



# Protecting Our Environment

## A Law That's Good For The Land

(NAPSA)—A regional airport in Kentucky—baseball fields, a golf course and an industrial park in West Virginia—prime farm land in Illinois—are all examples of post mining land development that are in use benefitting people across the nation today because of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, which celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2002.

Since the law passed in 1977, mined lands are no longer left abandoned without proper reclamation. Coal mine operators now reclaim the land as they mine, returning and restoring land that was previously mined. Reclamation leaves mined land as good as new, if not better than it was before the mining process began. Valuable topsoil is salvaged and vegetation and cattle thrive once again as a result of the Surface Mining Law.

### How The Law Works

Under the law, mine operators must have a permit before developing a surface or underground coal mine. The law prohibits mining within national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recreation areas, and within a restricted distance of occupied dwellings and public areas. Prior to the law, fish and wildlife, historical, or cultural resources were seldom considered or preserved. Now the mining impact of these features is an important part of the planning and permitting process.

The law gives primary responsibility for coal mine reclamation to the states themselves. Twenty-four states have chosen to accept this responsibility, while the Office of Surface Mining regulates mining practices on Indian and federal lands.

To date, more than 180,000 acres of abandoned mine lands have been restored to productive



**IT'S A HIT—Thanks to the Surface Mining Law, children now enjoy a Little League baseball field that was once a coal mine.**

use. A good example of this reclamation of mine land is a site on the border of Tennessee and Kentucky. Located along Interstate 75, this site was covered with old spoil pits and ridges—the unpleasant aftermath of a mine that was abandoned in the 1940s. Everyone traveling northbound on I-75 could see the effects of mining before the Surface Mining Law was enacted. Now, after reclamation, the travelers would have to be told there was once a surface mine there, because the mined area once again looks like the natural landscape surrounding it.

### Baseball Field Is A Hit

But this is only one example of how the Surface Mining Law protects our environment. In West Virginia, local children now enjoy a Little League baseball field that was once a coal mine, while in Maryland, a Christmas tree farm flourishes on reclaimed land. All across America, people are enjoying the benefits of the Surface Mining Law.

For more information about surface mining and how land is reclaimed, visit [www.osmre.gov](http://www.osmre.gov).