

2000 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards

The Office of Surface Mining presented the 2000 AML Reclamation Awards at the 2000 Annual Conference of the National Association of AML Programs in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The awards give well-earned public recognition to those responsible for the nation's most outstanding achievements in abandoned mine land reclamation and encourages the exchange and transfer of successful reclamation technology.

NATIONAL AWARD AND APPALACHIAN REGIONAL AWARD

Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands - The *Pleasant View Mine Project* reclaimed a 250-acre site encompassing a large final pit with impoundment, spoil piles, and acidic coal refuse. The refuse generated large amounts of acid drainage, polluting the impounded water to a degree that it was a deep red color and providing the nickname "Ketchup Lake" (see the Spring 2000 Newsletter). The site drained into Greasy Creek, a tributary of Clear Creek and part of an extensive wetland system. The reclamation placed the coal refuse in the large final pit, covered the area with soil from the spoil piles, and then revegetated the site. With the elimination of the pit, impoundment, and acid refuse, the threat to public health and safety was removed. Greasy Creek is once again healthy, aquatic life is returning, and the water is no longer polluting downstream water systems and wetlands.



Left to right: Mark Rust, contractor; Steve Hohmann, director, Kentucky AML; Steve Randell, inspector; Carl Campbell, commissioner, Kentucky Department for Surface Mining; Ken Mattox, supervisor, Madisonville regional AML office.

MID-CONTINENT REGIONAL AWARD

Indiana Division of Reclamation-Restoration - The *Midwestern Reclamation Project* improved site safety and reduced environmentally degrading conditions by backfilling or removing 4,400 feet of dangerous highwalls, eliminating 30 million gallons of acid water in multiple impoundments, disposing of derelict mining equipment, and reducing erosion by regrading and revegetating 250 acres of acidic spoil. Use of off-site coal combustion by-products eliminated the need to disturb adjoining areas for borrow material and provided a test for using coal combustion by-products on future reclamation projects. The project also included construction of new wetlands and improvements to existing ponds to enhance wildlife habitats. This project also won the People's Choice Award.



Paul Ehret, director, Bureau of Resource Regulation.

WESTERN REGIONAL AWARD

Navajo Abandoned Mine Land Department - During the *Carrizo 1 Reclamation Project*, the Navajo AML Program used polyurethane foam plugs (PUF) for the first time to close portals. In the Carrizo Mountain/Monument Valley region, unregulated uranium and vanadium mining left many dangerous hazards including vertical shafts, portals, highwalls, radioactive mine waste piles, polluted and radioactive water in open pits, drill-holes with undetonated explosives, and environmental degradation from heavy and radioactive metals. These hazards posed extreme dangers to the local Navajo people and livestock. Because of the hard-to-

reach portals, traditional mine closure methods were not practical. Therefore, PUFs were used because the material could be hand-carried to the sites. The plugs were covered with earth backfill, and natural materials were used to blend the reclaimed areas into the landscape. The reclamation work eliminated all the hazards and environmental problems.



Navajo Tribal Representatives left to right: (back row) Dariel D. Yazzie, Kimberly Beleen, Russel Tallbull, Trevor Tallbull, Delbert Bekis, Lynn H. Benally, (second row) S. Deb Misra, Jason Umberger, Vivienne Tallbull, Madeline Roanhorse, Ray Russell, Anslem John, (front) Larry J. Jackson and Leon Spencer.

2001 AML Awards Program

State and tribal Abandoned Mine Land programs should send nominations (including text, photos, maps, and diagrams) to the Office of Surface Mining Headquarters in Washington, D.C. by March 15, 2001. All nominations will be posted on the OSM web site for review.

Judging will be done by those most involved in abandoned mine reclamation and will begin on April 2, 2001. Participants will use the judging ballot available on the web site to rank the nominations. One ballot will be accepted from each eligible office - directors of state and tribal AML programs and OSM field offices. The nomination receiving the best score in each of the three coal regions will be the winner for that region. The regional winner with the best score will receive the National Award. The completed ballots must be returned electronically to OSM by April 30, 2001.

The awards will be presented at the 2001 Annual Conference of the National Association of AML Programs.

Contact Chuck Meyers at the OSM office, Washington, D.C., by phone (202/208-7940) or e-mail (cmeyers@osmre.gov) with any questions regarding nominations of the award program.

Highlights from Colorado

Thanks to all of you who attended the AML 2000 Conference at the Sheraton Steamboat Springs in September. We hope you had the opportunity to experience Colorado's coal mining country, wide open valleys, and autumn colors. The conference was attended by 260 state, tribal, and federal reclamation and environmental protection specialists, land management stakeholders, suppliers, and reclamation contractors. The high attendance emphasizes the interest and commitment many agencies have towards abandoned mine reclamation and remediation. The highlights of this year's conference included:

- ◆ A brief winter blast greeted our guests and those who took part in the Historical Tour of Routt County and the AML Bike Tour. Old and new friends mingled at the informal reception hosted by exhibitors and sponsors.

- ◆ The first day offered a wide variety of presentations on AML reclamation nationwide. Information on coal and non-coal reclamation from different perspectives demonstrates the importance and the need for AML programs to share information and technologies.

- ◆ Guest speaker at the evening banquet was Greg Walcher, executive director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. Gene Krueger, OSM, made the awards presentations and Association President Pat Park honored our retiring friend from Arkansas, Floyd Durham.

- ◆ On the second day we traveled from one exotic federal island territory to another with the official state cruise liner. Our cruise director, Greg Conrad, IMCC, popped thought-provoking questions that challenged our federal agencies. More sunshine and tours to the active coal mine operations of Colowyo Mine and Trapper Mine near Craig highlighted the afternoon.

- ◆ The last day of the conference featured GPS/GIS presentations as well as the Association business meeting.

Hope all of our hard work paid off in giving you an enjoyable



Greg Walcher, executive director, Colorado Dept. of Natural Resources.

experience. Don't miss next year's conference in Athens, Ohio. The conferences just get better and better!

Warm regards,

The Colorado AML Program