

## (b) [Reserved]

[45 FR 64908, Oct. 1, 1980, as amended at 48 FR 44780, Sept. 30, 1983; 81 FR 93355, Dec. 20, 2016; 82 FR 54958, Nov. 17, 2017]

**PART 785—REQUIREMENTS FOR PERMITS FOR SPECIAL CATEGORIES OF MINING**

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AUTHORITY: 30 U.S.C. 1201 *et seq.* as

SOURCE: 44 FR 15370, Mar. 13, 1979, unless otherwise noted.

EDITORIAL NOTE: At 82 FR 54965, Nov. 17, 2017, as required by the Congressional Review Act and Public Law 115-5, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement removed all amendments to part 785 made effective on Jan. 19, 2017, at 81 FR 93379-93381, Dec. 20, 2016.

**§ 785.1 Scope.**

This part establishes the minimum requirements for regulatory program provisions for permits for certain categories of surface coal mining and reclamation operations. These requirements are in addition to the general permit requirements contained in this subchapter G. All of the provisions of subchapter G apply to these operations, unless otherwise specifically provided in this part.

**§ 785.2 Objective.**

The objective of this part is to ensure that permits are issued for certain categories of surface coal mining and reclamation operations only after the regulatory authority receives information that shows that these operations will be conducted according to the applicable requirements of the Act, subchapter K, and applicable regulatory programs.

**§ 785.10 Information collection.**

In accordance with 44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved the information collection requirements of part 785 and assigned it control number 1029-0040. The information is being collected to meet the requirements of sections 507, 508, 510, 515, 701 and 711 of Public Law 95-87, which requires applicants for special types of mining activities to provide descriptions, maps, plans and data of the proposed activity. This information will be used by the regulatory authority in determining if the applicant can meet the applicable performance standards for the special type of mining activity. Persons must respond to obtain a benefit. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and you are not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

[73 FR 67630, Nov. 14, 2008, as amended at 81 FR 93379, Dec. 20, 2016; 82 FR 54965, Nov. 17, 2017]

**§ 785.11 Anthracite surface coal mining and reclamation operations.**

(a) This section applies to any person who conducts or intends to conduct anthracite surface coal mining and reclamation operations in Pennsylvania.

(b) Each person who intends to conduct anthracite surface coal mining and reclamation operations in Pennsylvania shall apply for and obtain a permit in accordance with the requirements of this subchapter. The following standards apply to applications for and issuance of permits:

(1) In lieu of the requirements of 30 CFR parts 816-817, the requirements of 30 CFR part 820 shall apply.

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(2) All other requirements of this chapter including the bonding and insurance requirements of 30 CFR 800.70, except the bond limits and the period of revegetation responsibility, to the extent they are required under sections 509 or 510 of the Act, shall apply.

(c) If the Pennsylvania anthracite permanent regulatory program in effect on August 3, 1977, is amended with respect to environmental protection performance standards, the Secretary shall issue additional regulations necessary to meet the purposes of the Act.

[44 FR 15370, Mar. 13, 1979, as amended at 48 FR 44780, Sept. 30, 1983]

## § 785.12 Special bituminous surface coal mining and reclamation operations.

(a) This section applies to any person who conducts or intends to conduct certain special bituminous coal surface mine operations in Wyoming.

(b) Each application for a permit for a special bituminous coal mine operation shall include, as part of the mining operations and reclamation plan, the detailed descriptions, maps and plans needed to demonstrate that the operations will comply with the requirements of the Act and 30 CFR part 825.

(c) The regulatory authority may issue a permit for a special bituminous coal mine operation for which a complete application has been filed in accordance with this section, if it finds, in writing, that the operation will be conducted in compliance with the Act and 30 CFR part 825.

(d) Upon amendment or revision to the Wyoming regulatory program, regulations, or decisions made thereunder, governing special bituminous coal mines, the Secretary shall issue additional regulations necessary to meet the purposes of the Act.

## § 785.13 Experimental practices mining.

(a) Experimental practices provide a variance from environmental protection performance standards of the Act, of subchapter K of this chapter, and the regulatory program for experimental or research purposes, or to allow an alternative postmining land use, and may be undertaken if they are

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approved by the regulatory authority and the Director and if they are incorporated in a permit or permit revision issued in accordance with the requirements of subchapter G of this chapter.

(b) An application for an experimental practice shall contain descriptions, maps, plans, and data which show—

(1) The nature of the experimental practice, including a description of the performance standards for which variances are requested, the duration of the experimental practice, and any special monitoring which will be conducted;

(2) How use of the experimental practice encourages advances in mining and reclamation technology or allows a postmining land use for industrial, commercial, residential, or public use (including recreation facilities) on an experimental basis;

(3) That the experimental practice—

(i) Is potentially more, or at least as, environmentally protective, during and after mining operations, as would otherwise be required by standards promulgated under subchapter K of this chapter; and

(ii) Will not reduce the protection afforded public health and safety below that provided by the requirements of subchapter K of this chapter; and

(4) That the applicant will conduct monitoring of the effects of the experimental practice. The monitoring program shall ensure the collection, analysis, and reporting of reliable data that are sufficient to enable the regulatory authority and the Director to—

(i) Evaluate the effectiveness of the experimental practice; and

(ii) Identify, at the earliest possible time, potential risk to the environment and public health and safety which may be caused by the experimental practice during and after mining.

