



U.S. Office of Surface Mining  
**News  
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**Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Honors Active Mine Operations for Outstanding Reclamation**

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) will recognize eight mine operations with the bureau's top honors in an annual awards program showcasing excellence in active mine reclamation.

The eight coal mining companies and their employees will be recognized at a banquet hosted by the National Mining Association on October 28, 2009.

"The winners of the 2009 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards demonstrate the range of beneficial uses to which active mines can be converted once mining is complete," said Glenda Owens, OSM Acting Director. "The awardees have set the bar high in the field of reclaiming coal mines, whether they're planting a rare plant species, working to add reclaimed land to a local park, restoring wildlife habitat, or funding reclamation research," she added.

"The winners of these awards have put good ideas to work in restoring ecosystems and building communities," said Wilma Lewis, U.S. Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management. "Reclaimed mines provide real, on-the-ground benefits and opportunities at the local level," she continued.

Since 1986, the Office of Surface Mining has presented awards to coal mine operators who have completed exemplary reclamation. A similar program for abandoned mine land reclamation began in 1992. The objective of the active mine reclamation awards is to showcase the nation's highest achievement in environmentally sound surface mining and land reclamation and to encourage the exchange of successful reclamation techniques.

The awards consist of three categories: the National Award, the Good Neighbor Award, and the bureau's top honor, the Director's Award. This year's winners are as follows:

## **NATIONAL AWARDS**

The National Awards are presented to coal mining companies that achieve the most exemplary mining and reclamation in the country.

### ***Peabody Energy's Black Beauty Coal Company, Viking Mine, Daviess County, Indiana***

Located in southern Indiana, the Viking Mine consisted of an ambitious reclamation project. Reclamation at the Corning Pit posed unique challenges: a diverse make-up of land uses, moderate to steep terrain, and many individual leased tracts. The Corning Pit reclamation procedures offer numerous benefits to the local community and the region. The reforestation efforts will offer short- and long-term benefits by creating habitat for wildlife, sequestering carbon, promoting biodiversity, and providing a future supply of timber products.

### ***Spring Creek Coal, LLC, Spring Creek Mine, Decker, Montana***

Pre-mine vegetation and soil surveys identified a diversity of vegetation types and habitats at the Spring Creek Mine in southeastern Montana. Mine operators have successfully incorporated this same type of diversity into the post-mining landscape. In addition, the company strives to enhance species-specific biodiversity in its revegetation efforts. Examples include providing refuge plots within reclaimed lands for a species of Echinacea, and extensive efforts to plant woolly twinpod — a species of mustard that is rare in Montana — for establishment in other reclaimed areas.

### ***San Juan Coal Company, La Plata Mine, La Plata, New Mexico***

Located in northwest New Mexico, San Juan Coal Company's reclamation efforts provide for both long-term stability and topographic diversity. The regrading completed at the La Plata Mine uses the best technology currently available to control erosion and sedimentation and to achieve enhancement of wildlife habitat and related environmental resources. The geomorphic-based reclamation creates stable, maintenance-free landforms. In addition, improved topographic diversity enhances wildlife habitat by creating windbreaks and security areas.

### ***Peabody Energy's Caballo Mine, Campbell County, Wyoming***

Stream channel reclamation and construction of associated pools of the North Tisdale Creek Wetlands Reservoir has effectively re-established riparian vegetation and wetland conditions at the Caballo Mine. Located within the Powder River Basin in northeastern Wyoming, the mine's reclamation of these areas demonstrates the feasibility of restoring ecosystem function and providing landscape features that existed before mining occurred. Important vegetation community characteristics and wildlife habitat will again be present on the prairie landscape as a result of these efforts.

## **GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD**

The Good Neighbor Awards are presented to companies for successfully working with the surrounding landowners and the community while completing mining and reclamation.

### ***Good Neighbor Award – Bronze***

#### ***Coulterville Coal Company, LLC, Gateway Mine, Randolph County, Illinois***

Peabody and Gateway actively recruit employees from the surrounding southern Illinois communities and participate in technical training and education programs for local students. Gateway provides mine tours and open houses for the local community and its schools, participates in Arbor Day projects, and donated steel to build a local high school. Gateway has received recognition from several sources for

their work, including an award from the Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals and a United States Department of Labor Sentinels of Safety certificate in 2005.

### **Good Neighbor Award – Silver**

#### **Patriot Coal Company, LP, Patriot Surface Mine, Henderson County, Kentucky**

Patriot Coal Company is receiving this award for restoring prime farmland, reclaiming an impoundment, and proposing to add a portion of the reclaimed area to a local county park. Patriot Coal assumed reclamation liability on this permit in western Kentucky and has done an outstanding job, finalizing the reclamation projects left behind by the mine's former owners. The company has restored farmland, reclaimed a 32-acre final pit impoundment, achieved hay productivity, and is slated to have a portion of the area merged into the Henderson County Park system.

### **Good Neighbor – Gold**

#### **North American Coal Corporation, Red Hills Mine, Choctaw County, Mississippi**

This central Mississippi mine has established and maintained good standing in the local and regional community. The Red Hills Mine is heavily involved in presenting hands-on technological training to rural teachers with the belief that helping teachers educate students is a smart investment. Mine operators built a public overlook, gave tours, and provided presentations to help address negative stereotypes associated with surface mining. The mine also employed exemplary reforestation techniques so that when property owners regained access to their land, they were presented with a valuable commodity of loblolly pine trees.

### **DIRECTOR'S AWARD**

The highest award given for outstanding achievement in a specific area of reclamation is the Director's Award. Each year, the OSM Director's Award focuses on a specific area of reclamation, and a single coal-mining operation is selected for outstanding achievement in that arena. The Director's Award for 2009, presented for advancing the science of reclamation, is given to:

#### **Luminant Mining Company, LLC, Fairfield, Texas**

The Luminant Environmental Research Program began funding graduate studies of the company's environmental footprint in 1971 and continues to do so today. University graduate students are offered the use of research facilities and living quarters near one of Luminant's power plant and mine facilities. By the end of 2008, Luminant had provided more than \$4.6 million in funding, and the program has produced more than 120 completed independent student theses and dissertations. Specific, on-the-ground results include increasing prime farmland soils at Luminant's Big Brown facility from about five percent to more than 58 percent.

OSM carries out the requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 in cooperation with states and Indian 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.