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Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) and Its Collaborators Win Two Partners in Conservation Awards

(Washington, D.C.) —The U.S. Department of the Interior today honored two OSM projects with the Department's prestigious [Partners in Conservation Awards](#).

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell recognized OSM's work with public and private collaborators for ongoing reforestation at the Flight 93 National Memorial as well as the development of a widely used software application that estimates the cost of treating mine-related water pollution.

The Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative Flight 93 Reforestation Project began in 2011 when the National Park Service (NPS) requested OSM's help in reforesting previously mined and reclaimed land at the [Flight 93 National Memorial](#) near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. On September 11, 2001, the passengers and crew of United Flight 93 bravely gave their lives, thereby thwarting a planned attack on the nation's capital.

The NPS is building a memorial at the crash site honoring the heroes of Flight 93. To provide a windbreak for the memorial, the NPS sought OSM's help based on the bureau's record of developing and popularizing reforestation methods on lands previously mined for coal. In concert with state regulatory authorities in Appalachia, OSM created the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) in 2004 to reestablish healthy, productive forest habitat on mined lands in the eastern coal fields. Providing technical assistance through ARRI, OSM partnered with the NPS, the [National Park Foundation](#), Families of Flight 93, and other groups to engage about 1,200 volunteers in planting over 35,000 tree seedlings in 2012 and 2013. Funding for this project comes from the NPS and the National Park Foundation ([click here for a list of project organizers, sponsors, and partners](#)).

The Department also honored the AMDTreat Software Partnership, which produced an influential software application to help treat water pollution. In collaboration with the Pennsylvania and West Virginia Departments of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), OSM developed the water-treatment software application known as [AMDTreat](#), which helps estimate costs to treat acid mine discharge (AMD), a detrimental by-product of coal mining.

Originally released in 2003, the 2012 update of AMDTreat — Version 5.0 — incorporates a USGS-developed module that allows geochemists and hydrologists to determine how to most effectively and economically treat water polluted from coal



mining and other sources. AMDTreat, which is free to download and is in use around the world, has yielded significant savings while reducing serious threats to local communities and the environment.

“To win one of these awards in a single year is a high honor. To win two is exceptional,” said OSM Director Joe Pizarchik. “It is a tribute not only to the hard-working employees at OSM, but also the people we have worked with, to be recognized in this way. This is proof that a small bureau, with fewer than 500 employees, working in concert with dedicated partners, can have a big effect. I could not be more proud of our employees and partners,” he added.

The Partners in Conservation Awards recognize outstanding examples of conservation legacies achieved when the Department of the Interior engages groups and individuals representing a wide range of backgrounds, ages, and interests to work collaboratively to renew lands and resources. The Department of the Interior celebrates conservation achievements that highlight cooperation among diverse Federal, state, local and tribal governments; public and private entities; non-profit organizations; and individuals.

The Department recognized OSM’s winning projects and 18 others at a [ceremony at the Main Interior Building](#) in Washington, D.C. Photos and video of the ceremony will be available shortly through the [OSM website](#) and [OSM’s YouTube channel](#).

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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Related Resources:

[OSM video on water-treatment efforts at the Flight 93 National Memorial](#)

[OSM video showcasing how AMDTreat allowed the state of Pennsylvania to save millions of dollars over time at a single site](#)

