

1998

ANNUAL REPORT ON MINING ACTIVITIES

IN THE

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Prepared by




DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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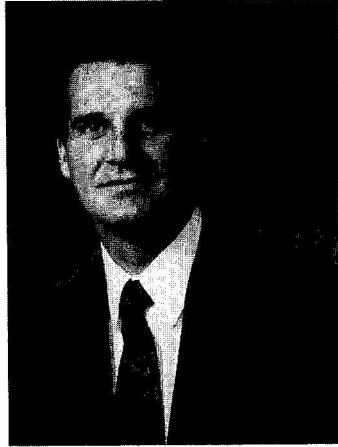
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A MESSAGE FROM MINERAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT DEPUTY SECRETARY ROBERT C. DOLENCE

The accomplishments of Pennsylvania's mining industry in 1998 are represented in this 129th consecutive edition of *Pennsylvania's Annual Report on Mining Activities*. The statistics in this volume represent the condition of the Commonwealth's mining industry and can be used to note several trends.

Impressively, the bituminous industry has enjoyed another good year due to increased surface and underground production. This increased production was achieved even though one of the 10 high-extraction longwall sections was shut down during the year. But more importantly, 1998 was the first year in history that the bituminous coal industry, represented by surface and underground mines, did not lose a single life. The underground bituminous industry contributed to this record even as it stepped up productivity. It should be noted that 1998 is only the second year in history when no bituminous underground miners perished while on the job.



The credit for this success most certainly is shared among the partners who are dedicated to the health and safety of our miners. The mining industry along with labor, DEP's Bureau of Deep Mine Safety, federal Mine Safety and Health Administration and academia played a significant role in proper health and safety training and fostering open discussions about the needs of underground miners.

Production in the anthracite coalfields continues to decline as is evident by a decrease in the total of producing mines. This downward trend may reflect the decreased demand for domestic anthracite as industrial users are turning to foreign sources as well as a decline in the use of anthracite for residential and commercial heating. The decline in productivity may slow when the 43 new anthracite surface mining permits issued in 1998 are fully operational. Sadly, one anthracite deep miner lost his life in the first fatal accident in the region in three years.

In 1998, the state's industrial mineral mines produced nearly 7.5 million more tons than in 1997 while working without a single fatality. Pennsylvania continues to be the nation's leading supplier of crushed aggregate.

The most important highlight of 1998 undoubtedly was Gov. Tom Ridge's announcement of DEP's latest abandoned mine land reclamation program, *Reclaim PA*. This program builds on mine operators' demonstrated ability to reclaim three times as much land through remining as the state can accomplish with traditional contracts. In 1998 alone, Pennsylvania's mining industry obtained permits to reclaim 3,300 acres of abandoned mines at no cost to taxpayers. *Reclaim PA* will create new incentives and enhance existing financial incentives for mine operators to remine and reclaim polluted land and water. In reality, the days when mining was synonymous with environmental degradation are largely over. Unfortunately, the public perception of mining continues to be influenced by the haunting images from the past.

Pennsylvania can look with optimism to the next century, starting on a foundation of increased overall productivity of the state's mines, no bituminous or industrial mineral fatalities during the year, and the good news of promising environmental cleanup efforts.

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**1998
MINING HIGHLIGHTS**

1998 MINING HIGHLIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) bureaus of Mining and Reclamation, District Mining Operations and Deep Mine Safety are responsible for the administration of the safety and environmental regulatory programs relating to the surface and underground mining activities of coal and industrial minerals. These responsibilities include licensing, permitting, bonding, inspection, compliance, pollution prevention advocacy, enforcement activities and blaster certifications.

The Bureau of Mining and Reclamation is responsible for developing new policies, procedures and regulations for surface and underground coal and industrial mineral mines. The Bureau of District Mining Operations is responsible for implementing these policies, procedures and regulations through its six District Mining offices in Pottsville, Knox, Ebensburg, Hawk Run, Greensburg and McMurray.

