

RECLAMATION PLANNING AND ITS EFFECT ON BOND RELEASES

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The land which we mine is located in a poverty stricken section of southeastern Ohio. Back when our economy was set up so that a small farmer could make a decent living at farming, this land was farmed quite heavily where the slopes flattened out enough to allow crops to be raised. The steeper areas were used for pasture and, as a result, trees would grow in these areas, since they were too steep to be farmed. As our economy changed, the small farmer could no longer keep farming and the land was let go with little or no management and the result was some very poor undeveloped land, a lot of which has been previously mined and unreclaimed.

The land use, which the majority of our mined area is put to, is that of grazingland. This use includes both grassland and forestland where the indigenous vegetation is actively managed for grazing, browsing, or occasional hay production. This has worked out well for us, and the landowner is well pleased with the results.

All of our mining is done by surface mining methods. When possible, each is placed in the hole made by the previous cut except for excess spoil, which might have to be placed in areas outside the mined out area or blended into the surrounding contour to compliment and provide positive drainage.

Most of the land which we mine has no topsoil as such. The steeper areas generally are covered with rock outcroppings, or they have been previously mined and unreclaimed, and therefore, there is very little recoverable soil. However, in most of the flatter areas, the subsoil is of appreciable thickness to provide enough material to more than adequately cover the entire mined area after being regraded. When possible, the regrading is done as mining progresses, and the resoiling material is replaced as soon as weather permits.

As soon as we put down the resoiling material we start preparing the seedbed by discing, fertilizing and liming, according to soil test recommendations, then we disc again prior to seeding. The seed, which we use, is a mixture of grasses and legumes which includes Kentucky 31 forager fescue, orchard grass, timothy, red clover, ladino clover, alsike clover, and alfalfa or birdsfoot trefoil. After the seed has been distributed, the mulching is done at the rate of three tones per acre with a large round bale mulcher. As quick as the mulch is placed, it is crimped along the contour, to hold it in place and to minimize erosion.

We only prepare enough ground, which we can get totally completed through crimping, in a days time or prior to a rain. We always start at the highest elevation and work toward a lower elevation so that, if a rain occurs, the areas that has been completed will be adequately protected and there will be very little redo work.

After the reclamation phase, we continually monitor the area to see if there is any erosion taking place, especially after a rainfall. If there are any places which need some repair, then it is taken care of before there is a bigger problem.

The thing which has really done the most for us, has been the proper design, construction and maintenance of our drainage control systems. This includes, the sediment ponds, the diversion ditches, the rock channels, the proper contouring of the ground throughout regrading and resoiling, and the proper mulching and crimping techniques. As a result, we don't have any trouble getting our partial bond releases, and although we have not gotten to the end of any of our five year maintenance periods, we don't feel, nor does the regulatory authority feel that we will have any trouble getting our final bond releases. We always get our partial releases, just as soon as possible. We want the five year maintenance period to start as soon as it can. We constantly communicate with the inspectors to assure that everything is being done which they feel necessary, so that we can get timely bond releases.

As a result of our planning, construction, maintenance, and communication with the regulatory authority, we not only get timely bond releases, we also eliminate the violations which would result if we hadn't done these things. We feel that, according to law, we have to do these things eventually anyway, so why not do them harmoniously and timely, and, at the same time, save us some money when the final, total costs of the mine are tallied.