

News Release



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 31, 2017

Contact: [Christopher Holmes](#) (202) 208-7941

Pennsylvania's 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 helps restore abandoned mine lands is honoring a Pennsylvania environmental agency with its highest national award for abandoned mine reclamation.

The [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSMRE) will honor the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation during a national gathering of mine land reclamation professionals. PADEP won the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation National Award for its project in the Sproul State Forest.

Through its Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Program OSMRE 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 *Huling Branch Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation/ATV Recreation and Watershed Improvement Project* eliminated dangerous highwalls by backfilling with existing spoil while incorporating an alkaline addition to reduce acid mine drainage impacts on surface and groundwater. The project also reestablished and expanded access for all-terrain vehicles in the Sproul State Forest, a popular outdoor recreation destination. The team also used the [Forestry Reclamation Approach](#) to reforest the land.



"Pennsylvania faces the largest AML inventory in the nation. This 2017 National award shows once again that the Commonwealth is doing excellent work to address threats stemming from more than two hundred years of pre-law mining," said OSMRE Appalachian Regional Director Thomas Shope.

OSMRE News Release continued

Pennsylvania, one of the nation's top historical coal producers, is also among the most affected by abandoned mine lands. In FY 2017, Pennsylvania received \$33.5 million in AML funding from OSMRE.

Pennsylvania 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:

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

Appalachian Region Award

Kentucky Department for Natural Resources
Division of Abandoned Mine Lands
Bell Central School HP AML Reclamation Project

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.

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.

###

