

Our work demonstrated that this subject refuses to stay put in any one category. To some of our field inspection team members, surface mining was chiefly a problem of the unsightly mess that may result. Others saw it as a problem of sediment and chemical pollution in streams and rivers. Still others were concerned with the resulting loss of wildlife habitat. Use of the land after mining was of prime concern to all. Should it, for example, be used for recreation, agriculture, forestry, or industrial development? All of the men also were aware of the possible danger to public safety that may result from certain surface mining practices.

So it is that various people see surface mining as a conservation problem—as an economic problem—as an engineering problem, an environmental problem, a land use problem, or a public relations problem. There is one thing in common: It is a problem.

A review of a few of the findings of our study can serve to put surface mining into perspective. For example:

1. Every State has had some surface mining activity within its boundaries.
2. Only 14 States have laws relating specifically to the conduct of surface mining operations and the reclamation of surface mined areas, and five of these direct their attention only to coal mining.
3. By January 1, 1965, surface mining had affected more than 3.2 million acres of land.
4. Despite all reclamation efforts by man and nature, and after the lapse of considerable time, about two million acres still need additional reclamation work—this is 3,125 square miles, or an area equal to the combined land area of the States of Delaware and Rhode Island.
5. In 1964 surface mining was biting off an estimated 153,000 acres annually. Only about one-third of the land disturbed that year was adequately reclaimed by man. By 1980 it is estimated, quite conservatively, that more than five million acres will have been affected.
6. Despite the existence of State regulatory laws of some sort in the opinion of the experts 73 percent of the mined areas reclaimed under existing State regulations in Appalachia required further attention.
7. The adverse effects of surface mining are not confined to the site of the operation. Off-site effects also must be considered. These on-site and off-site effects include:

- (a) nearly 1.7 million acres of wildlife habitat damaged;
- (b) erosion from some spoil banks at rates up to 27,000 tons per square mile per year, compared with only 25 tons per square mile from similar areas of forest;
- (c) approximately 13,000 miles of streams and over 145,000 surface acres of natural lakes, reservoirs and impoundments adversely affected by sediment and acid;
- (d) more than 20,000 miles of highways remaining—hazardous to public safety, hindering wildlife movement, damaging otherwise attractive landscapes.

This is today's picture. Our first task is to insure that tomorrow's inventory of damaged lands is no larger. Once we are assured that the buildup is halted, we can turn our attention to past damage. This is the primary reason that we feel at this time that S. 217 and S. 3126, which deal with the reclamation of the already damaged lands, are more appropriately subjects for later consideration.

We in the Department of the Interior believe that in many situations it is possible for society to benefit both from the use of the minerals of the land and from the use of the land itself after mining operations have been completed. One of the essentials in this is a recognition that proper mining practice today includes reclamation—not that reclamation merely is some follow-up treatment after the mining is done. This was not the general practice in the past. The nation must be assured from now on that good mining practice is used—and that the possibility of damage off the site of the mine itself also is taken into consideration in the mining operation.

The public recognizes the need for mineral commodities, and that they do not occur in economic deposits everywhere. Good land use planning can enable mining to continue while providing protection and reclamation of other natural resources. With such foresight, many areas from which minerals are extracted will lend themselves to subsequent uses.

These concepts are not really new; what is new is that their validity has been confirmed by our nationwide study which gave attention not only to the ravages