

## Senate Bill No. 108

### CHAPTER 491

An act to amend Sections 2727.1 and 2770 of, and to add Section 2777.5 to, the Public Resources Code, relating to surface mining.

[Approved by Governor October 5, 2011. Filed with  
Secretary of State October 6, 2011.]

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 108, Rubio. Surface mining: idle mines.

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975, with exceptions, prohibits a person from conducting a surface mining operation unless, among other things, a reclamation plan has been submitted to and approved by the lead agency for the operation. The act requires an operator, within 90 days of a surface mining operation becoming idle, to submit to the lead agency for review and approval, an interim management plan. The act defines idle to mean a curtailment for a period of one year or more of surface mining operations by more than 90% of the operation's previous maximum annual mineral production, with the intent to resume those surface mining operations at a future date.

This bill would instead define idle to mean that an operator of a surface mining operation has curtailed production at the surface mining operation, with the intent to resume the surface mining operation at a future date, for a period of one year or more by more than 90% of its maximum annual mineral production within any of the last 5 years during which an interim management plan has not been approved.

The act authorizes an interim management plan to remain in effect for a period not to exceed 5 years, after which, the lead agency is authorized to take certain actions, including renewing the interim management plan for another period not to exceed 5 years, if the lead agency finds that the surface mining operator has complied fully with the interim management plan.

This bill would authorize the lead agency to renew the interim management plan for additional 5-year periods, if the lead agency finds that the surface mining operator has complied fully with the interim management plan.

Existing law requires the owner or operator of a mining operation to forward to the Director of Conservation an annual report that identifies certain things about the mining operation including the mining operation's status and the type and total amount of commodities produced.

This bill would authorize a mine operator who has failed to properly report mineral production or status in any year prior to January 1, 2012, to attach corrected annual reports to the 2012 annual report so long as the corrected report is submitted on or before July 1, 2013, among other things.

The bill would authorize a mine to return to idle status after being considered abandoned prior to January 1, 2013, if an interim management plan is approved by July 1, 2013, and upon lead agency verification of compliance with the above provisions. The bill would authorize the Office of Mine Reclamation to enter any mine site for which a mine operator has requested a correction of mine status in order to conduct an inspection, as provided, and the bill would require the mine operator to be responsible for the reasonable cost of this inspection.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

SECTION 1. Section 2727.1 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

2727.1. "Idle" means that an operator of a surface mining operation has curtailed production at the surface mining operation, with the intent to resume the surface mining operation at a future date, for a period of one year or more by more than 90 percent of its maximum annual mineral production within any of the last five years during which an interim management plan has not been approved.

SEC. 2. Section 2770 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

2770. (a) Except as provided in this section, a person shall not conduct surface mining operations unless a permit is obtained from, a reclamation plan has been submitted to and approved by, and financial assurances for reclamation have been approved by, the lead agency for the operation pursuant to this article.

(b) A person with an existing surface mining operation who has vested rights pursuant to Section 2776 and who does not have an approved reclamation plan shall submit a reclamation plan to the lead agency not later than March 31, 1988. If a reclamation plan application is not on file by March 31, 1988, the continuation of the surface mining operation is prohibited until a reclamation plan is submitted to the lead agency. For purposes of this subdivision, a reclamation plan may consist of all or the appropriate sections of any plans or written agreements previously approved by the lead agency or another agency, together with any additional documents needed to substantially meet the requirements of Sections 2772 and 2773 and the lead agency surface mining ordinance adopted pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 2774, provided that all documents which together were proposed to serve as the reclamation plan are submitted for approval to the lead agency in accordance with this chapter.

(c) If a person with an existing surface mining operation has received lead agency approval of its financial assurances for reclamation prior to January 1, 1991, the lead agency shall administratively review those existing financial assurances in accordance with subdivision (d) prior to January 1, 1992. The review of existing financial assurances shall not be considered a project for purposes of Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000). A person with an existing surface mining operation that does not have financial

assurances that received lead agency approval prior to January 1, 1991, shall submit financial assurances for reclamation for review in accordance with subdivision (d).

(d) The lead agency's review of a reclamation plan submitted pursuant to subdivision (b) or of financial assurances pursuant to subdivision (c) is limited to whether the plan or the financial assurances substantially meet the applicable requirements of Sections 2772, 2773, and 2773.1, and the lead agency surface mining ordinance adopted pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 2774, but, in any event, the lead agency shall require that financial assurances for reclamation be sufficient to perform reclamation of lands remaining disturbed. Reclamation plans or financial assurances determined to substantially meet these requirements shall be approved by the lead agency for purposes of this chapter. Reclamation plans or financial assurances determined not to substantially meet these requirements shall be returned to the operator within 60 days. The operator has 60 days to revise the plan or financial assurances to address identified deficiencies, at which time the revised plan or financial assurances shall be returned to the lead agency for review and approval. Except as specified in subdivision (e) or (i), unless the operator has filed on or before July 1, 1990, an appeal pursuant to subdivision (e) with regard to nonapproval of the reclamation plan, or has filed on or before January 1, 1994, an appeal pursuant to subdivision (e) with regard to nonapproval of financial assurances, and that appeal is pending before the board, the continuation of the surface mining operation is prohibited until a reclamation plan and financial assurances for reclamation are approved by the lead agency.

(e) A person who, based on the evidence of the record, can substantiate that a lead agency has either (1) failed to act according to due process or has relied on considerations not related to the specific applicable requirements of Sections 2772, 2773, and 2773.1, and the lead agency surface mining ordinance adopted pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 2774, in reaching a decision to deny approval of a reclamation plan or financial assurances for reclamation, (2) failed to act within a reasonable time of receipt of a completed application, or (3) failed to review and approve reclamation plans or financial assurances as required by subdivisions (c) and (d), may appeal that action or inaction to the board.

