any person or class of persons may have under any statute or common law to seek enforcement of any of the provisions of this article and the rules thereunder or to seek any other relief.

(f) Any person or property who is injured through the violation by any operator of any rule, order or permit issued pursuant to this article may bring an action for damages, including reasonable attorney and expert witness fees, in any court of competent jurisdiction. Nothing in this subsection affects the rights established by or limits imposed under state workers' compensation laws.

(g) This section applies to violations of this article and the rules promulgated thereto, or orders or permits issued pursuant to said article insofar as said violations, rules, orders and permits relate to surface-mining operations.

§22-3-26. Surface-mining operations not subject to article.

The provisions of this article do not apply to any of the following activities:

(a) The extraction of coal by a landowner for the landowner's own noncommercial use from land owned or leased by the landowner.

(b) The extraction of coal as an incidental part of federal, state, county, municipal or other local government-financed highway or other construction: Provided, That the provisions of the construction contract require the furnishing of a suitable bond which provides for reclamation, wherever practicable, of the area affected by such extraction.

§22-3-27. Leasing of lands owned by state for surface mining of coal.

No land or interest in land owned by the state may be leased, and no present lease may be renewed by the state, nor any agency of the state, for the purpose of conducting surface-mining operations thereon unless said lease or renewal has been first authorized by an act of the Legislature: Provided, That the provisions of this section do not apply to underground mining on such land.

§22-3-28. Special authorization for reclamation of existing abandoned coal processing waste piles; coal extraction pursuant to a government-financed reclamation contract; coal extraction as an incidental part of development of land for commercial, residential, industrial or civic use; no cost reclamation contract.⁵

⁵OSM did not approve §22-3-28(a), (b), and (c) concerning coal extraction as an incidental part of development of land for commercial, residential, industrial, or civic use. Federal Register Tuesday, February 9, 1999

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(a) Except where exempted by section twenty-six of this article, it is unlawful for any person to engage in surface-mining as defined in this article as an incident to the development of land for commercial, residential, industrial or civic use without having first obtained from the director a permit therefor as provided in section eight of this article, unless a special authorization therefore has been first obtained from the director as provided in this section.

Application for a special authorization to engage in surface-mining as an incident to the development of land for commercial, residential, industrial or civic use shall be made in writing on forms prescribed by the director and shall be signed and verified by the applicant. The application shall be accompanied by:

(1) A site preparation plan, prepared and certified by or under the supervision of a person approved by the director, showing the tract of land which the applicant proposes to develop for commercial, residential, industrial or civic use; the probable boundaries and areas of the coal deposit to be mined and removed from said tract of land incident to the proposed commercial, residential, industrial or civic use thereof; and such other information as prescribed by the director;

(2) A development plan for the proposed commercial, residential, industrial or civic use of said land;

(3) The name of owner of the surface of the land to be developed;

(4) The name of owner of the coal to be mined incident to the development of the land;

(5) A reasonable estimate of the number of acres of coal that would be mined as a result of the proposed development of said land: Provided, That in no event may such number of acres to be mined, excluding roadways, exceed five acres; and

(6) Such other information as the director may require to satisfy and assure the director that the surface-mining under special authorization is incidental or secondary to the proposed commercial, residential, industrial or civic use of said land.

(b) There shall be attached to the application for the special authorization a certificate of insurance certifying that the applicant has in force a public liability insurance policy issued by an insurance company authorized to do business in this state affording personal injury protection in accordance with subsection (d), section nine of this article.

The application for the special authorization shall also be accompanied by a bond, or cash or collateral securities or certificates of the same type, in the form as prescribed by the director and in the minimum amount of two thousand dollars per acre, for a maximum disturbance of five acres.

The bond shall be payable to the state of West Virginia and conditioned that the applicant complete the site preparation for the proposed commercial, residential, industrial or civic use of said land. At the conclusion of the site preparation, in accordance with the site preparation plan submitted with the application, the bond conditions are satisfied and the bond and any cash, securities or certificates furnished with said bond may be released and returned to the applicant. The filing fee for the special authorization is five hundred dollars. The special authorization is valid for two years.

