

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION FACT SHEET

Division of Mine Reclamation

In April 2016 following significant revisions to the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA), the Division of Mine Reclamation (DMR) was created, effective January 1, 2017. DMR replaces the Office of Mine Reclamation that was established in 1991 to provide a measure of oversight for local governments as they administer SMARA within their respective jurisdictions. SMARA has several requirements for prospective mine operators. They must first obtain a permit from local lead agencies who are typically cities and counties. In addition, mine operators must receive approval from lead agencies for reclamation plans describing how mined land will be returned to a natural or otherwise useful condition once mining is complete and they must establish a financial assurance instrument, such as a bond, to ensure reclamation is achieved if they are financially unable to reclaim or abandon the operation.

DMR may provide feedback to lead agencies about a mining operation's reclamation plan and financial assurance, may appeal inadequate financial assurances to the State Mining and Geology Board, and may initiate enforcement actions to encourage SMARA compliance. Although DMR's primary focus is on existing mining operations and the return of those mined lands to usable and safe condition, it also identifies abandoned or legacy mines pre-dating SMARA for remediation.

DMR is led by a Supervisor of Mine Reclamation with a management team comprised of an Administrative Assistant and six Managers overseeing five major program areas. These programs include:

Administrative and Technical Support

Provides leadership to analytical and support functions including budgets, contracts, procurement, personnel, SMARA compliance and enforcement.

Reporting

Develops and maintains mining operations' data and document processing systems, producing standardized compliance policies and procedures to ensure uniform and effective enforcement of SMARA statutes and regulations. Reviews annual mining operator reports for compliance and collects mine fees to cover program costs.

Abandoned Mine Lands Program

The Abandoned Mine Lands Program (AML), partners with federal and state entities to identify and remediate primarily physical safety hazards such as dangerous mine shafts and deep holes at abandoned mine land sites. Remediation projects are undertaken in cooperation with local, regional, state, and federal partners.

Geology Program

Geologists review and provide written comments on reclamation plans, financial assurance cost estimate submittals and inspection reports. Staff perform mine inspections for closure and compliance purposes, prepare and present appeals and enforcement cases, and offers technical assistance via workshops to lead agencies.

Environmental Services

In conjunction with geologists, staff review and provide comments on reclamation plans and plan amendments and review environmental documents prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act when appropriate. Field investigations of existing and proposed mine sites may also be conducted to evaluate the practicality of proposed reclamation. Enforcement action support provided when appropriate. Public SMARA workshops and technical training seminars are also held to support best mine reclamation practices and to share information.



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