



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

# News Release



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## Office of Surface Mining Announces Grants Addressing Abandoned Mines

(Washington, D.C.) – The U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) today announced that \$298 million in grants is available in Fiscal Year 2009 for states and tribes to restore abandoned mine lands, treat water quality problems associated with past mining, and, in some cases, to be put to other uses.

“This is the second year we’ve distributed funds following amendments made in 2006 to the law that governs how this money is distributed. In each of those two years, we’ve provided more than double the funds that were available before the amendments took effect,” said Brent Wahlquist, Director of OSM. “The amount available this year is about \$24 million more than last year. We’re delivering this money to the Abandoned Mine Land programs faster, and these funds will continue to increase annually over the life of the program. We expect to see a vast increase in the number of abandoned mine land hazards reclaimed and in the pace at which they are reclaimed,” he added.

States and tribes may use these funds to eliminate health, safety, and environmental problems caused by past mining practices, improve water quality by treating acid mine drainage, and other uses. Funding will be distributed in accordance with the requirements of the [2006 Amendments to Title IV of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act \(SMCRA\)](#). The amendments provide that, in addition to the funds distributed to eligible states and tribes based on Abandoned Mine Land (AML) fee collections from coal production in Fiscal Year 2008, each state and tribe will receive the equivalent of one-seventh of its unappropriated state or tribal share balance from Treasury funds. The amendments also direct Treasury funds to certified states and Indian tribes — those that no longer have coal reclamation projects to address — that are no longer eligible for funds from AML fee collections. These Treasury funds are based upon the amount of fees collected within state or tribal boundaries during Fiscal Year 2008.

Collection of AML funds on coal produced during Fiscal Year 2008 was completed last month, and OSM has moved to make these funds available to state and tribal AML programs. Uncertified States and Tribes — those that still have work to do on coal reclamation projects — will use the existing grant procedures to continue their AML coal work. Certified States and Tribes will be able to apply for grants under a simplified process and use the money returned from their unappropriated state or tribal balances as directed by their State Legislatures or Tribal Councils. The funds they receive in lieu of AML funds may be used for any other purpose as they determine. If new coal problems are identified, however, the funds must first be used to address those problems.

When Congress enacted SMCRA in 1977, it created OSM and gave it the authority to collect fees on coal production to restore abandoned mine lands. The 2006 Amendments extended the Department of the Interior’s authority to collect AML fees through September 30, 2021. In addition to funding reclamation, the AML fund earns interest that is transferred to the United Mine Workers of America health benefit plans. So far, OSM and its partners have reclaimed more than 220,000 acres of abandoned coal mine sites since SMCRA’s passage.

The following chart shows the total amounts of mandatory Treasury and AML distributions available to eligible coal-producing states and tribes in FY09.

<u>Certified States/Tribes</u>		<u>Uncertified States/Tribes</u>	
Louisiana	\$ 289,586	Alabama	\$ 5,471,464
Montana	\$ 9,547,050	Alaska	\$ 1,723,541
Texas	\$ 3,781,470	Arkansas	\$ 1,569,094
Wyoming	\$100,783,068	Colorado	\$ 6,485,403
Crow Tribe	\$ 1,580,977	Illinois	\$ 11,356,792
Hopi Tribe	\$ 968,045	Indiana	\$ 10,546,634
Navajo Nation	\$ 5,851,308	Iowa	\$ 1,724,386
		Kansas	\$ 1,725,188
		Kentucky	\$ 31,184,323
		Maryland	\$ 2,085,185
		Mississippi	\$ 210,739
		Missouri	\$ 1,807,121
		New Mexico	\$ 3,823,848
		North Dakota	\$ 2,937,279
		Ohio	\$ 8,376,067
		Oklahoma	\$ 1,850,042
		Pennsylvania	\$ 29,975,292
		Tennessee	\$ 1,896,843
		Utah	\$ 3,620,533
		Virginia	\$ 7,022,985
		West Virginia	\$ 39,878,051

OSM carries out the requirements of SMCRA in cooperation with states and Indian tribes. OSM’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.

[2009 Abandoned Mine Land \(AML\) Grant Distribution](#)