

## ***What is Virginia's Orphaned Mineral Mine Program?***

Orphaned lands are those areas disturbed by the surface mining of non-fuel minerals, which occurred prior to 1969. At this time there were no requirements for reclamation.

Virginia's General Assembly enacted reclamation laws in 1968 to minimize the adverse effects of mining on the environment.

Recognizing that past mining practices had left many "orphaned", or un-reclaimed, mine sites, a proposal was made to study the extent of orphaned mines in Virginia.

The Division of Mineral Mining (DMM) runs the Orphaned Land Program (OLP) which inventories, evaluates and reclaims these sites.

## ***What is an Orphaned Mineral Mine Site?***



Orphaned or "abandoned" mineral mine sites are those that have not been reclaimed. They are historic mine sites and can be very

hazardous. They can be pits, quarries or underground mines.

## ***Why does DMM need to come on to my property?***

DMM keeps an inventory of orphaned mineral mine sites. Each site is physically inventoried and critical information, such as types of hazards and proximity to people, are captured.

You can see our Orphaned Mineral Mine inventory on our web mapping system: <https://www.dmme.virginia.gov/webmaps/DMM/>

## ***How many Orphaned Mineral Mines are in Virginia?***

There are an estimated 4,000 orphan mines in the Commonwealth, 69% of which have been inventoried (2013).

Once identified, an orphaned mine site is evaluated for its potential hazards to the environment and the public's health and safety. This evaluation includes soil and water investigations, studies on the feasibility of reclaiming the site, cost analysis, and seeking the landowner's consent to allow reclamation to proceed.

The first orphaned land site was reclaimed in 1981. Since then, 125 orphaned land projects have been completed encompassing 650 acres at a cost of \$3,715,301 (2013). The

average cost of reclamation per acre has been \$5,715.84.

## ***Who pays for the reclamation?***

Funds for the reclamation of orphaned mine sites are obtained from interest moneys earned from a state managed, industry self-bonding program. All active mine sites pay into this self-bonding program.

## ***How do you decide which Orphaned Mine site to reclaim?***

Proposed reclamation projects are identified and then evaluated by an Orphaned Land Advisory Committee composed of individuals from the Division of Geology and Mineral Resources, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Environmental Quality Water Division, the mineral mining industry, and private citizens who assist the Division of Mineral Mining in evaluating the sites and prioritizing reclamation.

## ***What do I do if I think I found an Orphan Mine?***

First, recognize that Orphaned Mines are very dangerous. Do NOT enter abandoned quarries, pits or shafts.



Visit MSHA's Stay Out, Stay Alive website for more information.  
<https://www.msha.gov/sosa>



*To report an orphaned mine, contact our office at:*

*900 Natural Resources Drive, Ste. 400  
Charlottesville VA 22903  
(434) 951-6310 (Phone)  
(434) 951-6325 (Fax)  
[DmmInfo@dmme.virginia.gov](mailto:DmmInfo@dmme.virginia.gov).*

*For additional information about Virginia's Mineral Mining Orphaned Land Program, please contact Josh Rubinstein at (434) 951-6318.*

Mine shafts can collapse and may have explosives or other dangers inside.

Quarries are often very deep and are filled with water. High walls can be unstable and debris can be underwater.

***Never enter an orphaned mine site, pit or quarry!***



## **GUIDE TO VIRGINIA'S ORPHANED MINERAL MINE PROGRAM**

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