

# NEWS RELEASE



**STATE OF ALABAMA**  
**Department of Industrial**  
**Relations**  
News For Immediate Release  
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## **ABANDONED MINE LAND RECLAMATION PROGRAM MAY EXPIRE** **Program eliminates public health and safety hazards and environmental problems**

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, December 18, 2002 . . . . . A program that has eliminated safety hazards and environmental problems for 25 years in north Alabama may expire after federal review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation program restores land and water resources which have been adversely affected by past coal mining and for which there is no continuing reclamation responsibility under state or federal law. Governor Don Siegelman has written OMB asking that the program be continued.

Since the program began, about 500 reclamation projects - including over 1,500 sites in 21 north Alabama counties have been completed - improving the quality of life for many Alabamians. Alabama still has several hundred abandoned mine sites that are either hazardous to the public or environmentally degrading.

“The AML program has come to be recognized as one of the most successful environmental improvement efforts in our nation’s history,” says Alice McKinney, director of the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations. “Under emergency provisions of the AML program, we have assisted homeowners living above dormant coal mines who have suffered damages to their residence in the form of cracks in the foundation and walls when these old mines collapse and the ground shifts. We have also improved the environment by planting over seven million trees on over 9,200 acres in 14 north Alabama counties.”

“The program is funded through fees paid to the federal government by coal operators,” says Bill Guyette, State Programs Division director. “The money is returned to the state in the form of federal grants from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Surface Mining, to correct problems caused by old mines such as improperly filled shafts, dilapidated mine buildings and equipment, toxic mine refuse and drainage, landslides, mine fires, gas leaks, and subsidence.”

OMB is reviewing the value and effectiveness of the AML program as well as the reauthorization of the reclamation fee which is set to expire September 30, 2004.

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**Industrial Relations is an umbrella organization of State government which administers: the State Employment Service, Unemployment Insurance, Workers’ Compensation, and Labor Market Information. Smaller programs also administered include Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation, Mine Safety and Inspection, and Surface Mining of Non-Fuel Minerals.**