



U.S. Office of Surface Mining **News Release**



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State Projects Recognized by OSM for Excellence in Abandoned Mine Reclamation

Editors note: Awards won by state offices in New Mexico, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Wyoming.

(Bloomington, IN) Six state offices responsible for reclaiming mines abandoned prior to passage of the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act of 1977(SMCRA) were awarded top honors for the 2007 competition sponsored by the US Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement(OSM).

The States were recognized at an awards banquet hosted by the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Professionals.

In addition to ensuring that mines are reclaimed as America's coal energy is produced, SMCRA also provides for reclamation at sites abandoned before the act. In the past thirty years all AML reclamation has eliminated safety and environmental hazards while creating useful land on over 314,108 acres.

These awards honor the accomplishments of state regulatory officials and their contractors.

The National Award

New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division **Mine Reclamation Bureau** **Real De Dolores Mine Safeguard Project**

The mining camp at Real De Dolores was mining gold in 1822, well before it was a United States Territory and operations continued at least through the 1880s. Reopened in the 1980s, some reclamation had occurred, but open shafts and pits remained to threaten public safety. Planned as a public recreation area that would give insight into the history of mining while maintaining and protecting plant and wildlife species, this project also became a demonstration and test for using lightweight plugs to close mine shafts, an important technique for reclaiming old Western mines.

The National Award – Category II **Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy** **Division of Mined Land Reclamation** **Buchanan County Park Highwall Elimination Project**

With 3200 feet of dangerous high wall in an area already used for recreation, reclamation at this site would have to undo the results of deep mining, auger mining and surface mining. Using OSM's AML enhancement rule, which enables a contracting company to sell coal incidentally mined during reclamation, Virginia was able to complete this project at extensive savings. The result provides 20 new acres of useable, safe recreation land that is part of 50 acres that includes a football field, basketball courts, a softball field, playgrounds, volleyball courts, an outdoor amphitheater and is the site of the Buchanan County fair. Once again dangers are eliminated and useable land is provided.

Appalachian Regional Award

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Kalp and Melcroft AMD Abatement Projects

Underground mining near the Indian Creek and Champion Creek valleys - begun in the mid to late 19th century and continuing into the 1960s - had left behind serious acid mine drainage problems; flooding basements in the town of Melcroft, harming nearby streams, and damaging highways and croplands. With funding coming from OSM, Pennsylvania, US Department of Agriculture and private sources, mine drainage was abated using cross drilling techniques and lowering and treating mine pools.

This reclamation will lead to increased property values, enhanced educational and recreational opportunities, community revitalization, and improved economic development.

Mid Continent Regional Award

Kansas Department of Health and Environment
Surface Mining Section
Overman AML Reclamation Project

Prior to SMCRA, and before passage of Kansas' first reclamation law in 1968, over 14,000 acres in Cherokee County had been mined beginning in the 1870s but without reclamation. The Overman site, surface mined prior to 1950, left behind 2 dangerous high walls near heavily traveled roads. Working around a 4inch gas pipeline and with portions of one high wall already collapsed, reclamation at this site has eliminated 2,095 feet of dangerous high wall, established an enhanced wildlife area, increased shoreline, and provided new spawning grounds for fish.

Western Regional Award

Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality
Abandoned Mine Land Division
Kemmerer Coal Reclamation Project 17H, Phase I, Contract A

This extensive reclamation project successfully reclaimed multiple abandoned underground mines that had supplied coal to the railroads beginning in the late 1800s and in some cases and for different uses into the mid 20th Century. Numerous open or partially filled portals and abandoned mine workings created a severe problem. There were 5 open portals, 15 covered

portals, subsidence opened to mine workings, coal slack stood in watershed drainage and a firewall had to be built to halt an underground fire.

Taking advantage of available historic data the reclamation was carefully sequenced to remove significant dangers to a public that uses the area for outdoor recreation. At the Gomer mine site, care was taken to both close a portal and design an area as it would have been in the early days of active mining.

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