The Bureau of Deep Mine Safety is responsible for regulating the health and safety programs designed for underground miners. These responsibilities include underground safety inspections, underground electrical inspections, equipment approvals, accident investigations, certification of miners and mine officials, emergency response, training and engineering services. The bureau has four divisions and four mine rescue stations and maintains offices in Uniontown, Pottsville, Ebensburg and Tremont.

ANTHRACITE HIGHLIGHTS

Total anthracite coal production was 7,535,593 tons, down 16 percent from 1997. Refuse bank production fell by 19 percent. Although DEP issued five new coal refuse reprocessing permits, total operating refuse reprocessing sites fell by 20, a 28 percent decrease over 1997, for a total of 51 sites. Total employees also decreased by 64 for a total of 467. These decreases are a result of downsizing of existing refuse operations and loss of market due to closings of two electric cogeneration facilities in 1997.

Underground production decreased by 10 percent for a total of 412,394 tons. No new underground mining permits were issued in 1998 as compared to four in 1997. Operating deep mines fell to 38, down 19 over 1997. Total employees decreased by 50 to 246.

Surface production decreased by 10 percent for a total of 2,388,010 tons. Forty-three new surface mining permits were issued in 1998 as compared to six in 1997. Operating anthracite surface mines totaled 65, down 10 from 1997. Total employees increased by 20 to 761. DEP estimates that approximately 90 percent of all operating anthracite surface mines are involved in some kind of re-mining activity.

No miners lost their lives in anthracite surface mines in 1998. Unfortunately, one underground miner was killed in an apparent explosion in July.

The overall number of permitted anthracite mining facilities requiring inspections decreased by 14 for a total of 376 sites. Total inspections performed increased by one percent for a total of 4,413 inspections. Violations cited during these inspections increased by 27 to 126.

BITUMINOUS HIGHLIGHTS

Bituminous coal production in 1998 was the highest it has been in 14 years, an increase for the fifth consecutive year. Total production was 79,544,949 tons, up eight percent from 1997.

Underground mining operations produced 61,284,503 tons, an 11 percent increase over 1997. In comparison to the seven issued in 1997, DEP issued no new underground mining permits in 1998, and the number of operating mines decreased by one to 53. The increase in production is probably due in part to several high extraction mines or longwall mines operating at full capacity. This increased production was achieved even though one of the 10

longwall sections active at the beginning of the year was idled during the year. Underground mines employed 4,988 people, 346 less than in 1997.

Surface production was 16,576,266 tons, an increase of one percent over 1997. Thirty-six new surface mining permits were issued in 1998 as compared to 95 in 1997. Operating surface mines increased by nine for a total of 446. Total employees increased by 419 to 2,519. DEP estimates that approximately 60 percent of all operating bituminous surface mines involve some remining activities.

No miners lost their lives in any bituminous mines in 1998.

The overall number of permitted bituminous mining facilities requiring inspections decreased by 66 for a total of 1,991 sites. Total inspections increased by one percent for a total of 21,975. Violations cited during these inspections increased 28 to 905.

INDUSTRIAL MINERALS HIGHLIGHTS

Total production from industrial mineral mines was 128,332,415 tons, up six percent from 1997. Underground production increased 13 percent for a total 7,942,948 tons. Surface production increased six percent for a total of 120,389,467 tons. These increases are attributable to healthy national and state economies that resulted in higher demand due to more construction projects that use industrial minerals, such as highway construction.

The number of operating underground mines decreased by three to 10. No new underground mining permits were issued. The number of employees decreased by seven percent to 363.

In 1998, DEP issued 182 new surface mining permits, compared to 106 in 1997. The number of operating surface mines increased by one percent for a total of 812 mines. Total employees decreased by seven percent to 4,637.

No fatalities occurred in any industrial mineral mine in 1998.

The overall number of permitted industrial mineral mining operations requiring inspections increased by 109 for a total of 1,926 sites. Total inspections performed at these sites increased by one percent for a total of 4,303. Violations cited during these inspections increased by four percent to 117.

