

Date of Hearing: June 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Isaac G. Bryan, Chair

ACR 157 (Hoover) – As Introduced March 4, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975: 50th anniversary

**SUMMARY:** Commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA).

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the Division of Mine Reclamation (DMR) within the Department of Conservation (DOC), led by the Supervisor of Mine Reclamation.
- 2) Pursuant to SMARA (Public Resources Code 2710-2796):
  - a) Prohibits a person from conducting surface mining operations unless the lead agency for the operation issues a surface mining permit and approves a reclamation plan and financial assurances for reclamation.
  - b) Defines "reclamation" as the combined process of land treatment that minimizes water degradation, air pollution, damage to aquatic or wildlife habitat, flooding, erosion, and other adverse effects from surface mining operations, including adverse surface effects incidental to underground mines, so that mined lands are reclaimed to a usable condition which is readily adaptable for alternate land uses and create no danger to public health or safety. The process may extend to affected lands surrounding mined lands, and may require backfilling, grading, resoiling, revegetation, soil compaction, stabilization, or other measures.
  - c) Authorizes, after receipt of mineral information from the State Geologist, the State Mining and Geology Board to designate specific geographic areas of the state as areas of statewide or regional significance and specify the boundaries of the geographic areas. Requires the designation to be included as a part of the state policy and indicate the reason for which the particular area designated is of significance to the state or region, the adverse effects that might result from premature development of incompatible land uses, the advantages that might be achieved from extraction of the minerals of the area, and the specific goals and policies to protect against the premature incompatible development of the area.

**THIS RESOLUTION:**

- 1) Commemorates the 50th Anniversary of SMARA, honors the leadership of Senator Nejedly, Governor Brown, and the many bipartisan policymakers, local officials, and industry partners whose vision created SMARA.
- 2) Reaffirms California's enduring commitment to responsible mineral resource management and environmental restoration.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:****1) Author's statement:**

SMARA represents a landmark achievement in California's approach to balancing environmental stewardship with the responsible development of mineral resources. For fifty years, SMARA has provided a comprehensive framework ensuring that surface mining operations are conducted responsibly and that mined lands are reclaimed for beneficial future uses. California relies on a steady supply of construction materials—including aggregates, concrete, and other mineral resources—to build and maintain the infrastructure that supports our communities. Roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, water systems, and housing all depend on these essential materials. ACR 157 recognizes the 50th anniversary of SMARA and the collaborative efforts of state agencies, local governments, industry, and community stakeholders who have helped implement and strengthen this important law. The resolution acknowledges the continued importance of responsible resource management and mine reclamation in protecting the environment while supporting California's long-term infrastructure and economic needs.

- 2) **Mining in California.** The Legislative Analyst's Office estimated that there were 47,000 abandoned mines in California in 2002, most of which dated from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The law applies mainly to modern (post-1975) permitted surface mines, not the tens of thousands of older abandoned mines that predate the statute (abandoned mines are regulated under the Abandoned Mines Land Unit at DOC). Today, there are 3,350 known mines in California, more than 1,000 of which are active to remove aggregate for building material, metals, and minerals. Mining operators are required under SMARA to develop and implement reclamation plans, which will return the mine to a condition where it can be used for another purpose after the mining operation is complete. Annual reports and inspections are intended to ensure that mining operators are making progress toward reclamation. Financial assurances are required to make sure there will be resources available to reclaim the mine. The state and lead agencies have an interest in properly reclaimed mines, because a surface mine is a large hole in the ground and can have many dangerous features. If the mine is reclaimed, the land can be returned to another use. If it is not, the state or the lead agency could be responsible for protecting the public from the dangers of the mine, cleaning up the mine, and reclaiming the mine.
- 3) **SMARA.** This suite of laws provides a comprehensive surface mining and reclamation policy with regulations for the extraction of minerals that are essential to the continued economic well-being of California and the needs of society, as well as for the reclamation of mined lands in order to prevent or minimize adverse effects on the environment and public health. SMARA applies to anyone, including government agencies, engaged in surface mining operations in California (including those on federally managed lands) that disturb more than one acre or remove more than 1,000 cubic yards of material. This includes prospecting and exploratory activities, dredging and quarrying, streambed skimming, borrow pitting, and the stockpiling of mined materials.

DMR and the Board are jointly charged with ensuring proper administration of SMARA's requirements. The Board promulgates regulations to clarify and interpret SMARA's

provisions and also serves as a policy and appeals board. DMR provides an ongoing technical assistance program for lead agencies and operators, maintains a database of mine locations and operational information statewide, and is responsible for compliance related matters.

According to the California Construction and Industrial Materials Association, today, approximately 1,970 mines have been or are regulated under SMARA.

- 4) **Areas of statewide significance.** SMARA authorizes the Board to designate specific mineral-resource areas as areas of statewide significance or areas of regional significance. After the State Geologist identifies significant mineral deposits through the classification process, the Board may designate certain deposits as being of statewide or regional significance. The designation process considers not only the geology but also land-use factors and the importance of the resource for future regional or statewide needs. The purpose of the designation is largely to help ensure that important mineral resources remain available for future extraction rather than being permanently lost to urban development. The resolution recognizes that SMARA's classification and designation system has mapped and conserved millions of acres of mineral resources of regional or statewide significance, ensuring that lands critical to California's infrastructure and economy remain available for future generations to develop and use.
- 5) **Effects of SMARA.** Since SMARA was enacted, about 856 mines have completed reclamation and been formally closed<sup>1</sup>.

The Mississippi Bar Gravel Mine, in Sacramento County, used for sand and gravel extraction is an example of successful reclamation. After aggregate mining was completed, the disturbed area was regraded, stabilized, and revegetated in accordance with an approved SMARA reclamation plan. The site was restored to a functioning riparian ecosystem, supporting native vegetation and wildlife rather than remaining a barren excavation.



**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

California Construction & Industrial Materials Association

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Paige Brokaw / NAT. RES. /

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<sup>i</sup> [DMR All Mines | CNRA GIS Open Data](#) (July 30, 2025)