With the recent change in State administration it seems unlikely that oil and gas legislation will be introduced this year. The Environmental Action Fund and SOCM are looking into introducing a bill in the 1987 session.

State Mineral Mapping

SOCM members in 1986 continued to press the state in a mandamus lawsuit, to resume mapping of coal reserves in coal producing counties in the state. In rulings won earlier by SOCM, the state had been ordered to overlay property maps on maps of coal reserves so that a more accurate appraisal of mineral worth could be done. The state mapped three counties and then quit. The mandamus suit calls for a resumption of mapping activity as an aide to local property assessors' appraisal of minerals in the ground.

SOCM Addresses Surface Owners' Problems in Legislative Effort

Over 100 SOCM members were involved in 1986 in a legislative effort to address problems remaining for surface owners who do not own their minerals. Some surface owners cannot get home loans because their title is clouded by a mineral exception. Some landowners cannot find out with certainty who owns their minerals because of inadequate courthouse records. Many separated mineral estates are unregistered and untaxed, depriving coal counties of much needed revenue.

To address these problems, SOCM offered a bill with provisions to reunite surface and mineral estates where mineral estates were abandoned or "dormant," to require registration and location of all mineral estates, to give surface owners the right to buy his/her mineral estate by matching the selling price of a mineral estate when sold outright or at a tax sale, and to porhibit the future separation of surface and mineral estates.

The bill ran into trouble in House Subcommittee last year and failed to pass. In SOCM's usual persistance, however, members have redoubled efforts to win support for a bill in the 1987 Legislative Session. Research into other parts of the state have revealed that the problem of separated estates occurs in many Tennessee counties, and new allies have been found in those areas. SOCM members are gearing up for an all-out effort on this important issue in 1987.



Melissa Smiddy (r) presents "Former SOCM Officer" T-Shirt to Carol Ford, 1986 President.