

2005 EXCELLENCE IN SURFACE COAL MINING RECLAMATION AWARDS

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

United States Department of the Interior
Office of Surface Mining



**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**
OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

History and objectives of the program

Since passage of the Surface Mining Law in 1977, land reclamation in the United States has become a built-in component of coal mining. In fact, successfully reclaimed land quickly begins to resemble its natural condition and is difficult to distinguish from the surrounding landscape.

The Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining initiated its annual Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards in 1986 to make visible the accomplishments of those responsible for the nation's most outstanding achievements in environmentally-sound surface mining and land reclamation, and to highlight the experience gained from completing exemplary reclamation.

The awards program is designed so that state and federal regulators can transfer the outstanding reclamation methods and techniques to the coal mine operators who work under the Surface Mining Law nationwide. The winners are the coal mine operators who developed innovative reclamation techniques or who have completed reclamation that resulted in outstanding on-the-ground performance.

This year four types of awards will be presented:

National Awards. These annual awards are presented to coal mining companies for achieving the most exemplary mining and reclamation in the country. The awards recognize on-the-ground achievement of the Surface Mining Law.

Director's Award. Each year one coal mining operation in the country is selected to receive the Director's Award for outstanding achievement in a specific area of reclamation. This year the award will recognize a mine operator whose dedication and commitment has resulted in developing an innovative reclamation design or technique that creates a more efficient way of doing the work and improves final reclamation.

Good Neighbor Awards. Three mine operations will be selected to receive Good Neighbor Awards for successfully working with the surrounding land owners and the community while completing mining and reclamation. A bronze, silver, and gold award will be presented in this category.

Best-of-the-Best Award. One operation will be selected from this year's National Award winners as the Best-of-the-Best. This special award will recognize and be presented to the specific individual(s) -- mine manager, reclamation specialist, state inspector -- who were directly responsible for the most outstanding accomplishments.

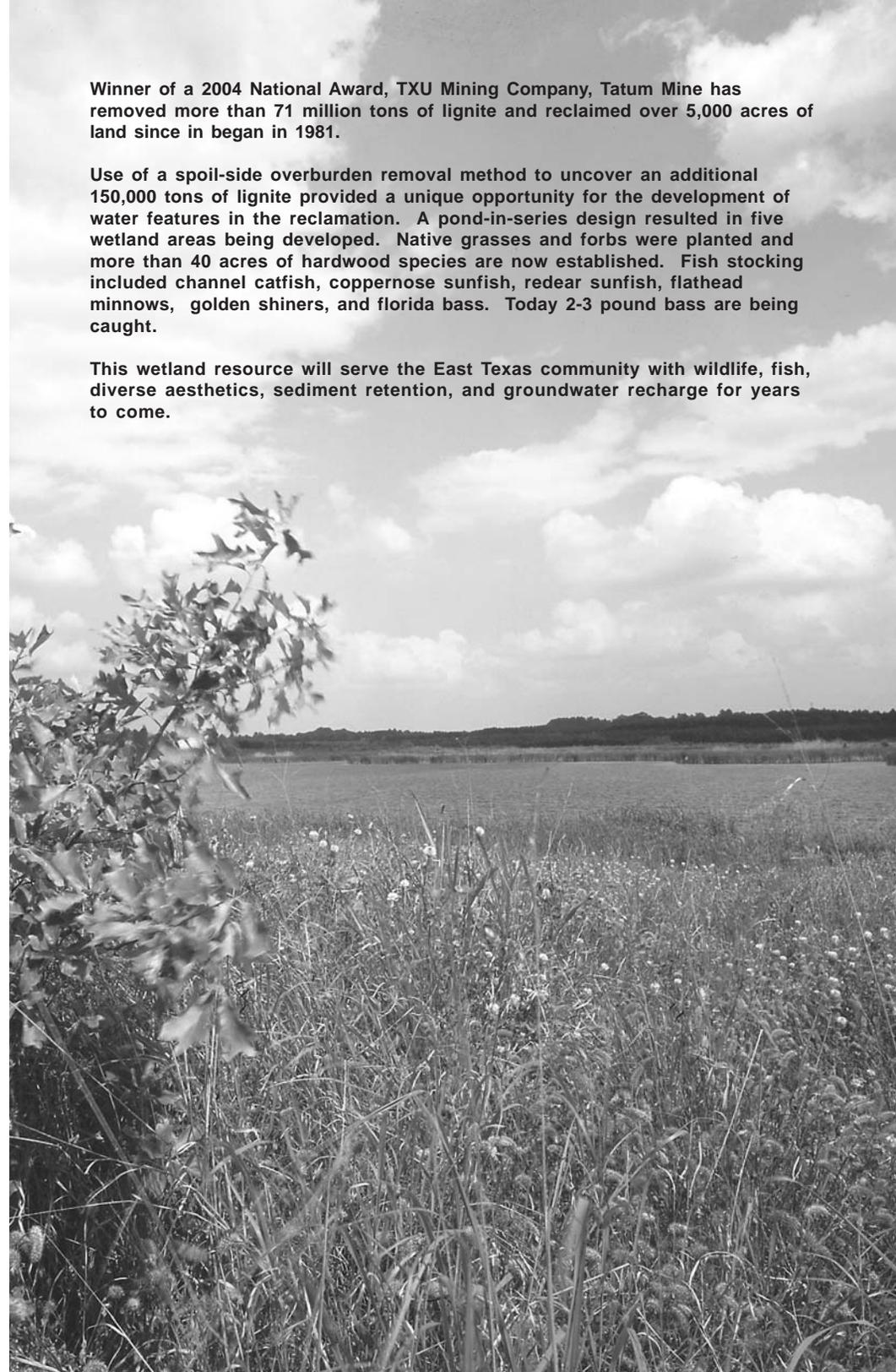
The Office of Surface Mining initiates the annual award process by requesting nominations from coal mine operators and others knowledgeable about the industry. Each state regulatory authority selects the best nominations for judging at the national level for the Office of Surface Mining's annual awards

