

Land Reclamation - Challenges and Opportunities

by

Dr. Jeff Skousen

**Extension Specialist-Land Reclamation
West Virginia University**

I am privileged to again address you at this meeting. It was a year ago when, in this meeting, I introduced myself to many of you. During the past year, I have learned many things about mining, reclamation, and acid mine drainage. I am grateful to many of you in this audience for your time and support in promoting and enhancing my education and experience.

Probably the single item which has taken a good share of my time over the past year is the writing and editing of the Bulletin entitled "A Review of Procedures for Surface Mining and Reclamation in Areas with Acid-Producing Materials" in conjunction with Dr. John Sencindiver and Dr. Richard Smith. We have also received a lot of input from the Task Force, and others who have served as reviewers. It has been a great challenge to bring together the comments of so many individuals with so many divergent views. As a matter of fact, I am not sure we accomplished this amalgamation to everybody's satisfaction. Nevertheless, we have attempted to give a realistic review of procedures and practices that operators may use to control acid mine drainage. Dr. John Sencindiver and I will be discussing details of the Bulletin later in another talk.

I have also enjoyed my association with members of the Surface Mine Drainage Task Force. The group meets in an informal setting every month, and this allows discussion of topics which are usually very interesting, entertaining, and educational.

Considerable time during this past year has been spent with personnel of the Department of Energy, the Department of Natural Resources, and also with coal mine operators. I hope to spend even more of my time on mine sites during the coming year, and to observe more techniques and approaches which may be applied to reduce environmental problems and enhance coal mining and reclamation. I hope you will feel free to contact me about problems you have, or innovative techniques that you are using to improve your operation.

Research conducted at the University in acid mine drainage and reclamation should be closely correlated to the needs of operators, and should be applicable to actual field conditions. Once in a while, university people are contacted by operators to help in reducing or solving problems that occur on the mine site. Yet, development of innovative reclamation approaches by operators probably occurs frequently on mine sites, but, for the most part, we at the University seldom hear or know of them. I solicit your help in developing ideas that may be researched, and in providing areas which may be used by researchers to test and apply control or abatement techniques for acid mine drainage.

Conversations and meetings have been initiated with members of Congress and several other universities relative to the establishment of a National Mine Land Reclamation Center. Administration of this National Center would be housed at West Virginia University under the Energy and Water Research Center which is directed by Dr. Richard Bajura. Congress is supportive of this activity. West Virginia University and other institutions are seeking endorsement from the coal industry, state agencies, and OSM to develop and establish this National Reclamation Center. The Center will function as a station where funds will be generated from government agencies and private organizations, proposals will be solicited from researchers, and appropriate projects will then be selected to further address mine land reclamation problems including acid mine drainage control and abatement. Members from industry and government will be asked to serve on an advisory committee for the Center. The development of the Mine Land Reclamation Research Center along with adequate federal funding and matching funds from other organizations is a crucial step in continuing the search for solving acid mine drainage problems. I am sure we will be hearing more concerning this Reclamation Research Center during ensuing months.

Communication between coal operators, government agencies, and researchers continues to be a priority item. Attempts are being made to present current reclamation procedures and treatments in magazines accessible to operators, and the West Virginia Mining and Reclamation Association's Green Lands and Coal Bell are two such accessible outlets.

I will continue to provide information as much as possible to organizations involved in acid mine drainage and reclamation and will provide assistance, as the need arises, to individuals concerned about reclamation and acid mine drainage in this state and region. I again thank you for your help and support and hope that I will have an opportunity to work with you in the future.