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Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Honors Excellence in Surface Coal Mine Reclamation

(Washington, D.C.) – On September 26, [the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSM) will honor five coal companies for completing reclamation of coal mine sites in an exemplary manner. The award-winning projects are located in Illinois, Texas, and Wyoming.

The winners of the 2012 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Awards demonstrated a wide range of technical innovation, addressing agricultural productivity, protection of birds of prey, providing water for wildlife in semi-arid regions, and working effectively with people in coal-producing communities. This year, OSM has chosen award winners in two categories: the Good Neighbor Award and the National Award.

Two mining companies are the winners of the Good Neighbor Awards, given to operators that work closely with communities while executing reclamation plans.

The Alcoa Incorporated, Sandow Mine of Sandow, Texas, won for integrating several non-profit groups into its long-running and extensive reclamation plans. Alcoa encouraged community participation in its tree planting and water resource development plans, formed a Community Advisory Panel to engage local citizens, introduced sustainability and redevelopment plans, and worked closely with state biologists to help manage wildlife at the 17,000-acre mine site.

Cloud Peak Energy's Antelope, Cordero Rojo, and Spring Creek Mines won for its contributions to three different communities near its mines in Montana and Wyoming. The three mine sites, which employ about 1,500 people, developed reclamation plans to build new shrub habitat in semi-arid climates. At the same time, the company sponsored local science fairs, provided displays at state fairs, and sponsored both non-profit service and educational support organizations.

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Three coal mine companies won National Awards, which go to recipients exhibiting the best reclamation practices in the United States.

Peabody Energy's Cottage Grove Mine of Equality, Illinois, won for its innovative practice in returning a 3,500-acre mine site to highly productive

farmland. In particular, the company segregated and sequestered eleven feet of rich topsoil across the site while it carried out surface mining, used GPS technology to re-spread the topsoil, used different seed selections, and prepared new seed beds to enrich and maintain the growing medium for use in agriculture. Today, the same fields are producing above-average corn yields compared to others in the county.

The Glenrock Coal Company's Dave Johnston Mine in Glenrock, Wyoming, won for its 45-plus year commitment to reclamation, which began about eight years after the mine started operation in 1958, and concluded in 2010. The company also developed an innovative way to collect ephemeral water seeping from reclaimed highwalls, and use the water to provide continued support for wildlife. The mine site is now home to an electricity-generating wind farm.

Peabody Energy's North Antelope Rochelle Mine in Wright, Wyoming, won for its commitment to protect raptor species on its 46,000-acre mine site. The company surveyed raptor populations, identified potential disturbances for nesting raptors, and developed multiple plans to mitigate those impacts. The company moved several nesting locations, built special nesting towers for raptors, and successfully maintained viable eagle, hawk, owl and kestrel populations. The mitigation technique is easily transferred to different types of mine sites.

OSM will present the awards at a luncheon in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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.

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