

THE NORTH DAKOTA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

ABANDONED MINE LANDS PROGRAM

The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977(P.L. 95-87) authorized reclamation of abandoned coal mines throughout the nation. The purpose of this program was to eliminate hazards to the public health, safety and general welfare from abandoned coal mines for which there was no continuing liability under federal or state law. Funding in North Dakota comes from a 10-cent per ton production tax on lignite extracted at the active mines. The State of North Dakota annually receives nearly 2 million dollars to administer the program.

North Dakota has had an approved State Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program since 1981. Abandoned mines in the State were inventoried and, of the over 600 mines eligible, eighty-seven were deemed potentially hazardous. The Public Service Commission (Commission), which administers this program for the State, had the eighty-seven sites prioritized in terms of perceived hazard and have been reclaiming these sites the past 14 years. Sixty-nine sites, representing over 2000 acres have been reclaimed in western North Dakota using private contractors at a cost of over 20 million dollars. These sites include: (1) surface mines, where precipitous areas known as highwalls have been eliminated, (2) underground mines subject to possible collapse that traverse beneath buildings and roads and (3) physical structures associated with mining such as abandoned tipples used to handle coal, (4) abandoned uraniferous mines.

The Division has been a national leader in the use of computer automation to enhance productivity and maximize return to the citizens for dollars received. Competitive sealed bidding has been used to ensure the best price for work performed.

Citizen participation in the reclamation process has been provided through public meetings in affected counties.

Mission Statement: AML/PSC

The elimination of hazards associated with past mining, and rapid response to emergencies resulting from underground mine collapse.