



NEWS RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C.
WWW.OSMRE.GOV

September 20, 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Christopher Holmes
(202) 208-7941
cholmes@osmre.gov

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement to Honor Five State Regulatory Agencies for Exemplary Reclamation of Abandoned Mine Lands

(Washington, D.C.) – On September 24, [the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSM) will honor state reclamation programs in Kentucky, Illinois, Montana, Utah, and Pennsylvania for outstanding examples of protecting people and the environment while reclaiming abandoned mine lands.

Each year, OSM recognizes states that achieve the most effective results while reclaiming mine lands abandoned before 1977, when Federal oversight of coal mining began. The [2012 Abandoned Mine Reclamation Awards](#) will recognize innovations and on-the-ground results, including the best regional achievements, the best single Small Project Award, and a single National Award winner.

[OSM Director Joe Pizarchik](#) will present the awards Monday evening in Des Moines, Iowa, as part of the 34th Annual Conference of the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs. The winners are as follows:

2012 Appalachian Regional Award

Lower Rock Creek Watershed Restoration Project
McCreary County, Kentucky

The project covered four locations in Kentucky and Tennessee. Lower Rock Creek stretches from Kentucky's Pickett State Park, through the Daniel Boone National Forest, and into the Big South National Recreation area. The watershed is a prime location for fishing, hunting, hiking, backpacking, and camping and hosts thousands of people each year. A coalition of state and federal agencies worked for more than a decade with non-profit entities to clean up the damage from acid mine drainage that rendered several miles of Lower Rock Creek devoid of aquatic life. At the end of the project, the acid in the water was reduced by 99 percent, and fish and other wildlife had returned.

2012 Mid-Continent Regional Award

I-72 Piers 3 Sag Subsidence Emergency Project
Sangamon County, Illinois

This project not only responded to a life-threatening emergency situation but proved for the first time that it is possible to stop mine subsidence while it is happening. The State of Illinois discovered that two heavily traveled interstate bridges were slowly sinking because of the collapse of two underground mines about 200 feet below the surface. The problem threatened the structural integrity of both bridges and the lives of travelers. Working in subzero temperatures and heavy snowfall and coping with flooding, related delays, the constant fear of further subsidence, and the possibility of the bridges collapsing, the State identified the problem, contracted for the repair work, and completed grouting to stop the sinking in slightly over four months.





NEWS RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C.
WWW.OSMRE.GOV

2012 Western Regional Award

Spring Meadow Lake Abandoned Mine Reclamation Project
Helena, Lewis and Clark County, MT

An undergraduate working on his thesis in 2003 discovered that a well-known and heavily utilized state park in Helena, Montana, was contaminated with extremely high lead and arsenic levels. Spring Meadow Lake State Park hosts about 85,000 people each year to swim, fish, canoe, picnic, and play. State officials confirmed the student's findings that the park land was originally used to mill gold, silver, zinc and manganese ore during World War I, and that the milling remains were contaminating both the water and land. The state used innovative techniques to isolate and remove the contamination, and turned the milling site into an interactive display.

2012 Small Project Award

Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program
Utah Division of Oil, Gas & Mining
Salt Lake City Utah

Utah's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program worked for more than 20 years to extinguish the Maclean underground mine fire that ignited in 1945. Putting out the 67-year old fire, which migrated underground, required the use of new mapping technologies as well as creating new chemical fire retardants, while working on extremely steep slopes. Utah has about a dozen similar underground fires currently burning. The state will apply the techniques and tools developed at the Maclean fire to extinguish those fires at lower cost and in less time.

2012 National Award

Dents Run AML/AMD Ecosystem Restoration Project
Benezette Township, Elk County, Pennsylvania

The 25-square-mile Dents Run watershed is best known for its role as a home to Pennsylvania's elk herd and its world-class trout stream. However, nine historic surface and underground coal mines dating back to the 1800s were leaching acid mine drainage so heavily into the watershed that passive treatment methods would not be effective, and active treatment would be very expensive. The state brought together a coalition of mining companies, non-profit groups, and landowners to provide more than half of the project's funding needs. Selling marketable coal discovered onsite and using limestone also mined nearby kept overall costs down, and enabled the project to reclaim ten highwalls, remove more than 5,000 cubic yards of coal waste, close 23 old mine openings, and treat 14 AMD discharges. In March 2012, the state declared Dents Run as "net alkaline" for the first time in 100 years, enabling fish and wildlife to return.

For instant updates on OSM, and more on the bureau's reclamation awards, follow OSM on Twitter at www.twitter.com/OSMRE or visit the OSM home page at www.osmre.gov.

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.