(c) Applications for experimental practices shall comply with the public notice requirements of § 773.6 of this chapter.

(d) No application for an experimental practice under this section shall be approved until the regulatory authority first finds in writing and the Director then concurs that—

(1) The experimental practice encourages advances in mining and reclamation technology or allows a postmining land use for industrial, commercial, residential, or public use (including recreational facilities) on an experimental basis;

(2) The experimental practice is potentially more, or at least as, environmentally protective, during and after mining operations, as would otherwise be required by standards promulgated under subchapter K of this chapter;

(3) The mining operations approved for a particular land-use or other purpose are not larger or more numerous than necessary to determine the effectiveness and economic feasibility of the experimental practice; and

(4) The experimental practice does not reduce the protection afforded public health and safety below that provided by standards promulgated under subchapter K of this chapter.

(e) Experimental practices granting variances from the special environmental protection performance standards of sections 515 and 516 of the Act applicable to prime farmlands shall be approved only after consultation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service.

(f) Each person undertaking an experimental practice shall conduct the periodic monitoring, recording and reporting program set forth in the application, and shall satisfy such additional requirements as the regulatory authority or the Director may impose to ensure protection of the public health and safety and the environment.

(g) Each experimental practice shall be reviewed by the regulatory authority at a frequency set forth in the approved permit, but no less frequently than every 2½ years. After review, the regulatory authority may require such reasonable modifications of the experimental practice as are necessary to ensure that the activities fully protect the environment and the public health and safety. Copies of the decision of the regulatory authority shall be sent to the permittee and shall be subject to the provisions for administrative and judicial review of part 775 of this chapter.

(h) Revisions or modifications to an experimental practice shall be proc-

essed in accordance with the requirements of § 774.13 of this chapter and approved by the regulatory authority. Any revisions which propose significant alterations in the experimental practice shall, at a minimum, be subject to notice, hearing, and public participation requirements of § 773.6 of this chapter and concurrence by the Director. Revisions that do not propose significant alterations in the experimental practice shall not require concurrence by the Director.

[48 FR 9484, Mar. 4, 1983, as amended at 65 FR 79669, Dec. 19, 2000]

**§ 785.14 Mountaintop removal mining.**

(a) This section applies to any person who conducts or intends to conduct surface mining activities by mountaintop removal mining.

(b) Mountaintop removal mining means surface mining activities, where the mining operation removes an entire coal seam or seams running through the upper fraction of a mountain, ridge, or hill, except as provided for in 30 CFR 824.11(a)(6), by removing substantially all of the overburden off the bench and creating a level plateau or a gently rolling contour, with no highwalls remaining, and capable of supporting postmining land uses in accordance with the requirements of this section.

(c) The regulatory authority may issue a permit for mountaintop removal mining, without regard to the requirements of §§ 816.102, 816.104, 816.105, and 816.107 of this chapter to restore the lands disturbed by such mining to their approximate original contour, if it first finds, in writing, on the basis of a complete application, that the following requirements are met:

(1) The proposed postmining land use of the lands to be affected will be an industrial, commercial, agricultural, residential, or public facility (including recreational facilities) use and, if—

(i) After consultation with the appropriate land-use planning agencies, if any, the proposed land use is deemed by the regulatory authority to constitute an equal or better economic or public use of the affected land compared with the pre-mining use;

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(ii) The applicant demonstrates compliance with the requirements for acceptable alternative postmining land uses of paragraphs (a) through (c) of § 816.133 of this chapter;

(iii) The applicant has presented specific plans for the proposed postmining land use and appropriate assurances that such use will be—

(A) Compatible with adjacent land uses;

(B) Obtainable according to data regarding expected need and market;

(C) Assured of investment in necessary public facilities;

(D) Supported by commitments from public agencies where appropriate;

(E) Practicable with respect to private financial capability for completion of the proposed use;

(F) Planned pursuant to a schedule attached to the reclamation plan so as to integrate the mining operation and reclamation with the postmining land use; and

(G) Designed by a registered engineer in conformance with professional standards established to assure the stability, drainage, and configuration necessary for the intended use of the site.

(iv) The proposed use would be consistent with adjacent land use and existing State and local land use plans and programs; and

(v) The regulatory authority has provided, in writing, an opportunity of not more than 60 days to review and comment on such proposed use to the governing body of general purpose government in whose jurisdiction the land is located and any State or Federal agency which the regulatory authority, in its discretion, determines to have an interest in the proposed use.

