

News Release



Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement
A Bureau of the U. S. Department of the Interior

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 3, 2017

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Interior Deputy Secretary Bernhardt Joins Office of Surface Mining Employees to Mark 40th Anniversary



WASHINGTON, D.C. –Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt today joined employees and guests of the Department’s Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSRME) at a ceremony marking the 40th Anniversary of the enactment of the surface mining law that established OSMRE.

“Both the surface mining law and the Office of Surface Mining have had a huge impact on the quality of life for millions of people across our country, especially the citizens of Coal Country” said Deputy Secretary Bernhardt. “There’s no question that coal mining has built the American Dream for countless families in this country. Entire towns have been built around the mines, supporting good-paying jobs and powering the United States.”

“Here at OSMRE, you have worked tirelessly for 40 years to protect this American Dream by keeping these families and communities safe,” Bernhardt said. “OSMRE employees understand that the success they have achieved in balancing the nation’s need for a reliable



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source of energy with the protection of the environment demonstrates the effectiveness of working closely with states, tribes, industry, and communities.”

"Part of the American Dream for so many families is boating, fishing, and whitewater rafting," the Deputy Secretary said. "OSMRE's work doesn't just reclaim land and waters damaged by abandoned coal mines; it restores the promise of the American outdoors for hardworking men and women – as well as their children – in Coal Country.”

“OSMRE takes great pride in knowing that the work we do touches American lives every day,” said Acting Director Glenda Owens. “With the Surface Mining law and the work of our dedicated staff, there is no doubt that our nation’s lands and water are in far better condition both during and after coal mining”.

Through the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, Congress established OSMRE for two purposes:

- To ensure that the nation's coal mines operate in a manner that protects citizens and the environment during mining operations and to restore the land to beneficial use following mining; and
- To implement an Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program to address the hazards and environmental degradation resulting from two centuries of coal mining activities that occurred before the law was passed in 1977.

Under the AML program, OSMRE has distributed more than \$5 billion in grants to states and tribes from the Abandoned Mine Land Fund. Over the past 40 years, the AML program has directly contributed to closing more than 43,000 abandoned underground mine shafts and openings; eliminating nearly 1,000 miles of dangerous highwalls; and restoring over 35,000 acres of streams and land.

OSMRE’s efforts have also led to a broadening of mining technology and successes through outreach and partnerships with colleges and universities. These and other partnerships have resulted in [successful reclamation](#), reforestation and use of land for commercial, industrial, residential, recreational; agricultural and forestry purposes, among them reestablishment of critical wildlife habitats.

Under the surface mining law, OSMRE actively monitors and regulates active coal mines to protect people from the adverse effects of coal mining activity.

OSMRE also continues to leverage the latest science and technology through its [National Technical Training Program \(NTTP\)](#), [Technology Development and Transfer](#), and [Technical Innovation and Professional Services \(TIPS\)](#) programs. These programs provide resources for technical assistance, training, and technology development and enhancement of the technical skills that states and tribes need to effectively administer their regulatory and reclamation programs under SMCRA.



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In addition, the Bureau provides ongoing support for mining operations in coalfield communities through its [National Mine Map Repository](#) initiative, which collects and digitizes underground and surface mines in order to allow the most accurate representation of mine dimensions, sizes and locations possible, to ensure operators and communities have critical information to prevent and address potential mine emergencies. Through the bureau's [VISTA/AmeriCorps programs](#), OSMRE helps impoverished communities recover from environmental and economic hardships related to coal mining, while also developing young professionals in service to the nation.

OSMRE 40th anniversary events took place at its national headquarters as well as in its three regional offices in Pittsburgh, PA; Alton, Ill; and Denver, CO.

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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.