MINING REGULATIONS AND INITIATIVES

A final rulemaking was passed in June that incorporated the provisions of the 1994 amendments to the Bituminous Mine Subsidence and Land Conservation Act (BMSLCA) into existing underground mining regulations. BMSLCA deals with underground mine operator responsibilities relating to subsidence damage repair and water supply replacement. The amendments require underground mine operators to restore or replace water supplies affected by their activities and to repair homes damaged by their activities or compensate the property owners for their losses.

Another rulemaking incorporated Act 173 of 1992 and Act 43 of 1996, amendments to the Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, into the anthracite and bituminous surface mining regulations. Under the changes, a surface coal mine operator is presumed responsible for replacement or restoration of a degraded or diminished water supply within 1,000 feet of the operation.

Also in 1998, DEP, with help from the public, revised regulations, policies and technical guidances as part of Gov. Tom Ridge's Regulatory Basics Initiative (RBI). The purpose of RBI is to assure that state requirements are no more stringent than standards imposed by federal law unless there is a compelling reason for Pennsylvania; to minimize costs to the regulated community; to encourage performance or outcome based requirements; and to ensure information is prepared in clear and concise language. In addition, existing regulations and technical guidance are evaluated to facilitate compliance, including the adequacy of related educational, technical and financial assistance programs.

The Bureau of Mining and Reclamation's RBI efforts resulted in five major amendments to the regulations included in 25 Pa. Code Chapters 77, 86, 87, 88, 89 and 90. Additionally, the Bureau revised 26 of its technical guidances and rescinded 57 technical guidances as part of its RBI efforts.

One set of amendments related to general permitting for industrial mineral mining, whereas the other four dealt specifically with coal mining and involved coal mine permitting and performance standards, Small Operator's Assistance Program (SOAP); and areas unsuitable for mining. In addition to DEP's standard public participation practices of the Department, the coal mining regulations were reviewed and commented on by the Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board (MRAB). The MRAB was established by the 1984 amendment to the Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act to advise the Department on surface mining and reclamation practices and bonding.

In October, Gov. Ridge announced the development of several concepts, collectively called *Reclaim PA*, including legislative, policy and management initiatives designed to enhance mine operator, volunteer and DEP abandoned mine reclamation efforts. *Reclaim PA* has the following four objectives:

- To encourage private and public participation in abandoned mine reclamation efforts
- To improve reclamation efficiency through better communication between reclamation partners
- To increase reclamation by reducing remining risks
- To maximize reclamation funding by expanding existing sources and exploring new sources

Remining is a major focus of *Reclaim PA*. Several of the initiatives touch on ways to make it easier for mine operators to mine and reclaim previously mined land at no cost to taxpayers. DEP is taking steps to provide financial incentives to operators who do remining, reduce the legal risks connected with remining and cut down on paperwork needed for operators to begin remining.

Remining is typically the most efficient way to accomplish reclamation of abandoned mined lands. In 1998, industry permitted approximately 3,300 acres of abandoned mine lands that will be reclaimed through remining. This is more than three times the acreage reclaimed with state and federal funds administered through DEP's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation.

DEP encouraged remining in other ways in 1998. For example, the Remining Operator's Assistance Program (ROAP) provides financial assistance to surface coal mine operators who are willing to reclaim abandoned mine lands. To date, ROAP has provided assistance on 32 projects at an incentive value of approximately \$570,500.

DEP also offers a financial guarantee to qualified mine operators to cover the bonding on their remining area. Seventy-seven permits were issued using the financial guarantees program. Another program provides mine operators with bond credits in exchange for the reclamation of abandoned mine lands. The first credits were given to an operator in 1998 and were worth \$20,645.

DEEP MINE SAFETY PROGRAMS

DEP's Bureau of Deep Mine Safety trains miners to work safely, certifies miners to do different jobs, inspects underground mines, investigates accidents and inspects mining equipment. The bureau performed 1,338 mine inspections in 1998 and conducted 185 training classes for 1,354 miners. Training was conducted by bureau instructors, and through contractual arrangements, by instructors from Pennsylvania State University, California University of Pennsylvania, Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Schuylkill County Vocational/Technical School. In particular, miners participated in training including mine rescue, emergency response, first aid/CPR, gas detection, ventilation and blasting awareness. The bureau granted more than 400 certifications during the year.