(2) The applicant demonstrates that in place of restoration of the land to be affected to the approximate original contour under §§ 816.102, 816.104, 816.105, and 816.107 of this chapter, the operation will be conducted in compliance with the requirements of part 824 of this chapter.

(3) The requirements of 30 CFR 824 are made a specific condition of the permit.

(4) All other requirements of the Act, this chapter, and the regulatory program are met by the proposed operations.

(5) The permit is clearly identified as being for mountaintop removal mining.

(d)(1) Any permits incorporating a variance issued under this section shall be reviewed by the regulatory authority to evaluate the progress and development of mining activities to establish that the operator is proceeding in accordance with the terms of the variance—

(i) Within the sixth month preceding the third year from the date of its issuance;

(ii) Before each permit renewal; and

(iii) Not later than the middle of each permit term.

(2) Any review required under paragraph (d)(1) of this section need not be held if the permittee has demonstrated and the regulatory authority finds, in writing, within three months before the scheduled review, that all operations under the permit are proceeding and will continue to be conducted in accordance with the terms of the permit and requirements of the Act, this chapter, and the regulatory program.

(3) The terms and conditions of a permit for mountaintop removal mining may be modified at any time by the regulatory authority, if it determines that more stringent measures are necessary to insure that the operation involved is conducted in compliance with the requirements of the Act, this chapter, and the regulatory program.

[44 FR 15370, Mar. 13, 1979, as amended at 48 FR 39904, Sept. 1, 1983; 52 FR 39183, Oct. 20, 1987; 81 FR 93379, Dec. 20, 2016; 82 FR 54965, Nov. 17, 2017]

**§ 785.15 Steep slope mining.**

(a) This section applies to any persons who conducts or intends to conduct steep slope surface coal mining and reclamation operations, except—

(1) Where an operator proposes to conduct surface coal mining and reclamation operations on flat or gently rolling terrain, leaving a plain or predominantly flat area, but on which an occasional steep slope is encountered as the mining operation proceeds;

(2) Where a person obtains a permit under the provisions of § 785.14; or

(3) To the extent that a person obtains a permit incorporating a variance under § 785.16.

(b) Any application for a permit for surface coal mining and reclamation operations covered by this section shall contain sufficient information to establish that the operations will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of §816.107 or §817.107 of this chapter.

(c) No permit shall be issued for any operations covered by this section, unless the regulatory authority finds, in writing, that in addition to meeting all other requirements of this subchapter, the operation will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of §816.107 or §817.107 of this chapter.

[44 FR 15370, Mar. 13, 1979, as amended at 51 FR 9006, Mar. 17, 1986]

**§ 785.16 Permits incorporating variances from approximate original contour restoration requirements for steep slope mining.**

(a) The regulatory authority may issue a permit for non-mountaintop removal, steep slope, surface coal mining and reclamation operations which includes a variance from the requirements to restore the disturbed areas to their approximate original contour that are contained in §§816.102, 816.104, 816.105, and 816.107, or §§817.102 and 817.107 of this chapter. The permit may contain such a variance only if the regulatory authority finds, in writing, that the applicant has demonstrated, on the basis of a complete application, that the following requirements are met:

(1) After reclamation, the lands to be affected by the variance within the permit area will be suitable for an industrial, commercial, residential, or public postmining land use (including recreational facilities).

(2) The requirements of §816.133 or §817.133 of this chapter will be met.

(3) The watershed of lands within the proposed permit and adjacent areas will be improved by the operations when compared with the condition of the watershed before mining or with its condition if the approximate original contour were to be restored. The watershed will be deemed improved only if—

(i) The amount of total suspended solids or other pollutants discharged to ground or surface water from the permit area will be reduced, so as to im-

prove the public or private uses or the ecology of such water, or flood hazards within the watershed containing the permit area will be reduced by reduction of the peak flow discharge from precipitation events or thaws;

(ii) The total volume of flow from the proposed permit area, during every season of the year, will not vary in a way that adversely affects the ecology of any surface water or any existing or planned use of surface or ground water; and

(iii) The appropriate State environmental agency approves the plan.

(4) The owner of the surface of the lands within the permit area has knowingly requested, in writing, as part of the application, that a variance be granted. The request shall be made separately from any surface owner consent given for the operations under §778.15 of this chapter and shall show an understanding that the variance could not be granted without the surface owner's request.

(b) If a variance is granted under this section—

(1) The requirements of §816.133(d) or §817.133(d) of this chapter shall be included as a specific condition of the permit; and

(2) The permit shall be specifically marked as containing a variance from approximate original contour.

(c) A permit incorporating a variance under this section shall be reviewed by the regulatory authority at least every 30 months following the issuance of the permit to evaluate the progress and development of the surface coal mining and reclamation operations to establish that the operator is proceeding in accordance with the terms of the variance.

(d) If the permittee demonstrates to the regulatory authority that the operations have been, and continue to be, conducted in compliance with the terms and conditions of the permit, the requirements of the Act, this chapter, and the regulatory program, the review specified in paragraph (c) of this section need not be held.

