

The reclamation of mined land in North Dakota has been carried on for many years in a voluntary manner on an experimental basis by most of the individual companies. At the present time one company has employed a full time geologist and another company has a full time reclamation and conservation employee, both of whom are assisting and counseling the operational personnel of their respective companies and are willingly exchanging ideas at all times for the benefit of the lignite coal industry.

At the present time the Game and Fish Department of the State of North Dakota, in cooperation with the various lignite coal companies are operating from eight to ten public fishing areas throughout the State.

Considerable work in grading and seeding has been accomplished and in excess of a quarter of a million trees have been planted as part of the work carried on in the past in reclamation and conservation.

The lignite coal is of such a nature that sulfur and ash content are very minimal and does not require necessary washing and drying equipment, thereby eliminating the creating of refuse piles or slurry pits and thereby minimizing all types of pollutions from such operations.

Most of the lignite coal mined in North Dakota is above the water drainage and in those areas where water can be impounded and because of the lack of pyrites in the seams the water is such quality that it will support aquatic life.

The majority of the tonnage mined in North Dakota is mined in the remote and rural areas and is also consumed basically in sparsely populated areas. The quality of the lignite coal is of such a low B.T.U. (British Thermal Unit) analysis and of such high moisture content and therefore must be mined as economically as possible and is limited to consumption in the general mining area because of the B.T.U. delivered cost.

The Interstate Commerce Commission also recognizes the low quality of the North Dakota lignite coal when in granting the railroad freight increase on transportation of all lignite coal, limits the increase to 50% as opposed to the normal increase granting to other higher quality coals.

The United Mine Workers of America also recognizes the low quality of lignite coal by assessing only one-half of the tonnage welfare fund as against the full assessment charged against other higher quality coals.

The lignite coal industry of North Dakota has been asked to consider some type of control legislation governing disturbed land as the result of surface mining and therefore the North Dakota Mined Land Conservation Association introduced and supported "Resolution K" in the 1967 session of the legislature thereby creating and formulating a commission to study reclamation and conservation for the State of North Dakota as related to surface mining in the State.

Many field trips were made through out the State by the Commission to view first hand reclamation work that has been carried on in a voluntary manner and many meetings have been held with various governing bodies to consider the thinking of the industry in order that they might be incorporated into workable legislation for the mutual benefit of all interested parties concerned. At the present time the recommendations of the members of the commission formed by Resolution K have been assigned to the Natural Resources Committee of the Legislative Research Commission for evaluation.

It is the opinion of the lignite coal industry that it is unreasonable and not practical from the standpoint of economics and manpower to have any duplications or multiple authority of more than one governing body to implement and enforce this type of regulations.

It is most important that serious consideration be given to any regulations enacted governing the reclamation of effected land as a result of the mining of lignite coal in the State of North Dakota which could seriously effect the industry by increasing our labor and supply cost and putting us in a more unfavorable competitive situation as opposed to high quality imported coals with higher mine realizations as well as the competition from other types of competitive fuels, including nuclear and hydro generation powers.

It is the mutual agreement of the lignite coal industry that if compulsory legislation is forthcoming that a State Governing body is much more informed of the situation and much more effective in administering the rules and regulations and should be the only legislative body empowered to see that these regulations are adhered to.

Therefore the North Dakota Mined Land Conservation Association goes on record as opposing Senate Bill No. 3132.