

Senator METCALF. My colleagues have made a very eloquent argument for a Department of Natural Resources. I hope when the hearings on Senator Moss' and my bill come up they would be as forceful. Do you have any statement?

Mr. BAKER. I come nearer agreeing I think with part of Senator Nelson's comments than I do with your bill.

Senator METCALF. I wouldn't be surprised. Do you have any statement, Mr. Cliff?

Mr. CLIFF. I would like to just say a few words. The Forest Service has been involved in restoration of surface mined areas for quite a few years on the lands that we administer. Our public domain lands are subject to mineral leasing under the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act. The acquired lands are subject to mineral leasing under the Mineral Leasing Act for acquired lands. There has been considerable mining under the mineral leasing acts. We have the authority to require restoration of these surface mined lands under these acts.

We have had experience in restoration of thousands of acres of lands that have been mined on the national forests under the Mineral Leasing Act. In the West under the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act as it applies to the national forests derived from the public domain we don't have the final authority, but we have authority to recommend to the Department of the Interior the stipulations on surface mining under the Mineral Leasing Act applying to the western lands.

We do have experience in restoration work. We have some notable examples in Idaho on phosphate mines where we are really pioneering on restoration under semiarid conditions.

We have had 30 years of experience in research directed at surface mine restoration in our research organization. Our research started in 1937. For the first half of this period we have devoted about 6 scientist years to research in surface mining and restoration.

We are now spending about 12 scientist years on this kind of research. Most of it has been done in cooperation with the mining industry and most of it in the Central States, in Ohio, Kentucky, and the surrounding States.

So we do have a backlog of expertise through our research and our experience in working in this area. We are primarily responsible for the work that is done on the national forest land. We are fairly current in keeping up with restoration in the Eastern United States.

We have some 108,000 acres of disturbed lands that are not restored. Eighty percent of this is in the West where the mining is done under the general mining laws where we didn't have the kind of authority that we would need to require restoration.

So there is some backlog of work to be done on the national forests in restoration. I just wanted to add that to round out the picture as to where we fit. We have the State cooperative forestry programs and we have cooperated with the State foresters in restoring privately owned forest lands that have been strip mined.

Mr. BAKER. It might be useful now, Mr. Chairman, if we may, to ask Mr. Grant to explain a little bit about what these 500 soil and water conservation districts have done on surface mine restoration and how that works.

Mr. GRANT. Thank you, Mr. Baker. Mr. Chairman, it certainly has been gratifying to listen to the statements regarding the expertise