



Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation

Year 2001 Awards
and
2002 Award Program Rules

United States Department of the Interior
Office of Surface Mining

Introduction

The 1977 Surface Mining Law was enacted to ensure that lands mined for coal would be restored to original condition as part of the mining process, and to restore unreclaimed coal mined lands that were abandoned before 1977.

Today, at the beginning of the 25 Anniversary of abandoned mine land reclamation funded under the Surface Mining Law, thousands of dangerous health and safety problems resulting from abandoned mine lands throughout the country have been eliminated. Yet despite the country's significant progress in eliminating abandoned mine land problems, there is little public awareness that this reclamation has taken place. When there are highly visible scars at an unreclaimed landscape, most people recognize the legacy of past coal mining. But after abandoned mine problems are eliminated and reclamation is complete, it is nearly impossible for any observer to see that health and safety problems once existed on the site. Ironically, the better the reclamation, the less apparent it is. Thus, the best reclamation is virtually invisible.

To give well-earned public recognition to those responsible for the nation's most outstanding achievements in abandoned mine land reclamation, the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining began the annual Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards Program in 1992. The Program publicly recognizes outstanding abandoned mine land reclamation and publicizes exemplary reclamation techniques.

The process used to select the winners includes judging by those most closely involved with reclamation projects - state and federal reclamation program staff. Each state/tribal Abandoned Mine Land Program selected its best project within its state/tribal boundary. Nominations were posted on the Internet and using an electronic ballot, each director from state/tribal Abandoned Mine Land Programs and Office of Surface Mining Field Offices selected the winning reclamation by ranking the nominations. Four awards were judged using this process in 2001 - three regional awards and one national award. The nominations receiving the best score in each of the three coal regions were selected as "Regional Winners." The regional winner with the best score was selected the "National Winner." In addition, the public selected one project they thought was best and the project receiving the most votes became the winner of the People's Choice Award.

2001 award winners:

Appalachian Region Award

Vindex Reclamation Project - West Vindex, Maryland

Mid-Continent Region Award

West Huntington Joint Reclamation Project - Huntington, Arkansas

Western Region Award

Sunnyside Project - Sunnyside, Utah

National Award

Vindex Reclamation Project - West Vindex, Maryland

People's Choice Award

Sunnyside Project - Sunnyside, Utah



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Since the Office of Surface Mining began presenting annual awards for the best abandoned mine land reclamation, 47 projects have received recognition and those responsible were presented awards at the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs annual conference.



Appalachian Region and National Awards

Vindex Reclamation Project, West Vindex, Maryland
Completed by Maryland Department of Environment
Water Management Administration Mining Program
Bureau of Mines

Project date: August 15, 1994 - July 29, 1997 at a cost of \$3,335,792.

The Vindex Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Project is located in the south Central portion of Garrett County, Maryland. The Community of Vindex was first established around 1890 as a lumber town; but, soon became a coal town in 1904, when a deep mining operation opened and a rail line was constructed to service the mining operation. Fueled by the demand of World War I, the operation expanded into one of the most modern and progressive deep mines of its time — complete with a company store, tipples, cleaning plant, power house, reservoir, and company owned dwellings. By the end of World War II the mine produced approximately 5.5 million tons of coal and with increasing costs and decreasing demand for coal the operation closed.

With abandonment of the mining operation public health, safety, and environmental conditions at the site continued to deteriorate. Dangerous highwalls ran parallel to and within 15 feet of the county road, dangerous unstable refuse piles were causing landslides onto roads and streams. Open portals and air shafts threatened public safety, and unauthorized burning of garbage had caused burning of the abandoned coal refuse and other abandoned facilities. Acid mine drainage was flowing from many of the abandoned mine portals and was severely impacting water quality of surrounding streams and rivers. Analysis indicated that acid mine drainage from the site contributed a net acid discharge of 3,354 pounds per day to the North Branch of the Potomac, amounting to over 16 percent of the total acid loading of the River.

During the design process, several innovative concepts, techniques, and construction practices were incorporated into the project. Laboratory analysis indicated that much of the abandoned coal refuse contained a high coal content. Although uneconomical to recover at this time, the refuse having a high coal recoverability was transported to a disposal area within the project for future recovery.

