

A recent survey and study of surface mining operations which Secretary Udall described and in which the Department of Agriculture participated, found that in excess of 150,000 acres annually are being disturbed in the Nation by surface mining operations. Only about one-third of this is presently being reclaimed.

It is not possible to eliminate or avoid all damage from surface mining. But the needs to be supplied from surface mining operations can be met and the benefits from surface mining activities can be gained in ways to minimize the damages and restore the mined lands to productive condition.

If action is taken now we can avoid the constant increase in acreage in our derelict land. We can avoid further off-site damage, including contamination of the streams, from surface mining operations. We can hold down further blotches from this cause on the beauty of our countryside.

Mr. Chairman, we in the Department of Agriculture applaud and endorse the program proposed in S. 3132 and join in recommending its enactment.

We are pleased that S. 3132 recognizes in section 16 and in the final clause of section 5(a) and in section 7(a) and the second sentence in section 14 that Congress has already enacted certain programs such as those of the Secretary of Agriculture for activities related to the restoration of surface mined areas and we read section 5(a) and the other sections I mentioned to authorize, require, and direct that there be consultation and cooperation among the Federal agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, and the States in carrying out the provisions of this bill.

The Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture have had long and successful cooperative experience with State and district soil and water conservation officials as Senator Nelson has already pointed out, State foresters, and farm and forest landowners and operators in land management and soil and water conservation work.

We would plan to cooperate fully with the Secretary of the Interior in making available to him and the States and State agencies the expertise and professional competence existing in the Department of Agriculture.

The on-going program of the Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service include technical assistance to private landowners in the restoration of surface mined lands. These will be continued. This is part of the Department of Agriculture's vital concern for the beauty and the prosperity of the rural countryside of America.

For example, the Soil Conservation Service provided onsite technical assistance as Senator Nelson has already pointed out to 5,255 cooperators in 500 soil and water conservation districts in 31 States to reclaim 127,747 acres of surface mined land in the period 1960-64.

In the same period, State forestry agencies with cooperation from the Forest Service provided onsite technical assistance or supervision for the reclamation of 36,710 acres of surface mined land in 1,431 locations.

We recognize that these are only small bites at the 2 million acres of previously surface mined land needing varying degrees of treatment. These 2 million acres of substantially derelict, unrestored, and