

What is Virginia's Orphaned Mineral Mine Program?

Orphaned, or abandoned, lands are those areas disturbed by the surface mining of non-fuel minerals, which occurred prior to 1969. At that time there were no requirements for reclamation.

Virginia's General Assembly enacted reclamation laws in 1968 to minimize the adverse effects of mining on the environment.

Recognizing that past mining practices had left many abandoned, or un-reclaimed, mine sites, a proposal was made to study the extent of orphaned mines in Virginia.

Virginia Energy's Mineral Mining Program runs the Orphaned Land Program (OLP) which inventories, evaluates and reclaims these abandoned sites.

What is an Abandoned Mineral Mine Land Site?



Abandoned Mineral Mine Land (AMML) sites are those that have not been reclaimed and where mining occurred prior to the

enactment of reclamation laws. They are historic mine sites and can be very hazardous. They can be pits, quarries or underground mines.

Why does Virginia Energy need to come on to my property?

The Mineral Mining Program keeps an inventory of orphaned mineral mine sites. Each site is physically inventoried and critical information, such as types of hazards and proximity to people, are captured.

You can see our Abandoned Mineral Mine Land inventory on our web mapping system: <https://energy.virginia.gov/webmaps/MineralMining/>

How many Abandoned Mineral Mines are in Virginia?

There are an estimated 4,000 abandoned mineral mine lands in the Commonwealth, 80% of which have been inventoried (2022).

Once identified, an abandoned mine site is evaluated for its potential hazards to the environment and the public's health and safety. This evaluation includes soil and water investigations, studies on the feasibility of reclaiming the site, cost analysis, and seeking the landowner's consent to allow reclamation to proceed.

The first orphaned land site was reclaimed in 1981. Since then, 135 orphaned land projects

have been completed encompassing 650 acres at a cost of \$3,715,301 (2013). The average cost of reclamation per acre has been \$5,715.84.

Who pays for the reclamation?

Funds for the reclamation of orphaned mine sites are obtained from interest moneys earned from a state managed, industry self-bonding program. All active mine sites pay into this self-bonding program.

How do you decide which AMML site to reclaim?

Proposed reclamation projects are identified and then evaluated by an Orphaned Land Advisory Committee (OLAC) composed of individuals from Virginia Energy's Geology and Mineral Resources Program, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Environmental Quality Water Division, the mineral mining industry, and private citizens who assist the Mineral Mining Program in evaluating the sites and prioritizing reclamation.

What do I do if I think I found an AMML?

First, recognize that abandoned mines are very dangerous. Do NOT enter abandoned quarries, pits or shafts.



Visit MSHA's Stay Out, Stay Alive website for more information.

<https://www.msha.gov/sosa>



To report an abandoned mineral mine land site, contact our office at:

*900 Natural Resources Drive, Ste. 400
Charlottesville VA 22903
(434) 951-6310 (Phone)*

[*mineralmininginfo@dmme.virginia.gov*](mailto:mineralmininginfo@dmme.virginia.gov)

For additional information about Virginia's Mineral Mining Orphaned Land Program, please contact Chrissi Wood-Smith at (434) 951-6322.

Mine shafts can collapse and may have explosives or other dangers inside.

Quarries are often very deep and are filled with water. High walls can be unstable and debris can be underwater.

Never enter an abandoned mine site, pit or quarry!



GUIDE TO VIRGINIA'S ABANDONED MINERAL MINE LANDS

**Virginia Department of Energy
Mineral Mining Program
900 Natural Resources Drive, Suite 400
Charlottesville, Va. 22903
Phone: 434-951-6310**