(c) The purpose of this section is to vest jurisdiction in the director, where the surface-mining is incidental or secondary to the preparation of land for commercial, residential, industrial or civic use and where, as an incident to such preparation of land, minerals must be removed, including, but not limited to, the building and construction of railroads, shopping malls, factory and industrial sites, residential and

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building sites and recreational areas. Anyone who has been issued a special authorization may not be issued an additional special authorization on the same or adjacent tract of land unless satisfactory evidence has been submitted to the director that such authorization is necessary to subsequent development or construction. As long as the operator complies with the purpose and provisions of this section, the other sections of this article are not applicable to the operator holding a special authorization: Provided, That the director shall promulgate rules establishing applicable performance standards for operations permitted under this section.

(d) The director may, in the exercise of his or her sound discretion, when not in conflict with the purposes and findings of this article and to bring about a more desirable land use or to protect the public and the environment, issue a reclamation contract solely for the removal of existing abandoned coal processing waste piles: Provided, That a bond and a reclamation plan is required for such operations.

(e) No person may engage in coal extraction pursuant to a government-financed reclamation contract without a valid surface-mining permit issued pursuant to this article unless such person affirmatively demonstrates that he is eligible to secure special authorization pursuant to this section to engage in a government-financed reclamation contract authorizing incidental and necessary coal extraction. The director shall determine eligibility before entering into a government-financed reclamation contract authorizing incidental and necessary coal extraction. The director may provide the special authorization as part of the government-financed reclamation contract: Provided, That the contract contains and does not violate the requirements of this section. The director may not be required to grant a special authorization to any eligible person. The director may, however, in his or her discretion, grant a special authorization allowing incidental and necessary coal extraction pursuant to a government-financed reclamation contract in accordance with this section.

Only eligible persons may secure special authorization to engage in incidental and necessary coal extraction pursuant to a government-financed reclamation contract. Any eligible person who proposes to engage in coal extraction pursuant to a government-financed reclamation contract may request and secure special authorization from the director to conduct such activities under this section. A special authorization can only be obtained if a clause is inserted in a government-financed reclamation contract authorizing such extraction and the person requesting such authorization has affirmatively demonstrated to the director's satisfaction that he or she has satisfied the provisions of this section. A special authorization shall only be granted by the director prior to the commencement of coal extraction on a project area. In order to be considered for a special authorization by the director, an eligible person must meet the permit eligibility requirements of this article and demonstrate at a minimum that:

(1) The primary purpose of the operation to be undertaken is the reclamation of abandoned or forfeited mine lands;

(2) The extraction of coal will be incidental and necessary to accomplish the reclamation of abandoned or forfeited⁶ mine lands pursuant to a government-financed reclamation contract;

(3) Incidental and necessary coal extraction will be confined to the project area being reclaimed;
or

(4) All coal extraction and reclamation activity undertaken pursuant to a government-financed reclamation project will be accomplished pursuant to the applicable environmental protection performance standards and conditions included in the government-financed reclamation contract.

⁶ OSM approval was limited to incidental extraction of coal on Abandoned Mine Land reclamation (AML) projects.

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Prior to commencing coal extraction pursuant to a government-financed reclamation project, the contractor shall file with the director a performance bond conditioned upon the contractor's performance of all the requirements of the government-financed reclamation contract pursuant to this article. For a no cost reclamation contract, the criteria for establishing the amount of the performance bond shall be the engineering estimate, determined by the director: Provided, That the director may establish a lesser bond amount for long term, no cost reclamation projects in which the reclamation schedule extends beyond two years. In these contracts, the director may in the alternative establish a bond amount which reflects the cost of the proportionate amount of reclamation which will occur during a specified period. The performance bond which is provided by the contractor under a federally financed or state financed reclamation contract shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of this section: Provided, however, That the amount of such bond is equivalent to or greater than the amount determined by the criteria set forth in this subsection.

(f) Any person engaging in coal extraction pursuant to this section is subject to the following:

(1) Payment of all applicable taxes and fees related to coal extraction;

(2) Replacement or restoration of the water supply of an owner of interest in real property who obtains all or part of the owner's supply of water for domestic, agricultural, industrial or other legitimate use from an underground or surface source where such supply has been affected by contamination, diminution or interruption proximately caused by coal extraction;

(3) Extraction pursuant to this section cannot be initiated without the consent of the surface owner for right of entry and consent of the mineral owner for extraction of coal.

§22-3-29. Experimental practices.

