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Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Honors Companies for Exemplary Mine Reclamation

(Washington, D.C.) – [The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSM) today will honor four coal companies for their commitment to reclaiming land and waters once mining is completed.

Projects in Ohio, Montana, and Wyoming will receive OSM's 2011 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Awards, given to companies that have exceeded the reclamation requirements of the Surface Mining Reclamation and Control Act of 1977 (SMCRA). Over the past 25 years, the winners have been coal mine operators who developed innovative reclamation techniques or carried out reclamation projects resulting in outstanding on-the-ground results.

OSM distributes awards in three categories: the National Award, the Good Neighbor Award, and the Director's Award.

Two mining companies are the winners of the National Awards, which go to the companies exhibiting the best reclamation practices in the United States.

The Oxford Mining Company of Columbus, Ohio, won for embracing the goals of a reforestation initiative developed by OSM in concert with the states, academia, and the mining industry. Using the Forestry Reclamation Approach at its Jockey Hollow West mine site, Oxford reclaimed more than 85 acres of land, planted more than 80,000 trees and perfected a land reclamation technique that minimized erosion during water runoff.

The Big Horn Coal Company of Sheridan County, Wyoming, won for executing an integrated geomorphic mine reclamation plan. Big Horn's effort covered 705 acres and fully reclaimed a large coal pit; restored a 2,500-foot portion of the Tongue River; reclaimed pre-SMCRA subsidence; designed and constructed a permanent post-mining reservoir; and integrated each project into the surrounding landscape using sound geomorphic and engineering principles.

One company claimed the Good Neighbor Award, given to an operator that works closely with communities while executing reclamation plans.

The Oxford Mining Company of Columbus, Ohio (also a National Award Winner) won for a wide array of community projects it has carried out in Harrison



County, Ohio. The company allowed multiple groups to use its Jockey Hollow West site as an outdoor classroom for state, industry, and landowner groups to study reforestation and also for training coal mine inspectors. It also allowed the American Chestnut Foundation to use the site as a production source for blight resistant chestnut tree seeds.

Each year, one coal mining operation in the country is selected to receive the Director's Award for outstanding performance in a specific area of reclamation. The 2011 Director's Award is presented to companies that exhibit exemplary use of geomorphic reclamation techniques, which return the land to a similar condition to what it was prior to mining. This year, two companies are receiving the award.

The Western Energy Company of Colstrip, Montana won for its longtime use of geomorphic reclamation at its Thin Breaks site in eastern Montana. The company replanted native species in the area, increased shrub diversity, and reclaimed ponderosa pine and sagebrush habitat. To achieve a natural topography, the company showed equipment operators the native areas near the mine to give them an idea of how to create the topography, and later put computers on the bulldozers to help the operators achieve the proper contours.

The Big Sky Coal Company of Colstrip, Montana won for its Big Sky Mine Area B project. The company used a cost-effective and successful geomorphic approach to create stable and sustainable landforms, establish native vegetation, and build post-mine land uses. Big Sky developed sustainable landforms in reclamation, restoring land use function and utility, and protecting the public while maximizing the recovery of the coal resource.

OSM will present the awards this evening at a banquet sponsored by the National Mining Association in Washington, D.C.

For instant updates on OSM, and more on the bureau's reclamation awards, follow OSM on Twitter at www.twitter.com/OSMRE or visit the OSM home page at www.osmre.gov.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement carries out the requirements of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 in cooperation with states and 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.

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