(e) The terms and conditions of a permit incorporating a variance under this section may be modified at any time by the regulatory authority, if it

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determines that more stringent measures are necessary to ensure that the operations involved are conducted in compliance with the requirements of the Act, this chapter, and the regulatory program.

(f) The regulatory authority may grant variances in accordance with this section only if it has promulgated specific rules to govern the granting of variances in accordance with the provisions of this section and any necessary, more stringent requirements.

[48 FR 39904, Sept. 1, 1983, as amended at 48 FR 44780, Sept. 30, 1983; 56 FR 65635, Dec. 17, 1991; 81 FR 93380, Dec. 20, 2016; 82 FR 54965, Nov. 17, 2017]

## § 785.17 Prime farmland.

(a) This section applies to any person who conducts or intends to conduct surface coal mining and reclamation operations on prime farmlands historically used for cropland. This section does not apply to:

(1) Lands on which surface coal mining and reclamation operations are conducted pursuant to any permit issued prior to August 3, 1977; or

(2) Lands on which surface coal mining and reclamation operations are conducted pursuant to any renewal or revision of a permit issued prior to August 3, 1977; or

(3) Lands included in any existing surface coal mining operations for which a permit was issued for all or any part thereof prior to August 3, 1977, provided that:

(i) Such lands are part of a single continuous surface coal mining operation begun under a permit issued before August 3, 1977; and

(ii) The permittee had a legal right to mine the lands prior to August 3, 1977, through ownership, contract, or lease but not including an option to buy, lease, or contract; and

(iii) The lands contain part of a continuous recoverable coal seam that was being mined in a single continuous mining pit (or multiple pits if the lands are proven to be part of a single continuous surface coal mining operation) begun under a permit issued prior to August 3, 1977.

(4) For purposes of this section:

(i) "Renewal" of a permit shall mean a decision by the regulatory authority

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to extend the time by which the permittee may complete mining within the boundaries of the original permit, and "revision" of the permit shall mean a decision by the regulatory authority to allow changes in the method of mining operations within the original permit area, or the decision of the regulatory authority to allow incidental boundary changes to the original permit;

(ii) A pit shall be deemed to be a single continuous mining pit even if portions of the pit are crossed by a road, pipeline, railroad, or powerline or similar crossing;

(iii) A single continuous surface coal mining operation is presumed to consist only of a single continuous mining pit under a permit issued prior to August 3, 1977, but may include non-contiguous parcels if the operator can prove by clear and convincing evidence that, prior to August 3, 1977, the non-contiguous parcels were part of a single permitted operation. For the purposes of this paragraph, clear and convincing evidence includes, but is not limited to, contracts, leases, deeds or other properly executed legal documents (not including options) that specifically treat physically separate parcels as one surface coal mining operation.

(b) *Application contents—Reconnaissance inspection.* (1) All permit applications, whether or not prime farmland is present, shall include the results of a reconnaissance inspection of the proposed permit area to indicate whether prime farmland exists. The regulatory authority in consultation with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service shall determine the nature and extent of the required reconnaissance inspection.

(2) If the reconnaissance inspection establishes that no land within the proposed permit area is prime farmland historically used for cropland, the applicant shall submit a statement that no prime farmland is present. The statement shall identify the basis upon which such a conclusion was reached.

(3) If the reconnaissance inspection indicates that land within the proposed permit area may be prime farmland historically used for cropland, the applicant shall determine if a soil survey exists for those lands and whether soil mapping units in the permit area have

been designated as prime farmland. If no soil survey exists, the applicant shall have a soil survey made of the lands within the permit area which the reconnaissance inspection indicates could be prime farmland. Soil surveys of the detail used by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service for operational conservation planning shall be used to identify and locate prime farmland soils.

(i) If the soil survey indicates that no prime farmland soils are present within the proposed permit area, paragraph (b)(2) of this section shall apply.

(ii) If the soil survey indicates that prime farmland soils are present within the proposed permit area, paragraph (c) of this section shall apply.

(c) *Application contents—Prime farmland.* All permit applications for areas in which prime farmland has been identified within the proposed permit area shall include the following:

(1) A soil survey of the permit area according to the standards of the National Cooperative Soil Survey and in accordance with the procedures set forth in U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbooks 436 "Soil Taxonomy" (U.S. Soil Conservation Service, 1975) as amended on March 22, 1982 and October 5, 1982, and 18, "Soil Survey Manual" (U.S. Soil Conservation Service, 1951), as amended on December 18, 1979, May 7, 1980, May 9, 1980, September 11, 1980, June 9, 1981, June 29, 1981, November 16, 1982. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service establishes the standards of the National Cooperative Soil Survey and maintains a National Soils Handbook which gives current acceptable procedures for conducting soil surveys. This National Soils Handbook is available for review at area and State SCS offices.

