

§ 785.15

the requirements of the Act, this chapter, and the regulatory program.

[44 FR 15370, Mar. 13, 1979, as amended at 48 FR 39904, Sept. 1, 1983; 52 FR 39183, Oct. 20, 1987]

§ 785.15 Steep slope mining.

(a) This section applies to any persons who conducts or intends to conduct steep slope surface coal mining and reclamation operations, except—

(1) Where an operator proposes to conduct surface coal mining and reclamation operations on flat or gently rolling terrain, leaving a plain or predominantly flat area, but on which an occasional steep slope is encountered as the mining operation proceeds;

(2) Where a person obtains a permit under the provisions of § 785.14; or

(3) To the extent that a person obtains a permit incorporating a variance under § 785.16.

(b) Any application for a permit for surface coal mining and reclamation operations covered by this section shall contain sufficient information to establish that the operations will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of § 816.107 or § 817.107 of this chapter.

(c) No permit shall be issued for any operations covered by this section, unless the regulatory authority finds, in writing, that in addition to meeting all other requirements of this subchapter, the operation will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of § 816.107 or § 817.107 of this chapter.

[44 FR 15370, Mar. 13, 1979, as amended at 51 FR 9006, Mar. 17, 1986]

§ 785.16 Permits incorporating variances from approximate original contour restoration requirements for steep slope mining.

(a) The regulatory authority may issue a permit for non-mountaintop removal, steep slope, surface coal mining and reclamation operations which includes a variance from the requirements to restore the disturbed areas to their approximate original contour that are contained in §§ 816.102, 816.104, 816.105, and 816.107, or §§ 817.102 and 817.107 of this chapter. The permit may contain such a variance only if the regulatory authority finds, in writing, that the applicant has demonstrated,

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on the basis of a complete application, that the following requirements are met:

(1) After reclamation, the lands to be affected by the variance within the permit area will be suitable for an industrial, commercial, residential, or public postmining land use (including recreational facilities).

(2) The requirements of § 816.133 or § 817.133 of this chapter will be met.

(3) The watershed of lands within the proposed permit and adjacent areas will be improved by the operations when compared with the condition of the watershed before mining or with its condition if the approximate original contour were to be restored. The watershed will be deemed improved only if—

(i) The amount of total suspended solids or other pollutants discharged to ground or surface water from the permit area will be reduced, so as to improve the public or private uses or the ecology of such water, or flood hazards within the watershed containing the permit area will be reduced by reduction of the peak flow discharge from precipitation events or thaws;

(ii) The total volume of flow from the proposed permit area, during every season of the year, will not vary in a way that adversely affects the ecology of any surface water or any existing or planned use of surface or ground water; and

(iii) The appropriate State environmental agency approves the plan.

(4) The owner of the surface of the lands within the permit area has knowingly requested, in writing, as part of the application, that a variance be granted. The request shall be made separately from any surface owner consent given for the operations under § 778.15 of this chapter and shall show an understanding that the variance could not be granted without the surface owner's request.

(b) If a variance is granted under this section—

(1) The requirements of § 816.133(d) or § 817.133(d) of this chapter shall be included as a specific condition of the permit; and

(2) The permit shall be specifically marked as containing a variance from approximate original contour.