

unproductive lands have in certain cases adversely affected the environment, the people, and in many instances the whole economy of the areas concerned.

Within the limits of available appropriations and where there is demonstrated value in reclamation, we will continue our work to provide through cooperative arrangements the best technical assistance we can to reclaim lands previously damaged by surface mining.

We will also continue our efforts in restoring more and more acres of public lands under our administration.

In every case where we have taken action toward the restoration of these kinds of land the results of putting them to beneficial use have been most happy. We presently are working with others in the executive branch to develop the best possible program proposals for the more rapid restoration of previously surface mined land.

We look forward to the time when these proposals are ready and budgetary considerations will permit the recommendation of a broader and more extensive program.

Another part of the ongoing programs of the Department of Agriculture relating to the reclamation of surface mined land is that of research. Information developed through years of research by the Forest Service and Agricultural Research Service on vegetative cover is being widely applied. We will continue to increase our knowledge in these fields and help to apply that knowledge wherever it is useful.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that this brief statement will illustrate the deep interest that we in the Department of Agriculture have in improving environmental and other conditions in the rural countryside.

We urge enactment of S. 3132. We stand ready to work with the committee to move the bill forward and to consider any amendments that you may wish to bring to our attention. We will be glad to respond now, Mr. Chairman, to any questions that the committee may have.

Senator METCALF. We are delighted to have you here and to have that very fine statement, Mr. Secretary, and of course we are pleased to have the chief forester and the other members of the group here to testify. Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. No questions.

Senator METCALF. Senator Hansen.

Senator HANSEN. I have no questions, Mr. Chairman.

Senator METCALF. Senator Fannin.

Senator FANNIN. How much of the reclaimed land is in coal mining areas? Isn't most of it in the coal mining area?

Mr. BAKER. Practically all, sir.

Senator FANNIN. That is the only question I have. Thank you.

Senator METCALF. Mr. Secretary, Senator Nelson raised some searching questions as to the advisability of including the Soil Conservation Service in this bill.

Are you satisfied that we do require and guarantee that there will be consultation with the Soil Conservation Service if this bill is passed, which gives the Secretary of the Interior the jurisdiction over the whole problem?

Mr. BAKER. Mr. Chairman, may I express, first, our deep appreciation for the complimentary remarks that I think are accurate that the Senator from Wisconsin made about the work of the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service.