(i) U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbooks 436 and 18 are incorporated by reference as they exist on the date of adoption of this section. Notices of changes made to these publications will be periodically published by OSM in the *FEDERAL REGISTER*. The handbooks are on file and available for inspection at the OSM Central Office, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1951 Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC, at each OSM Technical Center and Field Office, and at the central office of

the applicable State regulatory authority, if any. Copies of these documents are also available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, Stock Nos. 001-000-02597-0 and 001-000-00688-6, respectively. In addition, these documents are available for inspection at the national, State, and area offices of the Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, or at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on the availability of this material at NARA, call 202-741-6030, or go to: [http://www.archives.gov/federal\\_register/code\\_of\\_federal\\_regulations/ibr\\_locations.html](http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/code_of_federal_regulations/ibr_locations.html). Incorporation by reference provisions were approved by the Director of the *Federal Register* on June 29, 1981.

(ii) The soil survey shall include a description of soil mapping units and a representative soil profile as determined by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, including, but not limited to, soil-horizon depths, pH, and the range of soil densities for each prime farmland soil unit within the permit area. Other representative soil-profile descriptions from the locality, prepared according to the standards of the National Cooperative Soil Survey, may be used if their use is approved by the State Conservationist, U.S. Soil Conservation Service. The regulatory authority may request the operator to provide information on other physical and chemical soil properties as needed to make a determination that the operator has the technological capability to restore the prime farmland within the permit area to the soil-reconstruction standards of part 823 of this chapter.

(2) A plan for soil reconstruction, replacement, and stabilization for the purpose of establishing the technological capability of the mine operator to comply with the requirements of part 823 of this chapter.

(3) Scientific data, such as agricultural-school studies, for areas with comparable soils, climate, and management that demonstrate that the proposed method of reclamation, including the use of soil mixtures or substitutes,

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if any, will achieve, within a reasonable time, levels of yield equivalent to, or higher than, those of nonmined prime farmland in the surrounding area.

(4) The productivity prior to mining, including the average yield of food, fiber, forage, or wood products obtained under a high level of management.

(d) *Consultation with Secretary of Agriculture.* (1) The Secretary of Agriculture has responsibilities with respect to prime farmland soils and has assigned the prime farmland responsibilities arising under the Act to the Chief of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service shall carry out consultation and review through the State Conservationist located in each State.

(2) The State Conservationist shall provide to the regulatory authority a list of prime farmland soils, their location, physical and chemical characteristics, crop yields, and associated data necessary to support adequate prime farmland soil descriptions.

(3) The State Conservationist shall assist the regulatory authority in describing the nature and extent of the reconnaissance inspection required in paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(4) Before any permit is issued for areas that include prime farmland, the regulatory authority shall consult with the State Conservationist. The State Conservationist shall provide for the review of, and comment on, the proposed method of soil reconstruction in the plan submitted under paragraph (c) of this section. If the State Conservationist considers those methods to be inadequate, he or she shall suggest revisions to the regulatory authority which result in more complete and adequate reconstruction.

(e) *Issuance of permit.* A permit for the mining and reclamation of prime farmland may be granted by the regulatory authority, if it first finds, in writing, upon the basis of a complete application, that—

(1) The approved proposed postmining land use of these prime farmlands will be cropland;

(2) The permit incorporates as specific conditions the contents of the plan submitted under paragraph (c) of

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this section, after consideration of any revisions to that plan suggested by the State Conservationist under paragraph (d)(4) of this section;

(3) The applicant has the technological capability to restore the prime farmland, within a reasonable time, to equivalent or higher levels of yield as non-mined prime farmland in the surrounding area under equivalent levels of management; and

(4) The proposed operations will be conducted in compliance with the requirements of 30 CFR part 823 and other environmental protection performance and reclamation standards for mining and reclamation of prime farmland of the regulatory program.

(5) The aggregate total prime farmland acreage shall not be decreased from that which existed prior to mining. Water bodies, if any, to be constructed during mining and reclamation operations must be located within the post-reclamation non-prime farmland portions of the permit area. The creation of any such water bodies must be approved by the regulatory authority and the consent of all affected property owners within the permit area must be obtained.

[44 FR 15370, Mar. 13, 1979, as amended at 46 FR 47722, Sept. 29, 1981; 48 FR 21462, May 12, 1983; 53 FR 40839, Oct. 18, 1988]

## § 785.18 Variances for delay in contemporaneous reclamation requirement in combined surface and underground mining activities.

(a) *Scope.* This section shall apply to any person or persons conducting or intending to conduct combined surface and underground mining activities where a variance is requested from the contemporaneous reclamation requirements of § 816.100 of this chapter.

