

**§ 1279. Anthracite coal mines**

(a) The Secretary is authorized to and shall issue separate regulations according to time schedules established in this chapter for anthracite coal surface mines, if such mines are regulated by environmental protection standards of the State in which they are located. Such alternative regulations shall adopt, in each instance, the environmental protection provisions of the State regulatory program in existence on August 3, 1977, in lieu of sections 1265 and 1266 of this title. Provisions of sections 1259 and 1269 of this title are applicable except for specified bond limits and period of revegetation responsibility. All other provisions of this chapter apply and the regulation issued by the Secretary of Interior for each State anthracite regulatory program shall so reflect: *Provided, however*, That upon amendment of a State's regulatory program for anthracite mining or regulations thereunder in force in lieu of the above-cited sections of this chapter, the Secretary shall issue such additional regulations as necessary to meet the purposes of this chapter.

(b) Omitted.

(Pub. L. 95-87, title V, § 529, Aug. 3, 1977, 91 Stat. 514.)

## CODIFICATION

Subsec. (b) of this section, which required the Secretary of the Interior to report to Congress biennially on the effectiveness of State anthracite regulatory programs operating in conjunction with this chapter with respect to protecting the environment, terminated, effective May 15, 2000, pursuant to section 3003 of Pub. L. 104-66, as amended, set out as a note under section 1113 of Title 31, Money and Finance. See, also, page 109 of House Document No. 103-7.

SUBCHAPTER VI—DESIGNATION OF LANDS  
UNSUITABLE FOR NONCOAL MINING**§ 1281. Designation procedures****(a) Review of Federal land areas for unsuitability for noncoal mining**

With respect to Federal lands within any State, the Secretary of Interior may, and if so requested by the Governor of such State shall, review any area within such lands to assess whether it may be unsuitable for mining operations for minerals or materials other than coal, pursuant to the criteria and procedures of this section.

**(b) Criteria considered in determining designations**

An area of Federal land may be designated under this section as unsuitable for mining operations if (1) such area consists of Federal land of a predominantly urban or suburban character, used primarily for residential or related purposes, the mineral estate of which remains in the public domain, or (2) such area consists of Federal land where mining operations would have an adverse impact on lands used primarily for residential or related purposes.

**(c) Petition for exclusion; contents; hearing; temporary land withdrawal**

Any person having an interest which is or may be adversely affected shall have the right to pe-

tion the Secretary to seek exclusion of an area from mining operations pursuant to this section or the redesignation of an area or part thereof as suitable for such operations. Such petition shall contain allegations of fact with supporting evidence which would tend to substantiate the allegations. The petitioner shall be granted a hearing within a reasonable time and finding with reasons therefor upon the matter of their petition. In any instance where a Governor requests the Secretary to review an area, or where the Secretary finds the national interest so requires, the Secretary may temporarily withdraw the area to be reviewed from mineral entry or leasing pending such review: *Provided, however*, That such temporary withdrawal be ended as promptly as practicable and in no event shall exceed two years.

**(d) Limitation on designations; rights preservation; regulations**

In no event is a land area to be designated unsuitable for mining operations under this section on which mining operations are being conducted prior to the holding of a hearing on such petition in accordance with subsection (c) of this section. Valid existing rights shall be preserved and not affected by such designation. Designation of an area as unsuitable for mining operations under this section shall not prevent subsequent mineral exploration of such area, except that such exploration shall require the prior written consent of the holder of the surface estate, which consent shall be filed with the Secretary. The Secretary may promulgate, with respect to any designated area, regulations to minimize any adverse effects of such exploration.

**(e) Statement**

Prior to any designation pursuant to this section, the Secretary shall prepare a detailed statement on (i) the potential mineral resources of the area, (ii) the demand for such mineral resources, and (iii) the impact of such designation or the absence of such designation on the environment, economy, and the supply of such mineral resources.

**(f) Area withdrawal**

When the Secretary designates an area of Federal lands as unsuitable for all or certain types of mining operations for minerals and materials other than coal pursuant to this section he may withdraw such area from mineral entry or leasing, or condition such entry or leasing so as to limit such mining operations in accordance with his determination, if the Secretary also determines, based on his analysis pursuant to subsection (e) of this section, that the benefits resulting from such designation would be greater than the benefits to the regional or national economy which could result from mineral development of such area.

**(g) Right to appeal**

Any party with a valid legal interest who has appeared in the proceedings in connection with the Secretary's determination pursuant to this section and who is aggrieved by the Secretary's decision (or by his failure to act within a reasonable time) shall have the right of appeal for