Acid mine drainage leaving the site was creating a chemical barrier to fish migrating into the upper reaches of the Potomac River. In order to eliminate this barrier, a mechanical lime doser to neutralize acid loadings was constructed. The doser has eliminated the chemical barrier to fish migration upstream and dramatically improved the water quality of the river.



Located along the North Branch of the Potomac River this project contained unstable refuse piles, dangerous highwalls, and serious acid mine drainage problems (Left). A lime doser located above the acid mine drainage discharges has improved water quality and stream species are on the increase (Right).



This was Maryland's single most complex, time consuming, and costly Abandoned Mine Land project. It required over 55,000 man hours of work, cost more than twice Maryland's total annual Title IV grant allocation, and required three years to complete.



Mid-Continent Region Award

West Huntington Joint Reclamation Project, Huntington, Arkansas

Completed by Surface Mining and Reclamation Division
Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality

Project date: June 1998 - September 1999 at a cost of \$408,364.

The town of Huntington has a rich history in coal mining, and has the distinction of being the gateway to the most extensive unreclaimed surface and underground coal mine tract in Arkansas. The surface mined areas within this project had been abandoned for 35 years, yet the dark grey shale at the surface had yielded only a sparse cover of volunteer noxious weeds, shrubs, and trees.

The abandoned site had typical dangerous mine-related features that fascinate the public: steep and unstable piles and embankments that were used by all-terrain enthusiasts, a dangerous vertical and unstable highwall with a road at the top edge, and treacherously deep acid water bodies that were used for swimming. Open dumping was prevalent throughout the project area. Acid-forming conditions of the mine spoil and the water readily broke down the refuse into detrimental leachates. The physical position of the mine spoil and the underground mine workings were readily allowing leachates into the ground water .

In late 1997 the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) approached the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality to encourage integrating the resources of both agencies to jointly reclaim an abandoned mine land site. Both government agencies had been successfully reclaiming abandoned coal mine sites for nearly 20 years; but, had not jointly completed projects. Working together aerial photos were procured, digitized, and engineering work completed, and the West Hunting Project embraced as the ideal joint project for pooling of funds from both agencies. Through a cooperative agreement, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided the first \$200,000 of construction funding.

The reclamation of the site eliminated many health and safety hazards. The public is no longer in danger and the open site is being integrated back into the natural Arkansas landscape. Groundwater degradation has been eliminated and a dangerously crooked stretch of state highway was eliminated. This was an excellent synergistic opportunity between federal, state, and county authorities that saved the taxpayers thousands of dollars.



This joint Natural Resources Conservation Service - Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality project resulted from a cooperative agreement to reclaim abandoned mine sites together (Left). Rock lined drains provide long-term protection against erosion of waterways running across the site (Right).



The abandoned mine hazards were eliminated and the site is now an integral part of the Arkansas landscape.



A dangerous and crooked stretch of highway was reconstructed because project grading was done to accommodate the new alignment. Straightening this stretch of highway would not have been economically feasible without reclaiming the spoil ridges on the site.



Western Region and People's Choice Awards

Sunnyside Project, Sunnyside, Utah

Completed by the Utah Division of Oil, Gas & Mining
Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program

Project date: July 13, 1998 - October 18, 2000 at a cost of \$2,012,029.

From the late 1800's until 1992 the Sunnyside Coal mine removed coal seams averaging nine feet thick. This mine has a rich history as one of the largest continuously producing coal mines in the United States. Early exploration revealed that coal in the Sunnyside area was of superior quality for coking because of the metallurgical quality of the coal. Initially coal was shipped 40 miles to be coked; however, by 1917, the Sunnyside Mine had over 800 coking ovens. By 1919 the Sunnyside coke plant was the largest single beehive oven operation in the United States. Each 12' - 13' oven took 7.5 tons of coal per charge to convert a total of 6,142 tons of coal to 4,387 tons of coke per day, or 1.6 million tons of coke a year.