(b) *Application contents for variances.* Any person desiring a variance under this section shall file with the regulatory authority complete applications for both the surface mining activities and underground mining activities which are to be combined. The reclamation and operation plans for these permits shall contain appropriate narratives, maps, and plans, which—

(1) Show why the proposed underground mining activities are necessary

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or desirable to assure maximum practical recovery of the coal;

(2) Show how multiple future disturbances of surface lands or waters will be avoided;

(3) Identify the specific surface areas for which a variance is sought and the sections of the Act, this chapter, and the regulatory program from which a variance is being sought;

(4) Show how the activities will comply with § 816.79 of this chapter and other applicable requirements of the regulatory program;

(5) Show why the variance sought is necessary for the implementation of the proposed underground mining activities;

(6) Provide an assessment of the adverse environmental consequences and damages, if any, that will result if the reclamation of surface mining activities is delayed; and

(7) Show how offsite storage of spoil will be conducted to comply with the requirements of the Act, §§ 816.71 through 816.74 of this chapter, and the regulatory program.

(c) *Issuance of permit.* A permit incorporating a variance under this section may be issued by the regulatory authority if it first finds, in writing, upon the basis of a complete application filed in accordance with this section, that—

(1) The applicant has presented, as part of the permit application, specific, feasible plans for the proposed underground mining activities;

(2) The proposed underground mining activities are necessary or desirable to assure maximum practical recovery of the mineral resource and will avoid multiple future disturbances of surface land or waters;

(3) The applicant has satisfactorily demonstrated that the applications for the surface mining activities and underground mining activities conform to the requirements of the regulatory program and that all other permits necessary for the underground mining activities have been issued by the appropriate authority;

(4) The surface area of surface mining activities proposed for the variance has been shown by the applicant to be necessary for implementing the proposed underground mining activities;

(5) No substantial adverse environmental damage, either onsite or offsite, will result from the delay in completion of reclamation otherwise required by section 515(b)(16) of the Act, part 816 of this chapter, and the regulatory program;

(6) The operations will, insofar as a variance is authorized, be conducted in compliance with the requirements of § 816.79 of this chapter and the regulatory program;

(7) Provisions for offsite storage of spoil will comply with the requirements of section 515(b)(22) of the Act, §§ 816.71 through 816.74 of this chapter, and the regulatory program;

(8) Liability under the performance bond required to be filed by the applicant with the regulatory authority pursuant to subchapter J of this chapter and the regulatory program will be for the duration of the underground mining activities and until all requirements of subchapter J and the regulatory program have been complied with; and

(9) The permit for the surface mining activities contains specific conditions—

(i) Delineating the particular surface areas for which a variance is authorized;

(ii) Identifying the applicable provisions of section 515(b) of the Act, part 816 of this chapter, and the regulatory program; and

(iii) Providing a detailed schedule for compliance with the provisions of this section.

(d) *Review of permits containing variances.* Variances granted by permits issued under this section shall be reviewed by the regulatory authority no later than 3 years from the dates of issuance of the permit and any permit renewals.

[48 FR 24651, June 1, 1983]

**§ 785.19 Surface coal mining and reclamation operations on areas or adjacent to areas including alluvial valley floors in the arid and semi-arid areas west of the 100th meridian.**

(a) *Alluvial valley floor determination.*

(1) Permit applicants who propose to conduct surface coal mining and reclamation operations within a valley

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holding a stream or in a location where the permit area or adjacent area includes any stream, in the arid and semiarid regions of the United States, as an initial step in the permit process, may request the regulatory authority to make an alluvial valley floor determination with respect to that valley floor. The applicant shall demonstrate and the regulatory authority shall determine, based on either available data or field studies submitted by the applicant, or a combination of available data and field studies, the presence or absence of an alluvial valley floor. Studies shall include sufficiently detailed geologic, hydrologic, land use, soils, and vegetation data and analysis to demonstrate the probable existence of an alluvial valley floor in the area. The regulatory authority may require additional data collection and analysis or other supporting documents, maps, and illustrations in order to make the determination.

(2) The regulatory authority shall make a written determination as to the extent of any alluvial valley floors within the area. The regulatory authority shall determine that an alluvial valley floor exists if it finds that—

(i) Unconsolidated streamlaid deposits holding streams are present; and

(ii) There is sufficient water available to support agricultural activities as evidenced by—

(A) The existence of current flood irrigation in the area in question;

(B) The capability of an area to be flood irrigated, based on evaluations of typical regional agricultural practices, historical flood irrigation, streamflow, water quality, soils, and topography; or

(C) Subirrigation of the lands in question derived from the groundwater system of the valley floor.

(3) If the regulatory authority determines in writing that an alluvial valley does not exist pursuant to paragraph (a)(2) of this section, no further consideration of this section is required.

(b) *Applicability of statutory exclusions.*

(1) If an alluvial valley floor is identified pursuant to paragraph (a)(2) of this section and the proposed surface coal mining operation may affect this alluvial valley floor or waters that supply the alluvial valley floor, the applicant may request the regulatory authority,

as a preliminary step in the permit application process, to separately determine the applicability of the statutory exclusions set forth in paragraph (b)(2) of this section. The regulatory authority may make such a determination based on the available data, may require additional data collection and analysis in order to make the determination, or may require the applicant to submit a complete permit application and not make the determination until after the complete application is evaluated.

