



Module 19: Land Use / Vegetation [§§77.408/77.409]

19.1 Land Use

- a) **Identify the present uses of land use areas within the permit area (Key land use(s) to Exhibit 18: "Land Use and Reclamation Map").**

The permit area consists of approximately 160 acres of forestland and 15 acres of unmanaged natural habitat. See the Exhibit 18 for delineation of each land use.

- b) **For cropland, pastureland or land occasionally cut for hay, or commercial forest identify the productivity expressed as average yield of food, fiber, forage or wood products. Use yield data or estimates for similar sites based on current data from U.S. Department of Agriculture or Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.**

The following yields have been taken from the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey of Somerset County.

Soil Type	Corn (bu/ac)	Oats (bu/ac)	Alfalfa Hay (ton/ac)	Grass-Legume Hay (ton/ac)	Grass Hay (ton/ac)
BxB	...	...	...	...	...
CbB	...	...	...	...	...
HbF	...	...	...	...	...
RgF	...	...	...	...	...
RpB	...	...	...	...	...
RpD	...	...	...	...	...
WhB	95	60	...	3.00	...
WhC	85	55	...	3.00	...

- c) **Identify any lands classified as Primary Agricultural Land under Executive Order 2003-2 (The Agricultural Land Preservation Policy). If there are, then indicate the alternatives to this disturbance considered and the reasons they were not deemed feasible.**

Although the permit area includes soils classified as prime farmland (WhB), no farming or crop production currently takes place within the area. The WhB soils may be impacted by mining activities. Additionally, other soils in the permit area (WhC) are classified as farmland of statewide importance. Both WhB and WhC soils are located at the edge of the permit boundary and are unlikely to be affected, except by access or support grading activities.

19.2 Vegetation

Identify the percent ground cover of the natural vegetation within the permit area. If the postmining land use is fish and wildlife habitat, also identify the stocking and species composition of woody plants.

Forestland dominates ground cover for this site. Species include Hemlock and other coniferous as well as maple, cherry, and oak species. The tree coverage on site is mostly matured forestland. This site is bisected by utility lines, which contain grasses and brush type cover. This has been determined by reviewing aerial photography and an onsite visual inspection of the area. See Exhibit 18 for the pre-mining land uses. There are no areas proposed for a post-mining land use of fish and wildlife habitat.



19.3 Fish and Wildlife (Protection/Enhancement Plan)

- a) Have any threatened or endangered species and/or critical habitats of these species (includes species listed or proposed and habitats listed by the U.S. Department of Interior under the Endangered Species Act of 1973) been identified within or adjacent (within 1000 feet) to the proposed permit area?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If "yes" checked, identify the species and habitat area and include within your response to c) and d) information specific to the species and habitats identified.

PNDI records indicated potential impacts to several listed DCNR species, including Mountain Bugbane (*Actaea podocarpa*) and Fraser's Sedge (*Carex fraseriana*). Mountain Bugbane is classified as a Special Concern species and is currently threatened, while Fraser's Sedge is listed as endangered. After DCNR requested a survey of the area, they found no threatened, endangered, or special concern species. As a result, they determined that no impact is likely and no further coordination with their agency is needed. See attached letters for DCNR in Module 1.

Further impacts were identified for the PFBC species Longnose Sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*), which is listed as endangered. If measures are implemented to prevent the release of sediment and harmful chemicals into waterways, no significant adverse impacts from the proposed activity to the fish species of special concern is foreseen. See attached letter from PFBC and the measures which will be taken below (19.3 c) in Module 1.

- b) Have any habitats of unusually high value (e.g., wild trout streams, wetlands, riparian areas, cliffs/caves supporting raptors, areas offering special shelter or protection) been identified within or adjacent to the proposed permit area?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If "yes" checked, identify the habitat area and include within your response to c) and d) information specific to the habitats identified.

- c) Describe the measures which will be taken to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to fish and wildlife resources.

- Avoidance Measure: conduct any tree cutting, disturbance, inundation (flooding) and prescribed burning from October 1 to March 31.
- Alternate E&S controls, such as silt fence and filter sock, will be installed below the sediment pond structures during construction. Haul road sediment traps will be installed to settle runoff from roadways. Sediment ponds and ditches will be implemented to control runoff prior to mining activities. The E&S structures will be installed to cover the disturbed area as soon as possible to prevent sediment from entering the streams.
- If any areas are cleared of brush for overburden and/or mineral removal, the brush will be placed along the outermost boundary of the disturbed area. This will establish a buffer zone between the disturbed and undisturbed area and enhance existing nesting areas for birds and small game.
- The revegetation plan listed in Module 23 will be used for ground cover. Hay/straw mulch or equivalent will be applied to disturbed areas at a rate of 2-3 tons/acre after seeding.
- The operator will promptly notify the DEP as soon as they become aware of the presence of threatened or endangered species during operations.

- d) Describe the measures which will be taken to enhance fish and wildlife resources. Any facilities proposed for protection or enhancement of fish and wildlife resources are to be identified on Exhibit 18.

When the area is cleared and grubbed for overburden and/or mineral removal, brush will be placed along the outer limits of the disturbed area, establishing a buffer zone and creating cover for wildlife. Large trees will be left around the edge of the disturbed area and other areas not needed for mining activities. This will provide an environment for birds to perch and nest. After mining is complete, more wetland areas will exist, thus providing more habitat for fish and wildlife resources.

e) If no enhancement measures are identified in d), explain why enhancement is not practicable.

N/A