

Mine program reclaims land

HARRISBURG — "Dramatic" has been used to describe changes made through a USDA abandoned mine reclamation program. The program is the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) of the Soil Conservation Service.

Many people in rural areas and small towns reluctantly accept the hazards and visual blights because the coal mine land has been abandoned for a long time. RAMP offers an opportunity for change.

According to a report from SCS State Conservationist James H. Olson, in four years of RAMP construction in this State, 151 safety and health hazards have

been eliminated and erosion has been controlled on 651 acres. The improvements have enriched visual quality on 616 acres, and improved water quality in 9,725 acres of lakes and 84 miles of streams.

"As far as Federal projects go, RAMP jobs are small; however, to the people in rural areas these are big and important happenings because they have a direct effect on their lives," said Olson. "Parents no longer have to worry about children who used to play in open mine shafts and abandoned coal tipples or swim in water-filled pits. The elimination of high walls,

collapsed buildings, and burning, eroding culm banks improves local property values and the quality of life. This means a lot to people." Land is reclaimed for use as cropland, pasture, woodland, wildlife, or recreation. RAMP is a voluntary program which deals with small areas of abandoned coal mine land in private ownership. Over 700 Pennsylvania landowners have applied for reclamation help on 14, 399 acres. The decision on which land will receive treatment is based on safety and health hazards and community benefits and is made by county and State RAMP citizen and agency com-



"Before" photograph shows the Kemmer site, Clarion County. Before reclamation, site contained an open mine shaft, collapsed buildings, and eroding waste materials.



"After" photograph of the Kemmer site. Mine shaft has been closed, collapsed buildings removed, and eroding land stabilized by grading, seeding, and a rock-lined water runoff channel.

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mittees.

"What has been done thus far is progress," said Olson, "but it is really a drop in the bucket." Pennsylvania has 240,000 acres of abandoned coal mine land, largest amount of any state.

Landowners may request technical and financial help from the Soil Conservation Service through the Rural Abandoned Mine Program to reclaim their land. Funds for the reclamation work are derived from fees on active mining of 35 cents per ton on surface mine coal and 15 cents per ton on underground coal. The life of the RAMP program, as established by the Federal Surface Mine Reclamation Act of 1977, is 15 years.

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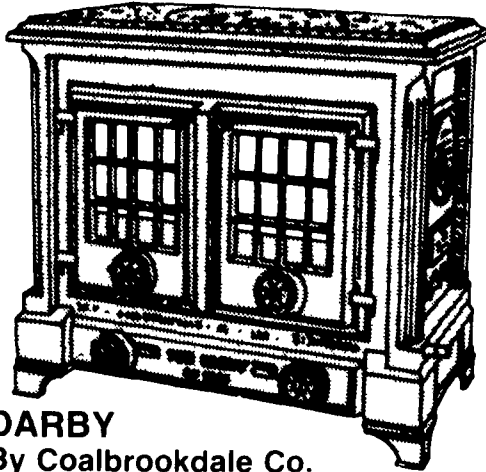
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