In order to encourage advances in surface mining and reclamation practices or to allow postmining land use for industrial, commercial, residential, agricultural or public use, including recreational facilities, the director may authorize departures, in individual cases and on an experimental basis, from the environmental protection performance standards promulgated under this article. Such departures may be authorized if the experimental practices are potentially more or at least as environmentally protective during and after surface-mining operations as those required by promulgated standards; the surface-mining operations approved for particular land use or other purposes are not larger or more numerous than necessary to determine the effectiveness and economic feasibility of the experimental practices; and the experimental practices do not reduce the protection afforded health or safety of the public below that provided by promulgated standards.

§22-3-30. Certification and training of blasters.

The director is responsible for the training, examination and certification of persons engaging in or directly responsible for blasting or use of explosives in surface-mining operations.

§22-3-30a. Blasting requirements; liability and civil penalties in the event of property damage.

(a) Blasting shall be conducted in accordance with the rules and laws established to regulate blasting.

(b) If the division of environmental protection establishes after an inspection that a blast at a surface coal mine operation as defined by the provisions of subdivision (2), subsection (a), section thirteen-a of this article was not in compliance with the regulations governing blasting parameters and resulted in property damage to a protected structure, as defined in section twenty-two-a of this article, other than water wells,

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the following penalties shall be imposed for each permit area or contiguous permit areas where the blasting was out of compliance:

(1) For the first offense, the operator shall be assessed a penalty of not less than one thousand dollars nor more than five thousand dollars.

(2) For the second offense and each subsequent offense within one year of the first offense, the surface-mining operator shall be assessed a penalty of not less than five thousand dollars nor more than ten thousand dollars.

(3) For the third offense and any subsequent offense within one year of the first offense, or for the failure to pay any assessment set forth within a reasonable time established by the ~~director~~ secretary, the surface-mining operator's permit shall be subject to an immediate issuance of a cessation order, as set out in section sixteen of this article. The cessation order shall only be released upon written order of the ~~director~~ secretary of the ~~Division~~ Department of Environmental Protection when the following conditions have been met:

(A) A written plan has been established and filed with the ~~director~~ secretary assuring that additional violations will not occur;

(B) The permittee has provided compensation for the property damages or the assurance of adequate compensation for the property damages that have occurred; and

(C) A permittee shall provide such monetary and other assurances as the ~~director~~ secretary considers appropriate to compensate for future property damages. The monetary assurances required shall be in an amount at least equal to the amount of compensation required in paragraph (B), subdivision (3) of this subsection.

(4) In addition to the penalties described in subdivisions (1), (2) and (3) of this subsection, for the second and subsequent offenses on any one permitted area regardless of the time period, the owner of the protected structure is entitled to a rebuttable presumption that the property damage is a result of the blast if: (A) A pre-blast survey was performed; and (B) the blasting site to which the second or subsequent offense relates is within seven tenths of a mile of the protected structure.

(5) No more than one offense shall arise out of any one shot. For purposes of this section, "shot" means a single blasting event composed of one or multiple detonations of explosive material, or the assembly of explosive materials for this purpose. One "shot" may be composed of numerous explosive charges detonated at intervals measured in milliseconds.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a) and (b) of this section, the division of environmental protection may not impose penalties, as provided for in subsection (b) of this section, on an operator for the violation of any rule identified in subsection (b) of this section that is merely administrative in nature.

(d) The remedies provided in this section are not exclusive and may not bar an owner or occupant from any other remedy accorded by law.

(e) Where inspection by the division of environmental protection establishes that production blasting, in violation of section twenty-two-a of this article, was done within three hundred feet of a protected structure, without an approved site-specific blast design or not in accordance with an approved site-specific blast design for production blasting within one thousand feet of any protected structure as defined in section

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twenty-two-a of this article, or within one hundred feet of a cemetery, the monetary penalties and revocation, as set out in subsection (b) of this section, apply.

(f) All penalties and liabilities as set forth in subsection (b) of this section shall be assessed by the ~~director~~ secretary, collected by the ~~director~~ secretary and deposited with the Treasurer of the State of West Virginia, in the "General School Fund".

(g) The ~~director~~ secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval pursuant to article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code for the implementation of this section.

(h) The provisions of this section shall not apply to the extraction of minerals by underground mining methods: *Provided*, That nothing contained in this section may be construed to exempt any coal mining operation from the general performance standards as contained in section thirteen of this article and any rules promulgated pursuant thereto.

§22-3-31. Conflict of interest prohibited; criminal penalties therefor; employee protection.

