News Release

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

Kentucky AML Program Receives Top Honors in 2017 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards

Bureau to Honor Five States at 25th AML Reclamation Awards Presentation

Washington, DC – The Federal bureau that regulates coal mining and aids in restoring abandoned mine lands is honoring a Kentucky environmental agency with its highest national award for abandoned mine reclamation.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) will honor the Kentucky Department for Natural Resources (KYDNR) Division of Abandoned Mine Lands during a national gathering of mine land reclamation professionals. KYDNR won the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Appalachian Regional Award for a reclamation project near a local school.

"This project, for which the Division of Abandoned Mine Lands is being honored, typifies the vision, expertise and commitment to excellence that this staff routinely demonstrates," said Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Charles Snavely. "A school that was living in daily fear that a bus filled with children might slide down the mountain now has stabilized grounds and a renewed sense of purpose."

OSMRE, through its Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Program, addresses the hazards and environmental degradation created by the two centuries of U.S. coal mining that occurred before the signing of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. This will be OSMRE's 25th year of honoring exemplary state and tribal reclamation projects.

The *Bell Central School HP AML Reclamation Project* stabilized a serious landslide area that threatened the school access road and parking lot and was a significant health and safety threat to staff, students and parents. The school had made several attempts to begin construction work on the site, but was unable to carry out the project because of funding challenges.

"We are pleased that AML was able to be part of such a successful project that meant so much to the Middlesboro community and to the students, school staff and parents of Bell Central School," said Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands Director Bob F. Scott.

Kentucky is home to one of the most pressing abandoned mine land reclamation tasks as a result of more than 200 years of unregulated coal mining. In FY 2017, Kentucky received $33.5 million in AML reclamation funding from OSMRE.

KYDNR is among five winners of the 2017 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards. A panel of judges composed of directors of state and tribal reclamation programs and OSMRE managers voted to determine this year's awardees. The other 25th anniversary award winners are:

National Award
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Abandoned Mine Lands
Huling Branch AML Reclamation/ATV Recreation and Watershed Improvement Project

Regional Awards – Honor the best projects in OSMRE's three regions

Mid-Continent Region Award
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Division of Reclamation AML Program
Sugar Ridge Fish and Wildlife Area 2 Project

Western Region Award
New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division
Low Impact Stormwater Project, Madrid

Small Project Award
(The Small Project Award recognizes a project that cost less than $1 million and is in a state that receives less than $6 million in AML funds.)
Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy
Division of Mined Land Reclamation
Hurricane Fork Gob Pile Project

Previous award winning projects have featured innovative reforestation techniques; geomorphic land restoration; and the creation of recreation space and wetlands to mitigate acid mine drainage. OSMRE will present its Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards during the 39th annual conference of the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs in Lexington, Kentucky on September 25, 2017.

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