

Abandoned Coal Mines in Tennessee

Coal industry representatives argue that the number of abandoned coal mines in Tennessee justifies the need to permit large new surface coal mining operations. The information presented by industry is intended to exaggerate the amount and seriousness of abandoned mine land in Tennessee and to lead legislators to believe that re-mining is the best and possibly the only method to correct problems previously created by industry.

The following facts were collected from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the Federal Office of Surface Mining in 2011.

- The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation in cooperation with the Federal Office of Surface Mining manages Tennessee's Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Program. This **adequately funded** program reclaims abandoned mines in Tennessee with public health and welfare protection as a key goal.
- In 1980 there were **50,000** acres of abandoned mine land in Tennessee in need of reclamation. Today there are **10,855** acres of land remaining on the Federal Office of Surface Mining's Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation List.
- **2,038** of Tennessee's **10,855** acres in need of reclamation represent a direct threat to public health or welfare (these areas are known as Priority 1 and 2 lands by the Federal Office of Surface Mining).
- The Bush administration's 2006 re-authorization of the abandoned mines reclamation fund set aside approximately **\$18 million** in funds for the State of Tennessee in coordination with the Federal Office of Surface Mining to reclaim the approximately **2,038** acres of land that represent a direct threat to public health and welfare in Tennessee.
- The remaining **8,817** acres of un-reclaimed previously mined areas in Tennessee (known as Priority 3 lands by the Federal Office of Surface Mining) represent no serious threat to public health or welfare in Tennessee. A very limited portion of the funds exist today to reclaim the **8,817** acres of Priority 3 lands in Tennessee in need of reclamation. These lands may be not be aesthetically pleasing, but they represent no direct threat to public health.

For more information: Tennessee Dept. of Environment & Conservation, Division of Water Pollution Control, Land Reclamation Section, Tim Eagle, Manager.

<http://www.tn.gov/environment/wpc/programs/abandmine/>

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