

§490-QQ. Performance, operation and reclamation standards

1. Performance standards. Standards adopted by the department through rulemaking must be performance-based to the extent feasible, and the department may require that the applicant implement control devices or measures necessary to achieve the performance standards. If the rules include standards that are not performance-based, the rules may allow a permittee to propose an alternative means of compliance that achieves equivalent environmental performance. The department is not required to approve the proposed alternative means of compliance. If the applicant proposes a control device or measure, it must demonstrate that there is reasonable assurance that the device or measure will achieve the performance standard.

[PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

2. Suspension of mining operations. If mining operations are suspended for a continuous period exceeding 90 days, the permittee shall provide notice to the department and take actions, consistent with its environmental protection, reclamation and closure plan, to maintain, monitor and secure the mining area and shall conduct any interim sloping or stabilizing of surfaces necessary to protect the environment, natural resources and public health and safety in accordance with the mining permit. If mining operations are suspended for a continuous period exceeding 365 days, the permittee is considered to have ceased mining operations and all requirements applicable to closure take effect unless the department agrees in writing to delay the implementation of the closure plan based on a written submission by the permittee that demonstrates that the mining operations are expected to recommence within a reasonable period of time as determined by the department. The department may require partial closure of mining operations.

[PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

3. Water quality monitoring. Through rulemaking the department shall establish standards for monitoring groundwater as close as practicable to any mining area that may pose a threat to groundwater. A permittee shall conduct groundwater and surface water monitoring in accordance with the provisions of a mining permit during mining operations, during suspension of mining operations, during closure and during the post-closure monitoring period. The post-closure monitoring period must be at least 30 years following cessation of mining, subject to the following conditions.

A. The permittee shall provide to the department a written request to terminate post-closure monitoring not less than 18 months before the proposed termination date and shall provide the department with technical data and information demonstrating the basis for the termination of the post-closure monitoring. [PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

B. The department may shorten the post-closure monitoring period at any time upon determining that there is no significant potential for water contamination resulting from the mining operation. [PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

C. The department shall extend the post-closure monitoring period in increments of up to 20 years unless the department determines, approximately one year before the end of a post-closure monitoring period or post-closure incremental monitoring period, that there is no significant potential for surface water or groundwater contamination resulting from the mining operation. [PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

[PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

4. Reclamation. The following reclamation requirements apply.

A. Except as provided in paragraph B, a permittee shall commence and complete final reclamation of a mining area and, if necessary, any affected area consistent with mining permit conditions and the environmental protection, reclamation and closure plan approved by the department. [PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

B. Upon written request of a permittee, the department may approve an extension of time to begin or complete final reclamation. [PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

C. Both the mining area and the affected area must be reclaimed with the goal that the affected area be returned to the ecological conditions that approximate pre-mining conditions to the extent feasible and practicable and considering any changes caused by non-mining activities or other natural events. [PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

D. Following closure and reclamation, the landowner or lessee of a mining area in an unorganized territory shall petition the Maine Land Use Planning Commission for rezoning to an appropriate subdistrict designation. [PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF); PL 2011, c. 682, §38 (REV).]

[PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF); PL 2011, c. 682, §38 (REV).]

5. Inspection and maintenance. A permittee shall fully comply with all inspection, maintenance and monitoring requirements contained in a mining permit. After closure, mining areas and affected areas must be inspected at least twice per year. All waste piles and impoundments or any other pile or storage facility must be inspected by a licensed civil engineer with expertise in structural stability of waste piles and impoundments. The engineer shall either certify that the mining area and affected area are in good condition and not susceptible to failure due to significant weather, seismic or other events or identify the corrective measures that must be undertaken by the permittee. The inspections must document that all permit requirements, including storm water control, sediment and erosion control, dust migration, access controls, land use restrictions, waste pile or impoundment stabilization measures and treatment systems are fully compliant with the mining permit conditions and that there are no known conditions that could present an unreasonable threat to public health and safety or the environment. A permittee shall notify the department of any recommended corrective measures as soon as practicable after the inspection. A permittee shall submit an inspection report to the department within 21 days after the inspection.

[PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW); PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2011, c. 653, §23 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 653, §33 (AFF). PL 2011, c. 682, §38 (REV).

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