In 1927 the coke oven operation was closed and the mining declined until World War II changed the economic situation in the mines and production boomed once again. Production continued until closure in 1992 ended in bankruptcy.

With the courts controlling the mine bankruptcy, assets were liquidated by auction in 1994 and beginning in 1997, funds were transferred from the courts to an abandoned mine reclamation account. From nearly 100 years of operation, mine workings and associated surface facilities were extensive. Facilities were scattered over a six square mile area. Reclamation included nearly 200 acres of surface disturbance that eliminated nine hazardous shafts, 48 hazardous portals, a 1/4-mile reach of creek restoration, and the planting of over 600 potted trees and shrubs.

Closure of mine shafts was done with heavy reinforced concrete bulkheads, then covered with soil. The custom-designed bulkheads were 18 inches thick and spanned shafts 16 feet in diameter. Portals were backfilled. A few of the larger portals were flanked with historic Italian-cut sandstone retaining walls. These were closed; but, preserved the historic stone intact. Railroad tracks owned by the Union Pacific Railroad played a constraining role in the reclamation since they were required to remain. A 400-foot long tunnel used to load coal into rail cars was removed while protecting and preserving the tracks inside.

The Grassy Trail Creek flowing through the main facility area was heavily impacted by the operations over the century of mining. The stream had been channelized and pushed toward the edge of the canyon. The successful stream restoration was modeled after natural reaches upstream. Grassy Trail Creek now meanders through a restored floodplain and provides an attractive habitat for wildlife in the area. Today, after over 100 years of mining disturbance the landscape has been restored to a near pre-mining condition.



A total of 48 abandoned portals were backfilled and closed (left). Prior to reclamation, these railroad tracks went through a collapsing tunnel. Since the tracks were required to remain, the tunnel and earth material above it was removed and the tracks preserved (Right).



Abandoned portals that were flanked with historic Italian-cut sandstone retaining walls were closed and the walls preserved intact. Today, with reclamation complete, these structures are an historical feature and a reminder of the Italian miners of the early 1900's who build houses, walls, and other structures using rock from the surrounding canyons.

2002 Abandoned Mine Land Awards

What projects are eligible for an award?

Abandoned mine land projects funded wholly or in part by the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund and completed by approved state or tribal programs are eligible for an award. This includes all coal, non-coal, high-priority, and emergency projects. Abandoned mine reclamation projects completed under the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) are eligible if completed jointly with state/tribal programs. Abandoned mine reclamation completed by citizen groups or other (non-state/non-tribal) organizations are not eligible for these awards and may be recognized by the Office of Surface Mining under separate awards programs. One project may be submitted by each state/tribal program each year.

The nomination and judging schedule.

The state/tribal Abandoned Mine Land programs (see footnote 1) provide nominations directly to the Office of Surface Mining Headquarters in Washington, D.C. by March 15, 2002, and judging begins on April 1, 2002.

The nominations will be posted in a special section of the Office of Surface Mining web site (including text, photos, maps, and diagrams) for review by all participants. A judging ballot listing all nominations will also be available at the web site. Participants will rank the nominations and return their completed ballots electronically to the Office of Surface Mining by May 3, 2002.

Required information and format. (Nominations must use the following format)

A. Non-graphic (text only) cover sheet containing:

1. Name and location of the nominated abandoned mine land reclamation project (nearest town).
2. Name, organization, address, and phone number(s) of those submitting the nomination.
3. Project start and completion dates, construction costs, and name of organization(s) responsible for the reclamation (including construction contractor(s)).
4. Date submitted.

B. Narrative description of the work that resulted in exemplary abandoned mine land reclamation.

The narrative should not exceed six single-spaced typewritten pages and should fully describe the abandoned mine problem including background and reclamation techniques used. The text should also contain photo captions and references to separate maps, diagrams, or other graphics.

C. Color photographs (including maps, diagrams, or graphics).

The photos should show both the specific activity and the surrounding conditions. When examined with the narrative description, the photographs should provide a clear understanding of the exemplary reclamation accomplishments. "Before and after" photos are desirable; but, not required. Each nomination is limited to six photographs or other graphics (including maps or diagrams). One photo should be identified as the "cover photo" that will be used on the web page containing the ballot. Photos (or other graphics) should not be included with the text.

