

The USACE Abandoned Mine Restoration Initiative
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Various Federal and State agencies have asked the Corps for engineering assistance with abandoned mine restoration. There are many problems associated with abandoned mines that the Corps of Engineers may address. Abandoned mines create a serious water quality problem, a hazardous waste problem, a sediment problem, a threat to the aquatic ecosystem, and a safety hazard.

The Corps missions most closely associated with abandoned mine restoration include hazardous waste cleanup, aquatic ecosystem restoration, permits and wetland, and support for other public organizations.

The Corps has been involved in coal mine restoration for many years, but in 1997, the Sacramento District began restoration of a gold mine in California under a cost sharing agreement with a local sponsor. By 1998, several Corps District offices were performing reimbursable mine restoration work for USFS, BLM, and EPA. In 1999, Congress authorized the Corps to assist in restoration of abandoned non-coal mines, and this year Congress appropriated \$5M to implement pilot projects for non-coal mine restoration.

Several Western Corps Districts formed a group called RAMS, which is a Consortium of Western Corps District Offices formed to facilitate use of Corps resources by Federal, State, and other organizations in the restoration of non-coal abandoned mine lands in the west. The Corps envisions including RAMS teams in its Central & Eastern Districts as well.

Corps involvement could be reimbursable work for other agencies through The Corps Support For Others Program; or the Corps might also get involved through Cost-Shared Projects including aquatic ecosystem restoration. The Corps has performed mine restoration at over 100 projects.

The Corps may provide different services to the stakeholder. These actions might include team building of non-government organizations, technical planning, investigation, design, and construction support, field oversight and quality control/assurance, contracting assistance and contract management, risk assessment and cost analysis of alternative measures.

The Corps is developing policy and procedures to increase USACE involvement in abandoned mine restoration.