(f) The board may decline to hear an appeal if it determines that the appeal raises no substantial issues related to the lead agency's review pursuant to this section.

(g) Appeals that the board does not decline to hear shall be scheduled and heard at a public hearing within 45 days of the filing of the appeal, or a longer period as may be mutually agreed upon by the board and the person filing the appeal. In hearing an appeal, the board shall only determine whether the reclamation plan or the financial assurances substantially meet the applicable requirements of Sections 2772, 2773, and 2773.1, and the lead agency surface mining ordinance adopted pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 2774. A reclamation plan or financial assurances determined to meet these requirements shall be approved. A reclamation plan or financial

assurances determined not to meet these requirements shall be returned to the person filing the appeal with a notice of deficiencies, who shall be granted, once only, a period of 30 days, or a longer period mutually agreed upon by the operator and the board, to correct the noted deficiencies and submit the revised reclamation plan or the revised financial assurances to the lead agency for review and approval.

(h) (1) Within 90 days of a surface mining operation becoming idle, as defined in Section 2727.1, the operator shall submit to the lead agency for review and approval, an interim management plan. The review and approval of an interim management plan shall not be considered a project for purposes of Division 13 (commencing with Section 21000). The approved interim management plan shall be considered an amendment to the surface mining operation's approved reclamation plan, for purposes of this chapter. The interim management plan shall provide measures the operator will implement to maintain the site in compliance with this chapter, including, but not limited to, all permit conditions.

(2) The interim management plan may remain in effect for a period not to exceed five years, at which time the lead agency shall do one of the following:

(A) Renew the interim management plan for an additional period not to exceed five years, which may be renewed for additional five-year periods at the expiration of each five-year period, if the lead agency finds that the surface mining operator has complied fully with the interim management plan.

(B) Require the surface mining operator to commence reclamation in accordance with its approved reclamation plan.

(3) The financial assurances required by Section 2773.1 shall remain in effect during the period that the surface mining operation is idle. If the surface mining operation is still idle after the expiration of its interim management plan, the surface mining operation shall commence reclamation in accordance with its approved reclamation plan.

(4) Within 60 days of the receipt of the interim management plan, or a longer period mutually agreed upon by the lead agency and the operator, the lead agency shall review and approve the plan in accordance with its ordinance adopted pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 2774, so long as the plan satisfies the requirements of this subdivision, and so notify the operator in writing. Otherwise, the lead agency shall notify the operator in writing of any deficiencies in the plan. The operator shall have 30 days, or a longer period mutually agreed upon by the operator and the lead agency, to submit a revised plan.

(5) The lead agency shall approve or deny approval of the revised interim management plan within 60 days of receipt. If the lead agency denies approval of the revised interim management plan, the operator may appeal that action to the lead agency's governing body, which shall schedule a public hearing within 45 days of the filing of the appeal, or a longer period mutually agreed upon by the operator and the governing body.

(6) Unless review of an interim management plan is pending before the lead agency, or an appeal is pending before the lead agency's governing body, a surface mining operation that remains idle for over one year after becoming idle as defined in Section 2727.1 without obtaining approval of an interim management plan shall be considered abandoned and the operator shall commence and complete reclamation in accordance with the approved reclamation plan.

(i) An enforcement action that may be brought against a surface mining operation for operating without an approved reclamation plan, financial assurance, or interim management plan shall be held in abeyance pending review pursuant to subdivision (b), (c), (d), or (h), or the resolution of an appeal filed with the board pursuant to subdivision (e), or with a lead agency governing body pursuant to subdivision (h).

SEC. 3. Section 2777.5 is added to the Public Resources Code, to read:

2777.5. (a) A mine operator who has failed to properly report a mine's mineral production or mine status in any previous year, pursuant to the annual reporting requirement in Section 2207, prior to January 1, 2012, may attach corrected annual reports to the 2012 annual report so long as the corrected annual reports are submitted on or before July 1, 2013, and if the lead agency confirms in writing to the department all of the following:

(1) The operator has provided written notification to the lead agency and the director of their intention to continue surface mining operations.

(2) The operator has an existing, valid permit or a vested right to conduct surface mining operations pursuant to Section 2776.

(3) (A) The operator's reclamation plan has been approved and is in compliance with this chapter, the mining operation is in compliance with the approved reclamation plan or applicable compliance order issued pursuant to this chapter, the mining operation has an approved financial assurance in place that the lead agency determines is adequate for reclamation pursuant to the approved reclamation plan, and the mining operation has been inspected by the lead agency as provided by Section 2774.

(B) The Office of Mine Reclamation may enter any mine site for which a mine operator has requested a correction of mine status or a return to idle status pursuant to this section in order to conduct an inspection.

(4) The operator has demonstrated that there are commercially useful mineral reserves remaining at the surface mining operation.

(5) Unpaid fees for years during which the operation's status was not properly reported have been paid to the department.

(6) The operator provides evidence to support any modified production reported on corrected annual reports.

(b) A mining operation that became idle, as defined in Section 2727.1, that failed to prepare and have approved an interim management plan and was thus considered abandoned pursuant to paragraph (6) of subdivision (h) of Section 2770 prior to January 1, 2013, may, without prejudice, be returned to idle status at the request of the operator if an interim management

plan is approved by July 1, 2013, and upon lead agency verification of compliance with subdivision (a).

(c) The mine operator shall be responsible for the reasonable costs of an inspection conducted by the Office of Mine Reclamation pursuant to subparagraph (B) of paragraph (3) of subdivision (a).