D. Format.

Each nomination package must contain the required information (described above) and be submitted in electronic format. The text will be posted on the web in Adobe Acrobat format and must be submitted as one file in Acrobat, WordPerfect, or Word format. Photographs will be posted in .jpg format on the web and must be provided in this electronic format. The nominations may be submitted via e-mail (cmeyers@osmre.gov), or on standard floppy disks.

Selection process for the 2001 awards.

Judging for the Regional and National awards will be done by those most involved in the abandoned mine reclamation work. Ballots will be accepted from directors of state/tribal Abandoned Mine Land programs and Office of Surface Mining field locations that deal with abandoned mine reclamation.

One ballot will be accepted from each eligible office (see footnote 2). Each person submitting a ballot may rank any or all of the nominations (including his or her own.) It is suggested that all the nominations be ranked; however, it is not required. Completed ballots will contain a rank order of the nominations - from most worthy of an award (scored by giving it a rank of 1) to least worthy of an award (scored by giving it the last number in the rank order). The nomination receiving the best average of the rank order scores on all the ballots received by May 3, 2002 will determine the winners. Regional award winners will only be selected when two or more nominations are received from that region. In case of a tie, a coin toss will be used to break the tie. The announcement and presentation of the 2002 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards will be made during the Annual Conference of the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs.

The People's Choice Award will be selected by those visiting the Office of Surface Mining website and casting a vote for the one project they think is best. The nomination receiving the most votes will become the winner.

Address question regarding nominations or the award program to: Chuck Meyers at the Office of Surface Mining, Washington, D.C. 20240, Telephone (202) 208-7940, e-mail: cmeyers@osmre.gov.

Footnote 1. Organizations eligible to submit nominations:

Alabama State Programs Division
Alaska Division of Mining
Arkansas Dept. Of Pollution Control and Ecology
Colorado Office of Active and Inactive Mines
Crow Tribe AML Program
Hopi Tribe Abandoned Mine Land Program
Illinois Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Division
Indiana Division of Reclamation
Iowa AML Program
Kansas Surface Mining Section
Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands
Louisiana Injection and Mining Division
Maryland Abandoned Mine Lands Section
Missouri AML Section Land Reclamation Program
Montana Abandoned Mine Reclamation Bureau
Navajo Nation Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Department
New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division
North Dakota AML Division
Ohio Division of Mines and Reclamation
Oklahoma AML Program
Pennsylvania Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Texas Surface Mining and Reclamation Division
Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program
Virginia Division of Mine Land Reclamation
West Virginia Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation
Wyoming AML Program

Footnote 2. Judges (one ballot accepted from each of the following):

Administrator, Alabama State Programs Division
AML Program Coordinator, Alaska Division of Mining
Director, Albuquerque Field Office (Albuquerque, New Mexico)
Regional Director, Appalachian Regional Coordinating Center
Team Leader, OSM Appalachia Team (Ashland, Kentucky)
Director, Arkansas Dept. Of Pollution Control and Ecology
Director, Big Stone Gap Field Office (Big Stone Gap, Virginia)
Director, Birmingham Field Office (Birmingham, Alabama)
Director, Casper Field Office (Casper, Wyoming)
Director, Charleston Field Office (Charleston, West Virginia)
Director, Colorado Office of Active and Inactive Mines
Manager, OSM Columbus Team (Columbus, Ohio)
Director, Crow Tribe AML Program
Director, Harrisburg Field Office (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania)
Manager, Hopi Tribe Abandoned Mine Land Program
Manager, Illinois Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Division
Assistant-Director- Restoration, Indiana Division of Reclamation
Director, Indianapolis Field Office (Indianapolis, Indiana)
Chief, Iowa AML Coordinator
Mining Section Chief, Kansas Surface Mining Section
Director, Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands
Director, Knoxville Field Office (Knoxville, Tennessee)
Director, Lexington Field Office (Lexington, Kentucky)
Director, Louisiana Injection and Mining Division
Supervisor, Maryland Abandoned Mine Lands Section
Regional Director, Mid-Continent Regional Coordinating Center (Alton, Illinois)
Chief, Missouri AML Section Land Reclamation Program
Chief, Montana Abandoned Mine Reclamation Bureau
Director, Navajo Nation Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Department
AML Program Manager, New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division
Director, North Dakota AML Division
Natural Resources Administrator, Ohio Division of Mines and Reclamation
Director, Oklahoma AML Program
Manager, OSM Olympia Office (Olympia, Washington)
Director, Pennsylvania Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Team Leader, OSM Anthracite Team (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania)
Director, Texas Surface Mining and Reclamation Division
Director, Tulsa Field Office
Chief, Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program
AML Manager, Virginia Division of Mine Land Reclamation
Regional Director, Western Regional Coordinating Center (Denver, Colorado)
Chief, West Virginia Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation
Administrator, Wyoming AML Program

