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Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Honors Winners of the 2016 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards and the 2016 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards

Washington, DC – This week the [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement \(OSMRE\)](http://www.osmre.gov) will recognize state and tribal abandoned mine land (AML) programs and mine operators who have innovated and performed notable reclamation of surface coal mines.

The bureau has recognized states, tribes, and coal mining companies with annual awards for the past thirty years.

Abandoned Reclamation Mine Awards

Tonight OSMRE Director Joseph Pizarchik will present the bureau's [Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards](#) at the 38th annual National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs in Bozeman, Montana.

The awards, voted on by a panel of judges composed of directors of state reclamation programs and OSMRE managers, honor state and tribal reclamation programs that address the adverse effects of mining carried out prior to 1977.

This year's winning projects include:

Appalachian Region

Mather, PA - Reclaiming a Company Town – Morgan Township, Green County, Pennsylvania Thanks to the efforts of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, land that was once the site of a coal mining community that employed over 600 miners and site of a massive refuse pile, can now support hiking, soccer, baseball and picnics, recreational activities that were once unimaginable for Mather and Greene County residents.

Mid-Continent Region

Highway 15 Pit Subsidence Emergency Project – St. Clair, County, Illinois

The Illinois Abandoned Mine Lands Division and Department of Transportation worked persistently to stabilize a portion of highway built over an abandoned mine after a four-foot-deep cavity was discovered beneath one of the highway's lanes.

Western Region Award

Coyote Canyon Coal Fire Mitigation – Coyote Canyon, New Mexico



The Navajo AML program worked diligently to extinguish a mine fire that had been burning since the 1930s after it discovered the fire was starting to cause subsidence and affecting nearby families, livestock and wildlife. A follow up survey was conducted a year after project completion and methane tests confirmed that the fire had not reignited. Safety hazards posed by the fire have been eliminated, and approximately five acres of land have been improved for recreation and as open range.

Small Project Award

The 2015 Halleck Mine AML Project – Bowman, North Dakota

When the North Dakota Public Service Commission discovered two sink holes caused by the collapse of an underground mine not only did it get to work quickly it did so effectively using technology to take a geophysical survey of the underground mine. The holes were in close proximity to two well-travelled roads and a natural gas pipeline so precision was necessary. Openings to the mine were strategically filled with grout keeping the project budget within reason. The entrance to the mine was reclaimed and catastrophe was averted.

National Award

Sand Coulee Water System Restoration Project – Great Falls, Montana

The Sand Coulee community struggled to maintain an adequate supply of potable water for 50 years due to coal waste that caused water filters to turn black and deteriorate piping. Acid mine drainage was draining into the community's aquifer. Emergency water rationing was implemented. The Montana Abandoned Mine Land program oversaw the project to tap a deeper aquifer with cleaner, more abundant water the community could use and the means to access the water which included using directional drilling to install water mains under a county road and under Sand Coulee Creek to minimize disturbance, significantly improving the infrastructure for decades to come.

Active Mine Reclamation Awards

On September 28 OSMRE Western Region Director David Berry will represent the bureau as it honors mine operators who perform exemplary work to reclaim the land they disturb after mining is complete at the 30th annual [Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Awards](#) to be presented at the MINExpo INTERNATIONAL® 2016 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The 2016 Award winners include:

Western Region Award:

BHP Billiton/Navajo Transitional Energy Corporation – Fruitland, New Mexico

The company revisited a site it had first reclaimed in the 1970s, after determining the originally built drop structures were not performing well to fully reclaim the area. Twenty-six years after its first effort, the company rebuilt the site using geomorphic reclamation, which created a central water source for wildlife and grazing, and eliminated the need to fix ongoing erosion from storm events.





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Mid-Continent Region Award

Solar Sources, Cannelburg Mining Complex – Cannelburg, Indiana

Before mining, the company segregated topsoil that is ideal for farming. After mining was completed, it replaced the topsoil and included needed nutrients to bring the area back to a prime farmland designation. Working with local farmers, the company demonstrated how decompacted soil, properly handled and treated, increased crop yields for different species. So far, the company has reclaimed more than 2500 acres, in addition to cleaning up 75 acres of abandoned mine land.

Appalachian Region Award

Westmoreland Coal Company/Oxford Mining – Cadiz, Ohio

This is the company's third Excellence in Coal Mine Reclamation Award in five years. This year's award winning project is for reclaiming more than eight miles of dangerous highwalls from previously abandoned mines near roads, homes and business; creating more than seventeen thousand feet of continuous streambeds; filling dozens of old slurry impoundments; and turning some of the reclaimed areas into 23 acres of valuable wetlands, and grazing lands.

National Award

Northampton Fuels Supply Company – Nanticoke, Pennsylvania

This company accepted the liability of reclaiming a 70-year old abandoned mine site that contained a pile of waste coal almost 700 feet high. It removed low-BTU coal that was polluting the air and a nearby watershed and refined it to the point where it was feasible to burn for electric power generation, then regraded the mine site to make it suitable for commercial and industrial development. The removal of more than a million tons of waste saved the state millions in AML funding while also providing the potential for future jobs in the small town.

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. For instant updates on OSMRE, follow the bureau's Twitter feed [@OSMRE](https://twitter.com/OSMRE).