COVER PHOTO: Located a few miles from the town of Hazen, North Dakota, The Coteau Properties Company Freedom Mine was the winner of a 2004 Good Neighbor Award for their work with local community organizations in developing the 637-acre Harmony Lake Wildlife Management Area -- now a state-owned public fishery and recreational facility.

Winner of a 2004 National Award, TXU Mining Company, Tatum Mine has removed more than 71 million tons of lignite and reclaimed over 5,000 acres of land since it began in 1981.

Use of a spoil-side overburden removal method to uncover an additional 150,000 tons of lignite provided a unique opportunity for the development of water features in the reclamation. A pond-in-series design resulted in five wetland areas being developed. Native grasses and forbs were planted and more than 40 acres of hardwood species are now established. Fish stocking included channel catfish, coppernose sunfish, redear sunfish, flathead minnows, golden shiners, and florida bass. Today 2-3 pound bass are being caught.

This wetland resource will serve the East Texas community with wildlife, fish, diverse aesthetics, sediment retention, and groundwater recharge for years to come.



Selection of the 2005 award-winning operations.

Nominations are due to the state regulatory authorities or the Office of Surface Mining field office in non-primacy states February 1, 2005. Nominations will be screened by the regulatory authority, and the best entries (a maximum of four National Awards, one Director's Award, and two Good Neighbor Awards from each state) forwarded to the Office of Surface Mining field offices by February 18, 2005. Field offices will evaluate and forward the nominations to the Office of Surface Mining Headquarters in Washington, D.C. by March 17, 2005, for judging on March 22, 2005.

Selection of winners consists of several steps. A site visit by a field office representative is made to ensure that:

1. On-the-ground performance conforms with the permit and is exemplary within that state or geographic area;
2. information in the nomination accurately reflects current site conditions;
3. other mining activities at the site do not detract from the award-winning activity; and
4. each nominee's Surface Mining Law compliance record is examined to ensure that there are no outstanding violations and to determine that there is no past record of not abating violations.

A panel of judges, composed of representatives of the Office of Surface Mining evaluate the nominations and select the National, Director's and Good Neighbor Award winners. Scoring is based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Maximum Points
Clarity and completeness of nomination package	5
Difficulty of achieving reclamation under existing conditions	20
On-site effectiveness	30
Transferability of the technique or practice	12
Increased public awareness of the Surface Mining Law	8
Long-term benefits to the community	15
Exceeds the spirit and intent of the Surface Mining Law	10

Judges' scores are totaled, and winning nominations selected. Based upon the judges' decision, the number of National Awards may vary from year to year. Awards are not limited to one per state. The Best-of-the-Best winner will be selected after visiting each of the National winners and discussing on-the-ground results with reclamation specialist(s) responsible for the work. Announcement of the 2005 award winners and presentation of awards will be made during a Fall 2005 National Mining Association meeting.

