Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation

Is NRCS a Potential Partner?
Is NRCS a Potential Partner?

• Past
  • NRCS Origins & Mission
  • Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP)

• Present
  • Programs
  • Abandoned Mine Reclamation Activities

• Future
  • Potential NRCS Assistance for Abandoned Mine Sites
“Helping People Help the Land”
1932- Soil Erosion Service
1935- Soil Conservation Service
Rural Abandoned Mines Program (RAMP)
RAMP

• 1977 – 1997
• Surface Mining Control & Reclamation Act (SMCRA)
  • Established “to protect people and the environment from pre-1977 coal mining activities.”
• Funding from Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund ($0.35/ton surface; $0.15/ton underground)
1994 -

How Our Land is Used
Millions of Acres*

- Cropland: 377.0
- Rangeland: 406.0
- Forest Land: 407.0
- Other: 51.1
- Developed: 98.3
- Federal: 402.1
- CRP**: 32.0
- Pastureland: 120.0

*Non-Federal Land 1,492 million acres, including contiguous United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.

**Conservation Reserve Program Land

Source: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1997 National Resources Inventory
Revised December 2000
NRCS CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

“Helping People Help the Land”

Technical- and Cost-share Assistance to Agricultural Producers
Conservation Programs

- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
EQIP
Environmental Quality Incentives Program

• Voluntary

• Cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland, private non-industrial forestland

• Statewide Initiatives

• County Allocations for Local Resource Concerns

• Competitive application/ranking process

• 50 – 90% cost-share to install “approved conservation practices”
FY-08 EQIP in California

Total: ~$30m

Counties ($17.5m)

Dairies ($6m)

Air Quality ($5.5m)

Wildlife Habitat ($1m)

FY-08 EQIP in California

Amador County: $276,000

FY-08 EQIP in Amador County
$276,000

Local Resource Concerns

- Ecological Health
- Fuel Load Reduction
- Pollutant Reduction on Irrigated Lands
- Rangeland Health
- Soil Erosion

etc.

Conservation Practice Standards

Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/
DEFINITION
A travel-way for equipment and vehicles constructed as part of a conservation plan.

PURPOSES
To provide a fixed route for vehicular travel …

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES…

CRITERIA
Access roads shall be designed…

CONSIDERATIONS
(Air Quality, Water Quality, Cultural Resources, Endangered Species, etc)

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

DEFINITION
Reclamation of land and water areas adversely affected by past mining activities

PURPOSES
• Stabilize abandoned mined areas to decrease erosion and sedimentation, support desirable vegetation and improve offsite water quality and or quantity
• Maintain or improve landscape visual and functional quality
• Protect public health, safety and general welfare

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES
This practice applies to abandoned mined land that degrades the quality of the environment and prevents or interferes with the beneficial uses of soil, water, air, plant or animal resources, or endangers human health and safety.

RAMP-Related Conservation Practices

• 452- Mine Shaft and Adit Closing
• 453- Land Reclamation, Landslide Treatment
• 455- Toxic Discharge Control (Coal only)
• 543- Land Reclamation, Abandoned Mine Land
• 544- Land Reclamation, Currently Mined Land
NRCS Mine Reclamation Activities
Mine hazards not *directly* identified as a Local Resource Concern

Mine reclamation practices not on the current list of approved Conservation Practices

Not on local RCD/Field Office

‘Radar Screens’

- legacy issues
- liability issues
- cost
Practices that address Local Resource Concerns on agricultural lands where abandoned mines are present may be eligible for EQIP cost-share assistance

- Channel Stabilization for erosion control
- Critical Area Planting
- Use Exclusion for rangeland health
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
“...trying to use EQIP funds for this will hinge on 2 items:

1 - the requirement for agricultural production
   this may be ok if there are other resources to consider
   ie...timber and range... and there would be practices in
   the plan to address those resources....;

2 - the ability to rank high enough to be competitive for
   funding so the landowner would have to have an
   interest in conservation beyond the issues of
   abandoned mines on the property and the willingness
   and ability financially to do the project as planned...”

Mike Brenner
NRCS District Conservationist
Auburn, CA
“...If for example I had a producer that ran cattle and wanted to apply for EQIP and do some water development, brush management, and cross fence and then also wanted to fence out abandoned mine sites using exclusion fencing they would more than likely get funded.

If they only wanted to fence out the mine site and plant it funding it would be tough at least with our local ranking criteria...”

Amy Rocha
NRCS District Conservationist
Jackson, CA
Thank you,

Julia Grim

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