Illinois Department of
Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
http://dnr.state.il.us

Pat Quinn, Governor
Marc Miller, Director

LAND RECLAMATION DIVISION

Memorandum No.2010-01

To: All Coal Mine Operators/Consultants

Date: February 8, 2010

From: Scott K. Fowler, Supervisor
Land Reclamation Division

Re: Tree and shrub planting

Recently there has been a national push by OSM to encourage the planting of trees as part of the post mining land use on reclaimed areas. In light of this effort, the Department has reviewed its experience in evaluating reforestation efforts on reclaimed areas and provides the following:

1) The regulations at 62 Ill. Adm. Code provides that, "When the approved reclamation plan includes the planting of trees and/or shrubs, the trees and/or shrubs shall be planted within 2 years after replacement of the plant-growth medium." Delaying planting of trees beyond the two year requirement of this regulation can result in areas with a dense herbaceous ground cover. This makes planting with approved tree species difficult and jeopardizes the likelihood the trees will survive and of the area meeting the bond release standard. Areas requiring tree and/or shrub planting that have been graded and topsoiled should be evaluated to determine if tree planting is due next spring.

   Although erosion control can be an issue on some areas, in those areas reclaimed to a flatter topography operators are encouraged to consider planting trees and shrubs the first year after replacement of the plant-growth medium and at the same time that the herbaceous cover species are planted rather than waiting for the following year.

2) Our experience has shown that one of the most detrimental factors to successful tree and shrub planting, besides soil compaction, is competition with herbaceous ground cover. Aggressive ground cover species not only compete with woody species for water and sun light, in some cases are chemically toxic to woody species and can harbor rodents that browse on seedlings.

Operators are encouraged to plant herbaceous ground cover species that are most compatible with tree and shrub plantings such as annual and perennial rye, Korean lespedeza, low-growing legumes, orchard grass, Timothy and red top. Species to be avoided include alfalfa, fescue and brome grass. Herbicide shall be used when necessary to eradicated ground cover in the rows where tree and shrub seedlings are to be planted.

3) Because black locust has a tendency to dominate areas where it is planted, it is the policy of the Department to limit its use to 10% of the initial planting stock. In addition, black locust will not be allowed to be a part of the year 2 or 3 supplemental replanting effort.

4) Our experience has shown that even though the initial planting of black locust has been limited, the species is capable of aggressively invading reclaimed areas resulting in a much higher percentage of black locust being present at the end of the revegetation liability period than what was present in the initial planting. To rectify this situation, for areas planted to trees and shrubs starting in 2010, no more than one black locust per sampling plot will be counted regardless of how many are present. A sampling plot being a 1/160th acre plot used for measuring tree and/or shrub populations as prescribed at 62 Ill. Adm. Code 1816/1817.117(c)(2).