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U.S. SENATORS

CHARLES H. PERCY

United States Congress

The Illinois Delegation

Washington, D.C. 20510

November 17, 1983



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Mr. Robert C. Horton, Director
Bureau of Mines
Department of the Interior
2401 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20241

Dear Mr. Horton:

Several members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation have been contacted by representatives of the Illinois Coal Association and the Illinois Farm Bureau seeking answers to a number of questions relative to subsidence and its impact on the coal and agricultural industries in our state.

These representatives recognize that the long-term health of our state depends on both a viable coal industry and a strong agricultural economy. They recognize that coal will play a major role in meeting the future energy needs of Illinois citizens. Much of the state's most productive farmland in central and southern Illinois is underlain with coal, mineable by deep shaft mining. Yet both industries recognize that to the greatest extent possible, coal must be removed without injury to the surface or to efficient crop production.

We turn to you for your help in finding the proper answers, through sound research, to some of the challenging questions relative to coal mine subsidence, its impact on agriculture, and the most effective means of avoiding or minimizing subsidence.

Specifically, we are asking you for a capability statement addressing the following questions and issues along with your estimate of the time frame and the cost of research to provide the basic information necessary to resolve these questions:

1. What is the practicality of high extraction mining under farmland? We need research on the design and operation of long wall and pillar extraction mining under shallow cover in one or more active mines in Illinois. We do not now know the technical and economic feasibility of mining six to eight feet of coal 200-500 feet beneath the relatively level productive farmland of Illinois.

EXHIBIT B

2. What are the mining techniques, extraction ratios, and pillar sizes that will minimize the risk of subsidence from future partial extraction mining in Illinois if high extraction mining is not feasible in all parts of the state?
3. What are various engineering methods that might be used to mitigate subsidence damage to farmland in the future as well as in abandoned shaft mines?
4. What is the magnitude of the subsidence problem from current and past mining in the state? Very little definitive, quantitative and qualitative information is currently available on the likely incidence of subsidence on existing mined lands. This is a necessary first step in determining the magnitude of the problem.
5. What are cost effective ways and means of preventing subsidence and mitigating its effects on communities built over abandoned mines?

We believe answers to these questions can have a significant impact on the productivity of both our coal and our agricultural resources in the future. We look forward to your capability statement.

Sincerely,

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