(a) No employee of the division engaged in the enforcement or administration of this article or employee of the surface mine board performing any function or duty under this article shall have a direct or indirect financial interest in any surface-mining operation. Whoever knowingly violates the provisions of this subsection is guilty of a misdemeanor, and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not more than two thousand five hundred dollars, or imprisoned in the county jail not more than one year, or both fined and imprisoned. The director shall establish methods by which the provisions of this subsection will be monitored and enforced, including appropriate provisions for the filing and the review of statements and supplements thereto concerning any financial interest which may be affected by this subsection.

(b) No person shall discharge or in any other way discriminate against, or cause to be fired or discriminated against, any employee or any authorized representative of employees by reason of the fact that the employee or representative has filed, instituted, or caused to be filed or instituted, any proceeding under this article, or has testified or is about to testify in any proceeding resulting from the administration or enforcement of the provisions of this article.

(c) Any employee or a representative of employees who has reason to believe that he or she has been fired or otherwise discriminated against by any person in violation of subsection (b) of this section may, within thirty days after the alleged violation occurs, petition to the surface mine board for a review of the firing or discrimination. The employee or representative is the petitioner and shall serve a copy of the petition upon the person or operator who will be the respondent. The participants shall be given ten days' written notice of the hearing before the board and the hearing shall be held within thirty days of the filing of the petition. The board shall have the same powers and shall hear the petition in the same manner as provided in article one, chapter twenty-two-b of this code.

(d) If the board finds that the alleged violation did occur, it shall issue an order incorporating therein findings of fact and conclusions requiring the participant committing the violation to take such affirmative action to abate the violation by appropriate action, including, but not limited to, the hiring or reinstatement of the employee or representative to his former position with compensation. If the board finds no violation, it shall issue a finding to that effect. Orders issued by the board under this section shall be subject to judicial review in the same manner as other orders of the board issued under this article or article one, chapter twenty-two-b of this code.

(e) Whenever an order is issued under this section to abate any violation, at the request of the petitioner a sum equal to the aggregate costs and expenses, including attorneys' fees to have been reasonably incurred

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by the petitioner for, or in connection with, the institution and prosecution of the proceedings, shall be assessed against the person committing the violation.

§22-3-32. Special tax on coal production; mines and minerals operations fund.

(a) Imposition of tax. -- Upon every person in this state engaging in the privilege of severing, extracting, reducing to possession or producing coal for sale, profit or commercial use, there is hereby imposed an annual tax equal to two cents per ton of coal produced by such person for sale, profit or commercial use during such person's taxable year. The special tax imposed by this section is in addition to all other taxes levied by law. In no event may a ton of coal be taxed more than once under the provisions of this section.

(b) Payment and collection of tax. -- The tax imposed by this section shall be collected by the tax commissioner in the same manner, at the same time, and upon the same tonnage as the minimum severance tax imposed by article twelve-b, chapter eleven of this code is collected: Provided, That under no circumstance shall this tax be construed to be an increase in either the minimum severance tax imposed by said article twelve-b or the severance tax imposed by article thirteen of said chapter eleven. Every person liable for payment of this special tax shall pay the amount due without notice or demand for payment. The tax commissioner shall provide to the director a quarterly listing of all persons known to be delinquent in payment of the special tax. The director may take such delinquencies into account in making determinations on the issuance, renewal or revision of any permit.

(c) Mining and Reclamation Operations Fund. -- The special fund previously created in the state treasury known as the "Mines and Minerals Operations Fund" is renamed the "Mining and Reclamation Operations Fund". The tax commissioner shall, at least quarterly, deposit into the fund the net amount of tax collected under this section, including any additions to tax, penalties and interest collected with respect thereto. The treasurer shall deposit all moneys deposited in or credited to this fund in an interest-bearing account, with the amount of interest earned being credited to this fund as it is earned. The moneys in this special fund shall be expended solely for the purposes of carrying out those statutory duties relating to the enforcement of environmental regulatory programs for the coal industry as imposed by this chapter and the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 and any amendments thereto. Expenditures from the fund are not authorized from collections but are to be made only in accordance with appropriations by the Legislature and in accordance with the provisions of article three, chapter twelve of this code and upon fulfillment of the provisions set forth in article two, chapter five-a of this code.

(d) General procedure and administration. -- Each and every provision of the "West Virginia Tax Procedure and Administration Act" set forth in article ten, chapter eleven of the code applies to the special tax imposed by this section with like effect as if such act were applicable only to the special tax imposed by this section and were set forth in extenso in this article, notwithstanding the provisions of section three of said article ten.