(2) An applicant need not submit the information required in paragraphs (d)(2) (ii) and (iii) of this section and a regulatory authority is not required to make the findings of paragraphs (e)(2) (i) and (ii) of this section when the regulatory authority determines that one of the following circumstances, heretofore called statutory exclusions, exist:

(i) The premining land use is undeveloped rangeland which is not significant to farming;

(ii) Any farming on the alluvial valley floor that would be affected by the surface coal mining operation is of such small acreage as to be of negligible impact on the farm's agricultural production. Negligible impact of the proposed operation on farming will be based on the relative importance of the affected farmland areas of the alluvial valley floor area to the farm's total agricultural production over the life of the mine; or

(iii) The circumstances set forth in § 822.12(b) (3) or (4) of this chapter exist.

(3) For the purpose of this section, a farm is one or more land units on which farming is conducted. A farm is generally considered to be the combination of land units with acreage and boundaries in existence prior to August 3, 1977, or if established after August 3, 1977, with those boundaries based on enhancement of the farm's agricultural productivity and not related to surface coal operations.

(c) *Summary denial.* If the regulatory authority determines that the statutory exclusions are not applicable and that any of the required findings of paragraph (e)(2) of this section cannot be made, the regulatory authority may, at the request of the applicant:

(1) Determine that mining is precluded on the proposed permit area and deny the permit without the applicant filing any additional information required by this section; or

(2) Prohibit surface coal mining and reclamation operations in all or parts of the area to be affected by mining.

(d) *Application contents for operations affecting designated alluvial valley floors.*

(1) If land within the permit area or adjacent area is identified as an alluvial valley floor and the proposed surface coal mining operation may affect an alluvial valley floor or waters supplied to an alluvial valley floor, the applicant shall submit a complete application for the proposed surface coal mining and reclamation operations to be used by the regulatory authority together with other relevant information as a basis for approval or denial of the permit. If an exclusion of paragraph (b)(2) of this section applies, then the applicant need not submit the information required in paragraphs (d)(2) (ii) and (iii) of this section.

(2) The complete application shall include detailed surveys and baseline data required by the regulatory authority for a determination of—

(i) The essential hydrologic functions of the alluvial valley floor which might be affected by the mining and reclamation process. The information required by this subparagraph shall evaluate those factors which contribute to the collecting, storing, regulating and making the natural flow of water available for agricultural activities on the alluvial valley floor and shall include, but are not limited to:

(A) Factors contributing to the function of collecting water, such as amount, rate and frequency of rainfall and runoff, surface roughness, slope and vegetative cover, infiltration, and evapotranspiration, relief, slope and density of drainage channels;

(B) Factors contributing to the function of storing water, such as permeability, infiltration, porosity, depth and direction of ground water flow, and water holding capacity;

(C) Factors contributing to the function of regulating the flow of surface and ground water, such as the longitudinal profile and slope of the valley and channels, the sinuosity and cross-sec-

tions of the channels, interchange of water between streams and associated alluvial and bedrock aquifers, and rates and amount of water supplied by these aquifers; and

(D) Factors contributing to water availability, such as the presence of flood plains and terraces suitable for agricultural activities.

(ii) Whether the operation will avoid during mining and reclamation the interruption, discontinuance, or preclusion of farming on the alluvial valley floor;

(iii) Whether the operation will cause material damage to the quantity or quality of surface or ground waters supplied to the alluvial valley floor;

(iv) Whether the reclamation plan is in compliance with requirements of the Act, this chapter, and regulatory program; and

(v) Whether the proposed monitoring system will provide sufficient information to measure compliance with part 822 of this chapter during and after mining and reclamation operations.

(e) *Findings.* (1) The findings of paragraphs (e)(2) (i) and (ii) of this section are not required with regard to alluvial valley floors to which are applicable any of the exclusions of paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(2) No permit or permit revision application for surface coal mining and reclamation operations on lands located west of the 100th meridian west longitude shall be approved by the regulatory authority unless the application demonstrates and the regulatory authority finds in writing, on the basis of information set forth in the application, that—

(i) The proposed operations will not interrupt, discontinue, or preclude farming on an alluvial valley floor;

(ii) The proposed operations will not materially damage the quantity or quality of water in surface and underground water systems that supply alluvial valley floors; and

(iii) The proposed operations will comply with part 822 of this chapter and the other applicable requirements of the Act and the regulatory program.

[48 FR 29820, June 28, 1983, as amended at 54 FR 9735, Mar. 7, 1989]

## § 785.20

### § 785.20 Augering.

(a) This section applies to any person who conducts or intends to conduct surface coal mining and reclamation operations utilizing augering operations.

(b) Any application for a permit for operations covered by this section shall contain, in the mining and reclamation plan, a description of the augering methods to be used and the measures to be used to comply with 30 CFR part 819.

