

INDUSTRY

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suitable overburden on the surface, which provides a good place for the roots to go once they push through the topsoil."

With millions of dollars tied in reclamation bonds, the industry has a vested interest in ensuring the work is done right. The bonds cover every phase of the process, and when one area is reclaimed, the money rolls forward to cover the next phase of operation.

"When it comes time to

get the money back, we'll submit a package to the Department of Environmental Quality and the BLM saying it's ready for bond release," Jason Schneider, mining operations manager with American Colloid, said. "They'll look at the plant growth and erosion to see if it's stable. If it is, the bond is applied to a new area."

In this arid climate, some plant species return quickly, including drought-tolerant grasses and forbs. Salt brush isn't far behind with its bright green leaves.

Sagebrush can be harder to restore.

But the industry is working on sagebrush as well. Bucher said they've established sagebrush plots in different reclamation zones to monitor the success of different seeds, soils and growing conditions.

"Over the last five or seven years, there's been a big push to put sagebrush back into the reclamation," Bucher said. "To start to establish it has been a learning process, and we're trying different techniques."

Reclamation of Wyoming Mining Claims (continued)

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Thu, Apr 23, 2020