(e) Crimes and penalties. -- Each and every provision of the "West Virginia Tax Crimes and Penalties Act" set forth in article nine of said chapter eleven applies to the special tax imposed by this section with like effect as if such act were applicable only to the special tax imposed by this section and set forth in extenso in this article, notwithstanding the provisions of section two of said article nine.

(f) Effective date. -- The special tax imposed by this section applies to all coal produced in this state after the thirtieth day of September, one thousand nine hundred ninety-one.

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§22-3-32a. Special tax on coal; clarification of imposition of tax; procedures for collection and administration of tax.

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature to clarify that from the date of its enactment, the special tax on coal imposed pursuant to the provisions of section thirty-two of this article is intended to be in addition to any other taxes imposed on every person in this state engaging in the privilege of severing, extracting, reducing to possession or producing coal for sale profit or commercial use including, but not limited to the tax imposed by section eleven of this article, the tax imposed by article twelve- b, chapter eleven of this code, the taxes imposed by article thirteen-a of said chapter and the tax imposed by article thirteen- v of said chapter.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provisions of section thirty-two of this article to the contrary, under no circumstance shall an exemption from the taxes imposed by article twelve-b, thirteen-a or thirteen-v, chapter eleven of this code be construed to be an exemption from the tax imposed by section thirty-two of this article.

(c) When coal included in the measure of the tax imposed by section thirty-two of this article is exempt from the tax imposed by article twelve-b, chapter eleven of this code, the tax imposed by section thirty-two of this article shall be paid to the tax commissioner in accordance with the provisions of sections four through fourteen, inclusive, article twelve-b, chapter eleven of this code, which provisions are hereby incorporated by reference in this article.

§22-3-33. Attorney fees and costs.

(a) As a result of any administrative proceeding under this article, at the request of any person, a sum equal to the aggregate amount of all costs and expenses, including attorney fees, as determined by the court or the Surface Mine Board to have been reasonably incurred by the requesting person for or in connection with his or her participation in the administrative proceeding, including any judicial review of agency actions, may be assessed against either party as the court, resulting from judicial review or the Surface Mine Board, resulting from administrative proceedings, considers proper.

(b) On a finding that a claim was brought in bad faith or for the purposes of harassment, the Surface Mine Board or the court, whichever is appropriate, may award to the defendant or respondent, however designated, a sum equal to the aggregate amount of all costs and expenses, including attorney fees, as determined to have been reasonably incurred.

(c) The secretary shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with the provisions of article three, chapter twenty- nine-a of this code that are necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

§22-3-34. Office of explosives and blasting terminated; transfer of functions; responsibilities, personnel and assets.

The office of explosives and blasting within the Department of Environmental Protection is hereby terminated. ~~, and its authority and functions are transferred to the Division of Mining and Reclamation. With this transfer, all records, assets, and contracts, along with the rights and obligations thereunder, obtained or signed on behalf of the office of explosives and blasting are hereby transferred and assigned to the Division of Mining and Reclamation. The secretary shall transfer from the office of explosives and blasting to the Division of Mining and Reclamation any personnel and assets presently used in the performance of the duties and functions required by sections thirty four through thirty seven of this article.~~

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§22-3-35. Legislative rules on surface-mining blasting; disciplinary procedures for certified blasters.

(a) The Division of Mining and Reclamation shall apply and enforce the previously existing rules of the former office of explosive and blasting at 199 CSR 1 until such time as it adopts rules of its own to implement this section, but shall promulgate rules for legislative approval in accordance with the provisions of section fifteen, article three, chapter twenty-nine-a of this code as necessary to reflect the repeal of section seven, article three-a, of this chapter of the Code of West Virginia, as amended. Any rules promulgated by the Division of Mining and Reclamation shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) A procedure for the review, modification and approval, prior to the issuance of any permit, of any blasting plan required to be submitted with any application for a permit to be issued by the secretary pursuant to article three of this chapter, which sets forth procedures for the inspection and monitoring of blasting operations for compliance with blasting laws and rules, and for the review and modification of the blasting plan of any operator against whom an enforcement action is taken by the Department of Environmental Protection;

(2) Specific minimum requirements for preblast surveys, as set forth in section thirteen-a, article three of this chapter;

(3) A procedure for review of preblast surveys required to be submitted under section thirteen-a, article three of this chapter;

(4) A procedure for the use of seismographs for production blasting which shall be made part of the blasting log;

