



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

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OSM to Recognize Projects Demonstrating Exemplary Mine Reclamation, Good Community Relationships

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSM) will recognize today the six winners of the 2010 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards. At a banquet sponsored by the National Mining Association, OSM will present four mine operators with National Awards, which recognize the best reclamation efforts of surface mining operations in the country, and two mine operators with Good Neighbor Awards, which recognize successful working relationships with the surrounding landowners and local communities while completing mining and reclamation activities.

“These projects demonstrate the positive results that mine operators can produce for local communities and the environment,” [OSM Director Joe Pizarchik](#) said. “These companies are to be commended for their achievements, and their work serves as models of how active mines can be reclaimed to yield benefits to the natural environment and the local community,” he added.

This year’s Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards are:

National Awards:

Antelope Coal, LLC, Gillette, Wyoming: The company successfully established wildlife habitat at its mine site through a three-phase approach. After evaluating the post-mining topographic surface to identify land areas with the highest shrub potential, the company then used features such as basins and ridgeline breaks to enhance moisture collection and improve deep soil moisture conditions for perennial shrub species. In the final phase, the company used an advanced planting technology that targeted optimal planting dates, planting rates, and specialized drilling equipment for shrubs. By following this approach, the mine operators developed consistent, high-quality habitat for elk and mule deer antelope.

Coal-Mac, Inc., Holden, West Virginia: This award winner emphasized protecting the environment and the public during construction and the operation of its slurry line system. The operator built an overland slurry line system, which stretched seven miles to carry slurry from the preparation plant to an existing impoundment; buried the slurry line to reduce impacts and used existing road sumps and ponds for spill storage should a rupture occur; and installed cameras along the slurry line to allow for instantaneous monitoring. The company also eliminated truck traffic on public roads through the use of an overland beltline, thereby increasing public safety during surface mining operations.

Larry D. Baumgardner Coal Co., Inc., Lanse, Pennsylvania: Before reclamation, the project site was heavily scarred with open pits, dangerous highwalls, and spoil material. The mine operator remined about 60 acres of this site in central Pennsylvania, including 7,740 feet of highwall and underground mines. The remaining effort not only eliminated the abandoned highwalls but also resulted in the recovery of topsoil-type material that had been buried by previous mining. This material was saved during the operation to be later used for planting. This allowed the site to be restored to a post-mining land use of forestland and some industrial and pasture land. The local environment benefited from reductions in iron and acid at the site that had resulted from the operator's remaining effort.

Western Fuels – Wyoming, Inc., Gillette, Wyoming: The company took steps to minimize the disturbance of wetlands when it established a road and conveyor route at its mine. The company also built its conveyor along a route that had less of an impact on water quality than other available options and used a wide arch span for a bridge, which reduced the project's impact on the wetlands. The benefits of the project's design and construction techniques will have short- and long-term benefits. These benefits include immediate reestablishment of wetlands and stream conditions, without the 60- to 70-year delay typically expected from a facility that will be in existence for decades.

Good Neighbor Award - Gold: ICG Beckley, LLC, of Eccles, West Virginia, completed numerous community projects and environmental improvements in and around the town of Eccles. Some of these projects and improvements include partnering with the West Virginia Department of Highways to re-pave approximately one mile of local roads and more than one mile of access roads to the mine site, reclaiming an abandoned refuse site while enhancing more than 3,100 feet of stream, and installing fan insulation coatings and refuse bin insulation in order to reduce noise for nearby residents. The company also donated laptop computers to a high school and bleachers for a Little League field in the community.

Good Neighbor Award - Silver: Energy West Mining Co. in Huntington, Utah, developed an ambitious and innovative spring development and pipeline project with the North Emery Water Users Special Service District (NEWUSSD). The goal of the project was to provide a long-term, dependable water supply to the water treatment plant in Huntington Canyon that would not be interrupted or affected by surface activities, or even by underground coal mining activities common to the area. The mining company donated time needed for the project's permitting activities, and worked closely with NEWUSSD to develop mitigation measures and help them supply water to their constituents. In order to complete the project, the team members also needed to overcome the obstacles that rugged terrain and harsh winter weather posed.

Surface coal mining and reclamation operations that have been conducted under a Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) Title V permit, and certain other kinds of mining and reclamation projects can be eligible for these awards. The relevant state regulatory agency vets the nominations and refers them to OSM for consideration. A panel of judges from OSM reviews the final submissions and determines which mine reclamation projects demonstrate innovative reclamation techniques or exemplary, on-the-ground performance.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement carries out the requirements of SMCRA 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.