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WASHINGTON, D.C.
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October 27, 2014
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Honors Coal Mining Companies for Exemplary Reclamation at the 2014 Excellence In Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards

(Washington, D.C.) – On October 27, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) will honor three coal companies for their high-quality reclamation of coal mines in Mississippi, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

The winners of the 2014 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards highlight a commitment to community and development of innovative techniques for restoring land and water affected by surface coal mining. This year features three winners overall: one Good Neighbor Award, given to operators that successfully work with adjacent landowners and the local community while completing mining and reclamation; and two in the National Award category, which recognizes companies that develop active-mine reclamation techniques that result in outstanding on-the-ground performance.

Alpha Natural Resources, Elk Run Coal Company, Inc., won for its contributions to communities near the company's operations in Boone County, West Virginia. Alpha Natural Resources donated to local charities, provided numerous volunteer hours to community causes, and provided equipment and resources for other projects in and near the communities of Sylvester and Whitesville.

Mississippi Lignite Mining Company won a National Award for its use of geomorphic techniques to restore the health of a stream segment at the company's Red Hills Mine in Ackerman, Mississippi. In reconstructing the McIntire Branch of the Little Bywy Creek, engineers designed a sinuous stream channel that, among other things, retains nutrients useful to aquatic life. Habitat assessments conducted a year after reclamation was completed show that the stream segment is similar to unmined streams nearby.

Cloud Peak Energy's Antelope Coal Mine in Gillette, Wyoming, won a National Award for the company's husbandry practices that successfully controlled cheatgrass — an aggressive invasive species — on reclaimed mine lands. By applying new reclamation techniques that depressed the cheatgrass seed bank and increased the presence of desirable native species, mine operators successfully transformed over 400 acres of previously reclaimed, cheatgrass-dominated land.

OSMRE will present the awards at a luncheon in Washington, D.C.

OSMRE began presenting its [Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards](#) in 1986. A similar [program recognizing high-quality reclamation of abandoned coal mine lands](#) started in 1992. To learn more about OSMRE's other activities, visit 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. 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.

