



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

News Release



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**Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Employee
Honored as Recipient of Service to America Medal**
Interior Secretary Ken Salazar Lauds Work with Volunteers in Coal Country

(Washington) – Dr. T. Allan Comp from the [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSM) will be honored the evening of May 3 as the recipient of an award recognizing members of the Federal workforce who have made significant contributions to the Nation through their commitment and innovation.

A reception in Washington, DC, sponsored by the Southwest Conservation Corps and Citizens Conservation Corps West Virginia will celebrate Comp’s Service to America Medal, given to him in 2009 by the Partnership for Public Service, for his work with volunteers who address environmental and economic issues in coal-producing states.

Dr. Comp founded and coordinates the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team and the Western Hardrock Watershed Team, which are part of a joint initiative between OSM and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). The Appalachian team serves communities in Alabama, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, while the western team operates in Colorado and New Mexico.

Each OSM/VISTA team member works in a host community to recruit volunteers to monitor water quality, educate the public about coal country watershed issues, and perform other watershed reclamation efforts.

“Dr. Comp’s work with volunteers in coal country is transforming the lives of young Americans while growing the next generation of conservation and community leaders,” said Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. “Through employment and educational opportunities offered by the Department of the Interior, my Youth in the Great Outdoors Initiative will employ and engage young people from all backgrounds. The OSM/VISTA teams are great examples of what can be accomplished when we enlist youth as stewards of the Nation’s resources,” he added.

“OSM is proud that one of its own has received this high honor,” said OSM Director Joe Pizarchik. “Dr. Comp works with these OSM/VISTA teams and local watershed groups to address the challenges posed by mining that occurred before the passage of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.”

“I’m honored to have received this medal, but the focus should be on the local people who help their communities and the OSM/VISTA teams that help them do that,” Comp said. “Volunteers are the backbone of this Nation, and of these teams,” he added.

Since the Appalachian team’s inception in 2002, OSM/VISTA workers have recruited volunteers who have logged more than 122,000 volunteer hours. The western hardrock team, founded in 2007, has enlisted volunteers who have logged more than 4,000 hours.

The Partnership for Public Service, a non-profit organization, is working to revitalize the Federal government. The Partnership awards eight medals per year based on recipients’ significant contributions to the country. Honorees are peer-nominated and selected for their commitment and innovation as well as the impact of their work in addressing the needs of the Nation.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement carries out the requirements of the [Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977](#) in cooperation with states and tribes. OSM’s objectives are to ensure that coal mining activities are conducted in a manner that protects citizens and the environment during mining, to ensure that the land is restored to beneficial use after mining, and to mitigate the effects of past mining by aggressively pursuing reclamation of abandoned coal mines.