Nineteen mining accidents were investigated during 1998. The bureau investigated each accident to determine the factors that contributed to each accident and, just as important, the measures to be taken in the future to prevent similar accidents.

1998 was the second year in history when no mine fatalities occurred in underground bituminous mines and the third consecutive year that no miners lost their lives in deep industrial mineral mines. Unfortunately, one miner was killed in an apparent explosion in an underground anthracite mine.

The Bureau of Deep Mine Safety also provided administrative support to the Pennsylvania Bituminous Mine Safety Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee on Diesel-Powered Equipment in 1998.

ANTHRACITE HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY: 1997 v. 1998

	YEAR		Change	% Change
	1998	1997		
Underground mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	412,394	456,567	-44,173	-10%
<i>Employees</i>	246	296	-50	-17%
<i>Producing mines</i>	38	57	-19	-33%
<i>New permits issued</i>	0	4	-4	-100%
Surface mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	2,388,010	2,659,176	-271,166	-10%
<i>Employees</i>	761	741	20	3%
<i>Producing mines</i>	65	75	-10	-13%
<i>New permits issued</i>	43	6	37	617%
Refuse Reprocessing				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	4,735,189	5,818,582	-1,083,393	-19%
<i>Employees</i>	467	531	-64	-12%
<i>Producing mines</i>	51	71	-20	-28%
<i>New permits issued</i>	5	11	-6	-55%
Permitted Sites				
<i>Surface</i>	139	144	-5	-3%
<i>Underground</i>	83	92	-9	-10%
<i>Refuse</i>	134	134	0	0%
<i>Refuse Disposal</i>	4	4	0	0%
<i>Preparation plants</i>	16	16	0	0%
<i>Total permitted sites</i>	376	390	-14	-4%
<i>Total Inspections</i>	4,413	4,370	43	1%
<i>Total Violations cited</i>	126	99	27	27%
TOTAL PRODUCTION	7,535,593	8,934,325	-1,398,732	-16%

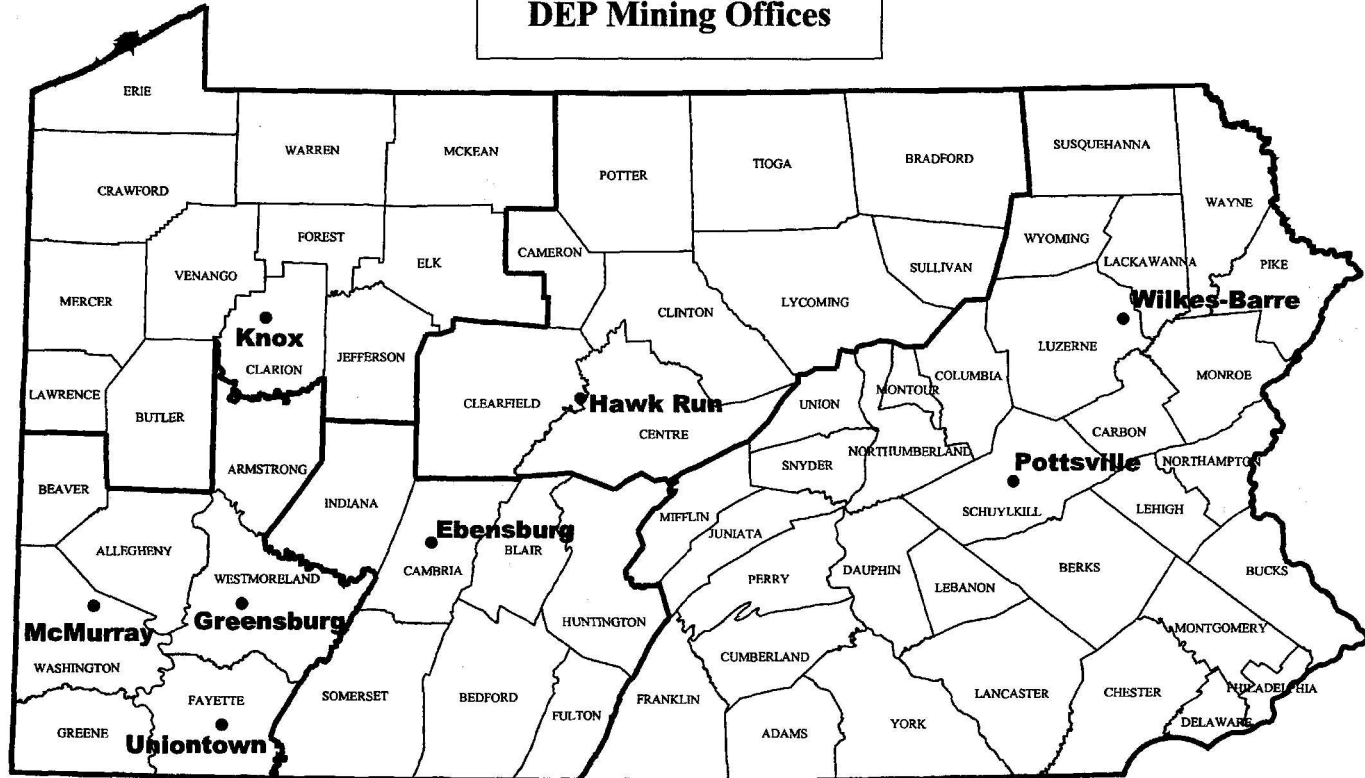
BITUMINOUS HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY: 1997 v. 1998

