

MINE REGULATION AND RECLAMATION IN MISSISSIPPI¹

Michael B. E. Bograd², Stan Thieling, and David T. Dockery III

Abstract: The Office of Geology of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is both the state geological survey and the mine regulatory authority. The Mississippi Surface Mining and Reclamation Law, passed in 1977, governs mines for all materials other than coal or lignite. There are over 700 active permits, plus a large number of “exempt” mines of less than four acres and “grandfathered” sites. All are surface pits or dredge mines for sand and gravel, fill dirt, brick and tile clay, bentonite, ball clay, and agricultural lime. The Mississippi Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation Law, enacted 1979, governs surface coal and lignite mines. Mississippi was the third state to be granted primacy, in 1980, by the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. The state’s first lignite mine was permitted in 1998 and has been producing since 2002. A second lignite mine is in the permitting stage. Permits under both laws are issued by the Environmental Quality Permit Board. The Commission on Environmental Quality sets MDEQ regulations and handles enforcement matters. The goal of both laws is to prevent environmental harm during mining and reclamation and restore mined land to a useful, productive, and beneficial purpose. Land disturbed by coal or lignite mining must be restored to approximate original contour and has added requirements for topsoil and prime farmland.

Additional Key Words: coal, lignite, approximate original contour

¹ Paper was presented at the 2012 National Meeting of the American Society of Mining and Reclamation, Tupelo, MS *Sustainable Reclamation* June 8 – 15, 2012. R.I. Barnhisel (Ed.) Published by ASMR, 3134 Montavesta Rd., Lexington, KY 40502

² Michael B. E. Bograd, State Geologist, Stan Thieling, Director, Coal Mining Division, and David T. Dockery III, Director, Surface Geology Division, all at Mississippi Office of Geology, Jackson, MS 39225