

**DESIGNATING AREAS UNSUITABLE FOR SURFACE COAL MINING**  
**[30 U.S.C. 1272]**

**SEC. 522.** (a)(1) To be eligible to assume primary regulatory authority pursuant to section 503, each State shall establish a planning process enabling objective decisions based upon competent and scientifically sound data and information as to which, if any, land areas of a State are unsuitable for all or certain types of surface coal mining operations pursuant to the standards set forth in paragraphs (2) and (3) of this subsection but such designation shall not prevent the mineral exploration pursuant to the Act of any area so designated.

(2) Upon petition pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, the State regulatory authority shall designate an area as unsuitable for all or certain types of surface coal mining operations if the State regulatory authority determines that reclamation pursuant to the requirements of this Act is not technologically and economically feasible.

(3) Upon petition pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, a surface area may be designated unsuitable for certain types of surface coal mining operations if such operations will -

(A) be incompatible with existing State or local land use plans or programs; or

(B) affect fragile or historic lands in which such operations could result in significant damage to important historic, cultural, scientific, and esthetic values and natural systems; or

(C) affect renewable resource lands in which such operations could result in a substantial loss or reduction of long-range productivity of water supply or of food or fiber products, and such lands to include aquifers and aquifer recharge areas; or

(D) affect natural hazard lands in which such operations could substantially endanger life and property, such lands to include areas subject to frequent flooding and areas of unstable geology.

(4) To comply with this section, a State must demonstrate it has developed or is developing a process which includes -

(A) a State agency responsible for surface coal mining lands review;

(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 coal mining operations;

(C) a method or methods for implementing land use planning decisions concerning surface coal mining operations; and

(D) proper notice, opportunities for public participation, including a public hearing prior to making any designation or redesignation, pursuant to this section.

(5) Determinations of the unsuitability of land for surface coal 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 the Federal, State, and local levels.

(6) The requirements of this section shall not apply to lands on which surface coal mining operations are being conducted on the date of enactment of this Act or under a permit issued pursuant to this Act, or where substantial legal and financial commitments in such operation were in existence prior to January 4, 1977.

(b) The Secretary shall conduct a review of the Federal lands to determine, pursuant to the standards set forth in paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (a) of this section, whether there are areas on Federal lands which are unsuitable for all or certain types of surface coal mining

operations: Provided, however, That the Secretary may permit surface coal mining on Federal lands prior to the completion of this review. When the Secretary determines an area on Federal lands to be unsuitable for all or certain types of surface coal mining operations, he shall withdraw such area or condition any mineral leasing or mineral entries in a manner so as to limit surface coal mining operations on such area. Where a Federal program has been implemented in a State pursuant to section 504, the Secretary shall implement a process for designation of areas unsuitable for surface coal mining for non-Federal lands within such State and such process shall incorporate the standards and procedures of this section. Prior to designating Federal lands unsuitable for such mining, the Secretary shall consult with the appropriate State and local agencies.

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

(d) Prior to designating any land areas as unsuitable for surface coal mining operations, the regulatory authority shall prepare a detailed statement on (i) the potential coal resources of the area, (ii) the demand for coal resources, and (iii) the impact of such designation on the environment, the economy, and the supply of coal.

(e) After the enactment of this Act and subject to valid existing rights no surface coal mining operations except those which exist on the date of enactment of this Act shall be permitted -

(1) on any lands 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 5(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and National Recreation Areas designated by Act of Congress;

(2) on any Federal lands within the boundaries of any national forest: Provided, however, That surface coal mining operations may be permitted on such lands if the Secretary finds that there are no significant recreational, timber, economic, or other values which may be incompatible with such surface mining operations and -

(A) surface operations and impacts are incident to an underground coal mine; or

(B) where the Secretary of Agriculture determines, with respect to lands which do not have significant forest cover within those national forests west of the 100th meridian, that surface mining is in compliance with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, the Federal Coal Leasing Amendments Act of 1975, the National Forest Management Act

of 1976, and the provisions of this Act: And provided further, That no surface coal mining operations may be permitted within the boundaries of the Custer National Forest;

(3) which will adversely affect any publicly owned park or places included in the National Register of Historic Sites unless approved jointly by the regulatory authority and the Federal, State, or local agency with jurisdiction over the park or the historic site;

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

(5) within three hundred feet from any occupied dwelling, unless waived by the owner thereof, nor within three hundred feet of any public building, school, church, community, or institutional building, public park, or within one hundred feet of a cemetery.