Previous Abandoned Mine Reclamation Awards

2000 Awards

Regional Awards

- Pleasant View Mine Project, Kentucky (Appalachian Region)
- Midwestern Reclamation Project, Indiana (Mid-Continent)
- Carrizo 1 Reclamation Project, Navajo Reservation (Western Region)

National Award

- Pleasant View Mine Project, Kentucky

1999 Awards

Regional Awards

- Blackwater River Limestone Drum Station, West Virginia (Appalachian Region)
- Partnership Approach to Reclamation of Abandoned Mine Land, Oklahoma (Mid-Continent)
- Socorro West, New Mexico (Western Region)

National Award

- Monument Valley 2 AML Reclamation Project, Navajo Reservation

1998 Awards

Regional Awards

- Muddy Creek East Project, Pennsylvania (Appalachian Region)
- Poffenbarger Project, Iowa (Mid-Continent Region)
- Sunrise Mining District Project, Wyoming (Western Region)

National Award

- Long Fork Sedimentation Project, Virginia

20th Anniversary Awards (Presented in 1997)

Regional Awards

- Upper Lehigh Project, Pennsylvania (Appalachian Region)
- ALCOA Project, Texas (Mid-Continent Region)
- Silver Reef Project, Utah (Western Region)

National Award

- Upper Lehigh Project, Pennsylvania

1995 Awards

- Awards were not presented in 1995 due to budget cuts.

1994 Awards (Presented in 1995)

- Aladdin Coal Tipple Interpretive Site, Wyoming
- Summit Reclamation Project, Utah
- City of Mines Project - Independence Mine and Mill, Colorado
- Gage Mine Safeguard Project, New Mexico
- Middle Fork Duck Creek Watershed Project, Ohio
- Rattlesnake Reclamation Project, Tennessee
- North Fork Watershed Project, Virginia
- Rock Springs Subsidence Abatement and Public Utility Repair, Wyoming
- Director's Award (Elimination of acid mine drainage)
- Meadow Creek Project, Tennessee

(Continued)

1993 Awards (Presented in 1994)

Harrison County Road 51 Project, Ohio
Shirley Basin Uranium District, Wyoming
Adrian Southeast Project, Pennsylvania
Eckhart Coal Waste Stabilization, Maryland
Colorado Bats/Inactive Mines Project, Colorado
Tintic Project, Utah
Richmond Shafts Project, Virginia
Rush Run Portals Project, West Virginia
Crook County Bentonite Project, Wyoming

1992 Awards (Presented in 1993)

Boonville Hospital RAMP Project, Indiana
Coppermine Abandoned Mine Project, Navajo Reservation
Gay Branch Gob Pile Project, Virginia
Lead and Zinc Mine Sites Reclamation Project, Illinois
Ocean Refuse Removal Project, Maryland
Pine Creek Mine Shafts Project, West Virginia
Pyramid Coal Company Reclamation Project, Illinois
Shiloh Reclamation Project, Arkansas
Veca Pit and Spoils Project, Wyoming
White Oak Four Reclamation Project, Ohio

NOTE: Electronic color copies of this flyer in Adobe Acrobat format are available at the Office of Surface Mining web site (www.osmre.gov/awards.htm).