(c) No permit shall be issued for any operations covered by this section unless the regulatory authority finds, in writing, that in addition to meeting all other applicable requirements of this subchapter, the operation will be conducted in compliance with 30 CFR part 819.

### § 785.21 Coal preparation plants not located within the permit area of a mine.

(a) This section applies to any person who operates or intends to operate a coal preparation plant in connection with a coal mine but outside the permit area for a specific mine. Any person who operates such a preparation plant shall obtain a permit from the regulatory authority in accordance with the requirements of this section.

(b) Any application for a permit for operations covered by this section shall contain an operation and reclamation plan which specifies plans, including descriptions, maps, and cross sections, of the construction, operation, maintenance, and removal of the preparation plant and support facilities operated incident thereto or resulting therefrom. The plan shall demonstrate that those operations will be conducted in compliance with part 827 of this chapter.

(c) No permit shall be issued for any operation covered by this section, unless the regulatory authority finds in writing that, in addition to meeting all other applicable requirements of this subchapter, the operations will be conducted in compliance with the requirements of part 827 of this chapter.

(d)(1) Except as provided in paragraph (d)(2) of this section, any person who operates a coal preparation plant beyond May 10, 1986, that was not sub-

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ject to this chapter before July 6, 1984, shall have applied for a permit no later than November 11, 1985.

(2)(i) State programs that have a statutory or regulatory bar precluding issuance of permits to facilities covered by paragraph (d)(1) of this section shall notify OSMRE not later than November 7, 1985, and shall establish a schedule for actions necessary to allow the permitting of such facilities as soon as practicable. Not later than December 9, 1985, this schedule shall be submitted to OSMRE for approval.

(ii) Any person who operates a coal preparation plant that was not subject to this chapter before July 6, 1984, in a state which submits a schedule in accordance with paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section shall apply for a permit in accordance with the schedule approved by OSMRE.

(e) Notwithstanding § 773.4 of this chapter and except as prohibited by § 761.11 of this chapter, any person operating a coal preparation plant that was not subject to this chapter before July 6, 1984, may continue to operate without a permit until May 10, 1986, and may continue to operate beyond that date if:

(1) A permit application has been timely filed under paragraph (d)(1) of this section or under a State imposed schedule specified in paragraph (d)(2) of this section,

(2) The regulatory authority has yet to either issue or deny the permit, and

(3) The person complies with the applicable performance standards of § 827.13 of this chapter.

[48 FR 20401, May 5, 1983, as amended at 52 FR 17730, May 11, 1987; 53 FR 47391, Nov. 22, 1988, as amended at 65 FR 79669, Dec. 19, 2000]

### § 785.22 In situ processing activities.

(a) This section applies to any person who conducts or intends to conduct surface coal mining and reclamation operations utilizing in situ processing activities.

(b) Any application for a permit for operations covered by this section shall be made according to all requirements of this subchapter applicable to underground mining activities. In addition, the mining and reclamation operations plan for operations involving in situ

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processing activities shall contain information establishing how those operations will be conducted in compliance with the requirements of 30 CFR part 828, including—

- (1) Delineation of proposed holes and wells and production zone for approval of the regulatory authority;
- (2) Specifications of drill holes and casings proposed to be used;
- (3) A plan for treatment, confinement or disposal of all acid-forming, toxic-forming or radioactive gases, solids, or liquids constituting a fire, health, safety or environmental hazard caused by the mining and recovery process; and
- (4) Plans for monitoring surface and ground water and air quality, as required by the regulatory authority.

(c) No permit shall be issued for operations covered by this section, unless the regulatory authority first finds, in writing, upon the basis of a complete application made in accordance with paragraph (b) of this section, that the operation will be conducted in compliance with all requirements of this subchapter relating to underground mining activities, and 30 CFR parts 817 and 828.

**§ 785.25 Lands eligible for remining.**

- (a) This section contains permitting requirements to implement § 773.13.

Any person who submits a permit application to conduct a surface coal mining operation on lands eligible for remining must comply with this section.

(b) Any application for a permit under this section shall be made according to all requirements of this subchapter applicable to surface coal mining and reclamation operations. In addition, the application shall—

- (1) To the extent not otherwise addressed in the permit application, identify potential environmental and safety problems related to prior mining activity at the site and that could be reasonably anticipated to occur. This identification shall be based on a due diligence investigation which shall include visual observations at the site, a record review of past mining at the site, and environmental sampling tailored to current site conditions.

- (2) With regard to potential environmental and safety problems referred to in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, describe the mitigative measures that will be taken to ensure that the applicable reclamation requirements of the regulatory program can be met.

[60 FR 58491, Nov. 27, 1995, as amended at 65 FR 79669, Dec. 19, 2000; 73 FR 67630, Nov. 14, 2008; 81 FR 93381, Dec. 20, 2016; 82 FR 54965, Nov. 17, 2017]