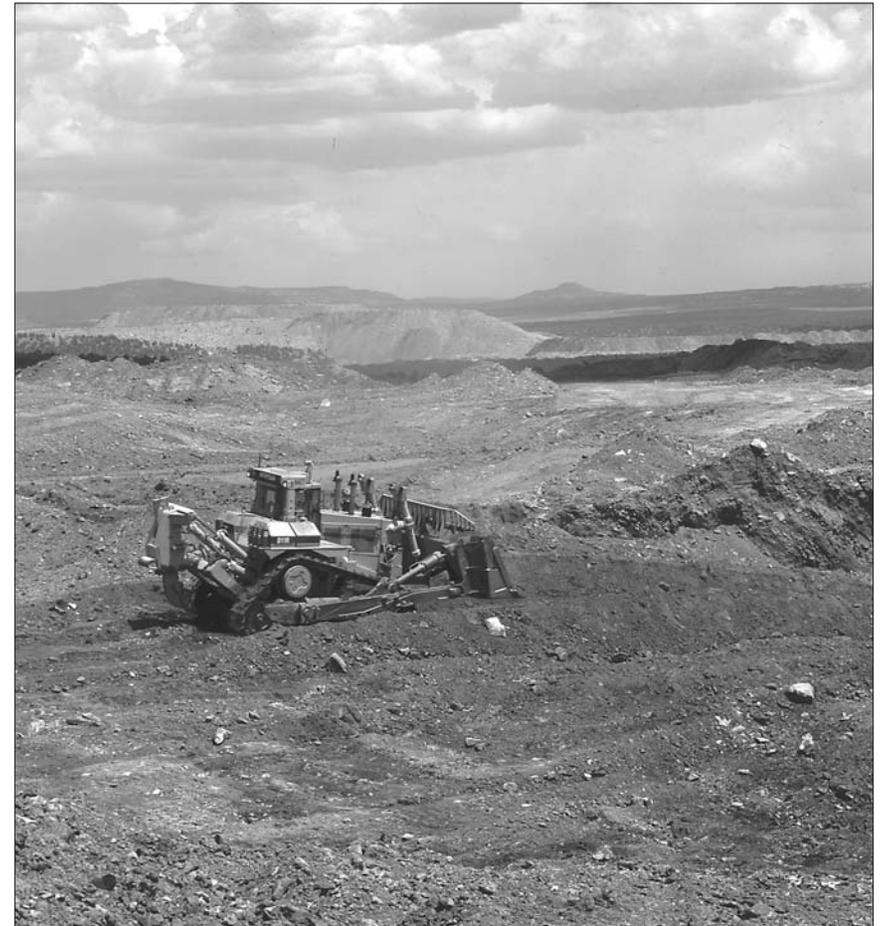
Address questions regarding nominations or the award program to the Office of Surface Mining field offices or Chuck Meyers, Office of Surface Mining, Washington, D.C. 20240. Telephone (202)208-7940; E-mail (cmeyers@osmre.gov).

Electronic copies of this flyer in Adobe Acrobat .pdf format and a list of (1986-present) winners are also available on the Office of Surface Mining web site at (www.osmre.gov/awards.htm).

Who is eligible for an award?

Surface coal mining and reclamation operations that have been conducted under a Title V permit (1978 - present) may be nominated for an award. In addition, non-permitted mining and reclamation completed using Government Financial Reclamation Contracts under the Enhanced Abandoned Mine Land regulations is also eligible for nomination.

Although Title IV Abandoned Mine Land reclamation projects are not included in this program, this aspect of reclamation is eligible for a National or Director's Award if it is integrated with Title V permitted operations.



At the San Juan Coal Company innovative reclamation has recreated the slopes with characteristics of the undisturbed lands. Using a slope design process based on fluvial geomorphic principles the reclaimed topography is more stable, diverse, and resistant to damage from flash flooding than traditional reclaimed land in this arid environment.

