

THE APPALACHIAN REGIONAL REFORESTATION INITIATIVE, A YEAR FIVE PROGRESS REPORT¹

Scott D. Eggerud²

Abstract: Accomplishments of the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) have been extraordinary, however much work remains. ARRI was formed in 2004 with the simple goal of improving reforestation success on coal mined lands in Appalachia. The goals have been refined to include, specifically 1) plant more high-value hard-wood trees on reclaimed coal mine lands in Appalachia; 2) increase the survival rates and growth rates of planted trees; and 3) expedite the establishment of forest habitat through natural succession. The key to ARRI's success has been the development of partnerships. State and federal regulators, making up the ARRI Core Team, rely on the expertise of the Science Team, consisting of researchers from the major universities throughout Appalachia. The Science Team developed the Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA) to ensure proper reforestation utilizing state of the art reclamation practices. The Core Team and the Science Team rely on the regulatory authorities to ensure the industry and consultants insert proper reforestation language into mining permits. Several regulatory authority programs have been amended to include FRA language. Core and Science Team members have conducted numerous training sessions for regulatory authorities, industry, consultants, landowners, reclamation inspectors and even equipment operators. All stakeholders rely on field inspectors and equipment operators to properly prepare the forestry growth medium for tree planting. Thus far the industry has responded by gradually increasing the numbers of trees planted on surface mines from about 9.4 million trees in 2005 to over 12.8 million trees in 2008. Cultural barriers within the landowner, regulatory authority and industry groups still exist, however proven science and aggressive outreach is helping overcome such barriers.

Additional Key Words: The Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI), Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA), partnerships, surface mine reforestation, Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) programs, outreach.

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² Scott D. Eggerud is a Forester, Office of Surface Mining (OSM), United States Department of Interior (USDI), Pittsburgh, PA 15220.