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

## **Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Presented 2015 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards to Four U.S. Coal Companies**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSMRE) presented 2015 [Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards](#) today to four coal companies that exemplify the best practices and techniques to reclaim the land after coal mining is complete.

In each case, operators created or improved upon processes to achieve the highest quality reclamation projects, while also providing educational, cultural and outdoor programs as good corporate citizens. In order to win an Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Award, mine operators had to ensure that their on-the-ground performance not only conformed with the mining permit, but was exemplary within that state or geographic area; that other mining activities at the site did not detract from the award-winning activity, and that they had no outstanding violations or past record of not abating violations.

The judges chose the following companies for their efforts:

**Mingo Logan Coal Company's Left Fork Surface Mine** in Logan County, West Virginia won the 2015 Good Neighbor Award for using an aggressive planting campaign that utilized the Forestry Reclamation Approach to replant thousands of trees on a mine site that first began operations in 1987. While doing so, the company also provided for enhancement of wildlife areas, and then held two outdoor education and activities programs; the *Women in The Outdoors* event, and *Wheelin' Sportsmen*, which provided an opportunity for people with disabilities to hunt and enjoy the outdoors.

**Cloud Peak Energy's Cordero Rojo Mine** in Gillette, Wyoming won the 2015 Western Region National Award for adopting a stream restoration technique similar to that outlined in OSMRE's proposed [Stream Protection Rule](#). The company's objective was to return a river to its closest premining state in both form and hydrologic function. The company used geomorphic reclamation to restore almost 20,000 feet of stream channels that included floodplain pools and runs, alluvium perched aquifers, vortex rock weirs, armored scour pools and simulated backwater areas. Both macroinvertebrates and invertebrates have returned to the postmined area, and so have fish.



**Paramount Coal Company's Hawks Nest Surface Mine** in Buchanan County, Virginia claimed the 2015 Appalachian Region National Award through its work to create a roadway network that allowed the company to eliminate 17,000 feet of pre-SMCRA abandoned mine highwalls over 134 acres. The company also restored about 8500 feet of linear stream channel, incorporating natural stream restoration techniques with pools and riffles and native riparian vegetation, then created large areas of usable land that was later turned into residential, recreational, industrial and forestry use. The roads the company built are now tied into the Coalfield Parkway, which local officials hope will generate a diversified economy and greater development for the community.

**Vigo Coal Company's Red Brush Mine** in Evansville, Indiana claimed the 2015 Mid-Continent region Award utilizing a hybrid production system of highwall mining and then trucks and shovels to eliminate pre-law mining pits from previous coal mines, then mitigated several steep slopes. After proper cultivation, the company planted thousands of trees including oak, walnut, hickory, bald cypress, birch and dogwoods. The company also decompacted soil and set aside areas for 450 American Chestnut seedlings to help reintroduce the threatened tree species. The survival rate for the trees is about 95 percent more than two years after planting.

OSMRE presented the 2015 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards during the annual meeting of the National Mining Association at the Renaissance Washington Hotel, 999 Ninth Street NW, Washington, D.C.

*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.*

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