	YEAR		Change	% Change
	1998	1997		
Underground mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	61,284,503	55,344,042	5,940,461	11%
<i>Employees</i>	4,988	5,334	-346	-6%
<i>Producing mines</i>	53	54	-1	-2%
<i>New permits issued</i>	0	7	-7	-100%
Surface mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	16,576,266	16,463,474	112,792	1%
<i>Auger production (tons)</i>	187,933	200,158	-12,225	-6%
<i>Employees</i>	2,519	2,100	419	20%
<i>Producing mines</i>	446	437	9	2%
<i>New permits issued</i>	36	95	-59	-62%
Refuse Reprocessing				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	1,496,247	1,483,501	12,746	1%
<i>Employees</i>	54	65	-11	-17%
<i>Producing mines</i>	19	13	6	46%
<i>New permits issued</i>	2	5	-3	-60%
Permitted Sites				
<i>Surface</i>	1,626	1,684	-58	-3%
<i>Underground</i>	150	152	-2	-1%
<i>Refuse</i>	40	35	5	14%
<i>Refuse Disposal</i>	85	91	-6	-7%
<i>Preparation plants</i>	90	95	-5	-5%
<i>Total permitted sites</i>	1,991	2,057	-66	-3%
<i>Total Inspections</i>	21,975	21,706	269	1%
<i>Total Violations cited</i>	905	877	28	3%
TOTAL PRODUCTION	79,544,949	73,491,175	6,053,744	8%

INDUSTRIAL MINERALS HIGHLIGHTS: 1997 v. 1998

	YEAR		Change	% Change
	1998	1997		
Underground mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	7,942,948	7,003,893	939,055	13%
<i>Employees</i>	363	389	-26	-7%
<i>Producing mines</i>	10	13	-3	-23%
<i>New permits issued</i>	0	0	0	0%
Surface mines				
<i>Production (tons)</i>	120,389,467	113,879,988	6,509,479	6%
<i>Employees</i>	4,637	4,974	-337	-7%
<i>Producing mines</i>	812	803	9	1%
<i>New permits issued</i>	182	106	76	72%
Permitted Sites				
<i>Large surface</i>	822	806	16	2%
<i>Small surface</i>	1,099	1,005	94	9%
<i>Underground</i>	5	6	-1	-17%
<i>Total permitted sites</i>	1,926	1,817	109	6%
<i>Inspections</i>	4,303	4,270	33	1%
<i>Violations cited</i>	117	112	5	4%
TOTAL PRODUCTION	128,332,415	120,883,881	7,448,534	6%

DEP Mining Offices



Please see the department directory section on page 320 for contact information, including phone numbers and addresses.