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Veteran Pennsylvania Mining Engineer to Receive OSMRE's 5th ECHO Award Craig Burda cited for successful effort to end acid mine drainage from coal waste facilities

(Washington, D.C.) — For more than 20 years, mining engineer Craig Burda has dedicated himself to protecting people and the environment. Specifically, Burda saw the ongoing threat of [acid mine drainage](#) (AMD) coming from permitted coal waste facilities, as well as the holes in mining policies that allowed such problems to continue.

Due to Burda's tireless work at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), and his understanding of the law and the engineering needed to eliminate the hazard of AMD, his efforts led to a change in how the Commonwealth permits coal refuse sites. Today, refuse facilities in Pennsylvania are now permitted as "zero discharge" after reclamation is completed.

The [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement \(OSMRE\)](#) is honoring Burda with the fifth [ECHO \(Environment, Community, Humanity, Ownership\) Award](#) for his sustained efforts to effectively implement the law.

"I take great pleasure in recognizing someone who has fully embraced what the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act clearly targets," said [OSMRE Director Joe Pizarchik](#). "Craig's efforts show that even someone working out of the public eye can have a terrific impact on protecting people and the environment. This is exactly why we created the ECHO Award."

The nomination, which came from an OSMRE hydrologist, outlines how Burda analyzed groundwater data and showed how past reclamation techniques were inadequate to prevent AMD. Burda also required a coal producer to use new materials to line a refuse area, which created a new standard. As his nomination states: "Craig's accomplishment was achieved with no change in the regulatory requirements for protecting surface and ground water. He evolved the program by simply failing to accept substandard practices and using monitoring data as the basis for his permitting decisions."

Director Pizarchik will present the ECHO Award to Mr. Burda at the Rachel Carson State Office Building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on January 4, 2017.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) carries out the requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 in cooperation with states and tribes. OSMRE'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. For instant updates on OSMRE, follow the bureau's Twitter feed @OSMRE.