How to nominate a surface coal mining operation for an award.

Nominating a coal mining operation for an Office of Surface Mining Award is the first step in the award selection process. Nominations may be submitted by coal companies, regulatory authorities, state or federal mine inspectors, interest groups, or landowners. Company officials and employees may nominate their own operations.

National Awards.

A coal mining operation may be nominated for outstanding achievement in a specific portion of the reclamation (e.g., design and implementation of sedimentation control practices) or for exceptional overall performance in meeting goals of the Surface Mining Law. National awards are presented for development of reclamation techniques that would have widespread application to other areas and for outstanding on-the-ground reclamation using traditional reclamation methods. The operation's exemplary performance may be achieved during active mining, during reclamation, following bond release, or throughout the entire process.

Both ongoing mining or reclamation that has achieved excellent results and reclamation that has achieved bond release are eligible for nomination. All nominations should include on-the-ground results for however long the results have been in place. For example, a nomination for increased soil productivity on a reclaimed site would be verified with several years of crop yield data.

Director's Award

The Director's Award for 2005 will be presented for exemplary reclamation that includes an innovative design or technique that creates a more efficient way of doing the work and improves final reclamation. The nomination should include a description of the reclamation and specific information about the innovative design or technique. A nomination could, for example, be for the specific design of a pond drop structure or describe a broad revegetation seeding technique used throughout the operation.

Good Neighbor Awards

Three awards will be presented for achievement of exemplary interaction, communication, and involvement with the surrounding land owners and local community. Establishment of good working relations and interaction with mine neighbors is an important element of the Surface Mining Law that mine operators are achieving in many different ways. The objective of these awards is to recognize this achievement and communicate the Good Neighbor concepts so others can use them. This may include successful interaction with landowners throughout the mining and reclamation process, working with local organizations to better inform citizens, or including the community in on-the-ground reclamation activities. Nominations for this category should briefly describe the mining and reclamation operation (both narrative and photos), and include testimonial letters and/or other documentation of a successful good neighbor policy.

An example of a mining company being a good neighbor could be -- when local citizens said they were concerned with coal trucks on the narrow roads when their children were walking to the school bus stop, the company responded to the concerns by not hauling coal on the public roads during that time of the day. Actions like this are not regulated; but, are examples of the mining company just being a "good neighbor" and an integral part of the community.

Rules and required information.

Nominations should be submitted to the state regulatory authority, or in states without this authority (Missouri, Tennessee, and Washington), to the local Office of Surface Mining field office. Nomination packages **MUST** be developed using the following format:

A. Cover sheet containing:

1. Company name.
2. Name and location of the nominated mining operation (including driving directions).
3. Permit number(s) of site being nominated.
4. Award category (the same nomination may be submitted in the Director's Award, Good Neighbor Award, and National Award categories).
5. Name, address, phone number, and E-mail address of a company contact person (and of the person submitting the nomination if different).
6. Names and titles of all individuals directly responsible for on-the-ground reclamation at the nominated site.

B. Narrative description of the specific reclamation or environmental control techniques that resulted in exemplary performance under the Surface Mining Law. The narrative should be comprehensive, but not exceed six single-spaced typewritten pages and should describe the mining operation and the specific activity nominated for an award using the following outline:

1. Brief history/background of the mining and reclamation.
2. Description of the nominated activity or reclamation practice, including specific problems, solutions, and unusual circumstances.
3. On-site effectiveness of the work. This should be documented and quantified with data. For example, successful handling of acid materials could be shown with water quality sampling data.
4. Transferability or value of the accomplishment(s) to other mining and reclamation operations.
5. Long-term benefits to the landowner and local or regional community.

C. Color photographs (not slides). The photos should show both the specific activity and the surrounding reclamation. When examined with the narrative description, the photographs should provide a clear understanding of the exemplary accomplishments. Photographs should be 8" x 10" or smaller, and labeled to explain what the photo shows. "Before and after" photos are desirable, but not required. There is no limit to the number of photographs that may be submitted.

D. Format. Each nomination package must contain the required information (described above) in a three-ring, loose-leaf binder, plus five high-quality, stapled machine copies (e.g., Xerox) for use by the judges. Additional supporting information may be submitted with the nomination; however, it must be separate from the information described above. Nominations judged at the national level will not be returned.