(5) A procedure to warn of impending blasting to the owners or occupants adjoining the blasting area;

(6) A procedure to limit the type of explosives and detonating equipment, the size, the timing and frequency of blasts based upon the physical conditions of the site so as to: (A) Prevent injury to persons; (B) prevent damage to public and private property outside the permit area; (C) prevent adverse impacts on any underground mine; (D) prevent change in the course, channel or availability of ground or surface water outside the permit area; and (E) reduce dust outside the permit area;

(7) Provisions for requiring mining operators to publish the planned blasting schedule in a newspaper of general circulation in the locality of the mining operation;

(8) Provisions for requiring mining operators to provide adequate advance written notice of the proposed blasting schedule to local governments, owners and occupants living within the distances prescribed in subsection (a), section thirteen-a, article three of this chapter;

(9) Provisions for establishing a process for the education, training, examination and certification of blasters working on surface-mining operations;

(10) Provisions for establishing a process for the education, training, examination and certification of blasters working on surface-mining operations;

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(11) Provisions for establishing a fee on each quantity of explosive material used for any purpose on surface mining operations, which fee shall be calculated to generate sufficient money to provide for the operation of the explosives and blasting program and the Division of Energy. The secretary shall deposit all moneys received from these fees into a special revenue fund in the State Treasury known as the Mountaintop Removal Fund to be expended by the secretary and the Division of Energy in the performance of their duties.

§22-3-36. Claims process for blasting.

- (a) The Division of Mining and Reclamation shall establish and manage a process for the filing, administration and resolution of claims related to blasting.
- (b) Claims which may be filed and determined under the provisions of this section shall be those arising from both of the following:
- (1) Damage to property arising from blasting activities conducted pursuant to a permit granted under article three of this chapter; and
- (c) The claims process established by the Division of Mining and Reclamation shall include the following:
- (1) An initial determination by the Division of Mining and Reclamation of the merit of the claim; and
- (2) An arbitration process whereby the claim can be determined and resolved by an arbitrator in a manner which is inexpensive, prompt and fair to all parties.
- (d) If the operator disagrees with the initial determination made by the division of Mining and Reclamation and requests arbitration, then the following shall apply:
- (1) Any party may be represented by a representative of their choice:
- (2) At the request of the claimant, the Division of Mining and Reclamation shall provide the claimant with representation in the arbitration process, which representation shall not necessarily be an attorney-at-law; and
- (3) If the claim is upheld, in whole or in part, then the operator shall pay the costs of the proceeding, as well as reasonable representation fees and costs of the claimant, in an amount not to exceed \$1,000.
- (e) Participation in the claims process created by this section shall be voluntary for the claimant. However, once the claimant has submitted a claim for determination under the provisions of this section, it is intended that the finding of the Division of Mining and Reclamation, if not taken to arbitration, shall be final. If arbitration is requested, it is intended that the results of such arbitration shall be final. The Division of Mining and Reclamation shall provide written notification to the claimant of the provisions of this subsection and shall secure a written acknowledgment from the claimant prior to processing a claim pursuant to the provisions of this section.

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(f) The operator shall pay any claim for which the operator is adjudged liable within thirty days of a final determination. If the claim is not paid within thirty days, the secretary shall issue a cessation order pursuant to section sixteen, article three of this chapter for all sites operated by the operator.

(g) No permit to mine coal shall be granted unless the permit applicant agrees to be subject to the terms of this section.

(h) To fulfill its responsibilities pursuant to this section, the Division of Mining and Reclamation may retain the services of inspectors, experts and other persons or firms as may be necessary.

§22-3-37. Rules, orders and permits to remain in effect regarding blasting; proceedings not affected.

(a) All orders determinations, rules, permits, grants, contracts, certificates, licenses, waivers, bonds, authorizations and privileges which have been issued, made, granted or allowed to become effective prior to the enactment of this article shall remain in effect according to their terms until modified, terminated, superseded, set aside or revoked pursuant to this article, by a court of competent jurisdiction, or by operation of law.

(b) Any proceedings, including notices of proposed rule-making, or any application for any license, permit or certificate pending before the division are not affected by this enactment.

§22-3-38. Transfer of personnel and assets.

The secretary shall transfer to the Division of Mining and Reclamation any personnel and assets presently used to perform or used in the performance of the duties and functions required by sections thirty-four through thirty-nine of this article.

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"Office of Explosives and Blasting ACT."