

News Release

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement
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ICYMI: OSM Principal Deputy Director Lanny E. Erdos Highlights Importance, Effectiveness of Bureau's Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program Grants

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Since the day President Trump took office, he has demonstrated his commitment to responsibly developing and managing our nation's natural resources. Under the leadership of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) is proud to support this commitment through grants for collaborative reclamation and conservation projects, like the Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program (WCAP) – a federal program with minimal cost to taxpayers and an enormous impact on water quality, recreation and local economies and communities.

WCAP provides supplemental financial assistance to non-profit watershed restoration groups and other non-profit organizations for the construction of acid mine drainage (AMD) treatment facilities that help restore the biological health of local streams.

Since the program was established, the OSM has awarded more than \$25.7 million through approximately 300 cooperative agreements. The funds that our bureau proudly provides for these projects is supplemented by clean water groups through contributions and in-kind donations. Our partners multiplied the amount of government funding by approximately 250%, resulting in more than \$80.7 million in funding for clean water projects. These funds have done more to clean up legacy acid mine drainage than any other program in the nation.

In just the past few days, the Office of Surface Mining has awarded millions of dollars to deserving organizations and their partners, all to address water quality issues. Here are just three we recently announced:

First, on September 1st, our agency provided \$100,000 to the Friends of Deckers Creek in West Virginia, which will use that money to reduce the amount of acid mine drainage flowing into Dillan Creek and Deckers Creek. Both of those creeks lead to the Cheat River Watershed, which is now a pristine example of a clean watershed, and home to some outstanding fishing and recreational opportunities.

Second, on August 25th, OSM gave almost \$43,000 to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to construct a passive treatment system and improve water quality in Cherry Run.

Finally, on August 10th, OSM provided \$100,000 in funding to Pathfinders Resource Conservation for earthmoving, water and soil neutralization, and seeding activities to eliminate the acid mine drainage originating near Bussey, Iowa.

In 2019, Pennsylvania and West Virginia received more than \$330,000 in WCAP funding, and generated nearly \$1 million in partner contributions for three clean water projects. The result of this teamwork is that hundreds of miles of streams are now free from acid mine drainage and are thriving with fish and wildlife. Americans can now enjoy access to these watersheds for fishing, hunting and other forms of recreation.

In 2018, the OSM awarded nearly \$1 million in WCAP agreements to Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Five non-profit organizations used those funds to address 10 acid mine drainage related problems.

The cleanup of these sites, and many others like them, is a great example of successful collaboration involving federal, state and local governments, as well as citizens and industry. Perhaps this is what Congress envisioned when it called for federal and state cooperation with the passing of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act in 1977 — 43 years ago. This is good government working for the American people.

Under President Trump's leadership, OSM works to strike a balance between the protection of the environment and the nation's need for energy, particularly coal. Programs like WCAP help us to strike that balance by restoring streams that provide clean water and adding recreational opportunities for Americans in our coal communities.

Soon, we will announce the next round of applications for the 2021 Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program Grants. We encourage our state partners, qualified non-profit entities, and academic institutions to apply for funding. With your enthusiasm, dedication, and innovation, we can continue the critical work of cleaning up our nation's watersheds.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) 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.