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## Hardwood Trees Reign in Virginia

By Richard Davis  
Photo by Gavin Bledsoe

Torrential rains failed to dampen the enthusiasm for Virginia's 4<sup>th</sup> annual Arbor Day celebration on April 4, 2008. The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME), the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM), and the Virginia Department of Forestry hosted the event for secondary school students from Dickenson County, Virginia. Other Arbor Day partners included The Nature Conservancy, The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF), and Take Pride in America.

DMME and its partners held the event at a previously mined site in Russell County, Virginia where The Nature Conservancy has accomplished a pilot carbon sequestration project. Although the surface mining was post Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA), the reclamation was typical of

many pre-SMCRA sites with highly compacted soils, competitive ground cover, and numerous invasive shrubs. The Nature Conservancy had contracted to rework the site to make it compliant with the forestry reclamation approach, under the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative. The work included shearing the existing woody vegetation, liming and fertilizing, ripping, and planting native hardwood species. (*Hardwood Trees continued on page 2*)



Virginia DMME personnel assist Dickenson County students plant native hardwoods for Arbor Day.

## Pennsylvania Arbor Day Event Educates School Children

By Dave Hamilton  
Photos by Tom Grote

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Office, in collaboration with the Jennings Environmental Center, hosted an Arbor Day tree planting event near Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania, on April 25, 2008.

(*Arbor Day continued on page 2*)



Dave Hamilton, OSM, gives tree planting instructions to Pennsylvania school students.

## Hardwood Trees continued from page 1...

The Nature Conservancy's planting contractor excluded a two-acre area specifically left for the Arbor Day event.

The event highlighted efforts to restore the American chestnut to eastern forests. Beginning in the early 1900's, blight largely decimated this species. By the 1950's, blight reduced the once dominant and ecologically critical nut producer to ghostly snags throughout most of its range. With a mission to restore the American chestnut tree to its native range, the TACF has implemented scientific research and breeding programs by crossing American chestnuts with blight resistant Chinese chestnuts. Further backcrossing the offspring with American parents produces offspring that have the desirable characteristics of the American tree and the blight resistance of the Chinese species. The TACF has implemented

Operation Springboard to use surface mined lands as an avenue to introduce a blight resistant American chestnut to the eastern forest. This process can also be used on Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) reclamation projects.

During the Arbor Day event, Lynn Scarlett, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, recognized Marshal Case, President and Chief Executive Officer of the TACF, for his volunteer efforts to reestablish chestnut trees. Scarlett also joined Case, OSM Director, Brent Wahlquist, and a number of students to plant five backcross American chestnuts seedlings on the site. Scarlett noted the students were planting for the future, which needs science, conservation and partnerships to make things happen.

"The support and enthusiasm for Arbor Day is tremendous," said

Butch Lambert, Director of Virginia's Division of Mined Land Reclamation. "In addition to being a fun experience for the students, Arbor Day activities also emphasize Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). Arbor Day sponsors gave presentations that directly related to secondary SOLs for biology and earth science."

DMME's AML program continues to implement the forestry reclamation approach whenever practical on its projects. DMME's tree planting contractor recently planted over 18,000 hardwood seedlings on AML enhancement projects. DMME personnel also planted over 100 American chestnut on AML sites this spring. For further information on Virginia's Arbor Day event or reforestation efforts, please contact Richard Davis at 276-523-8216 or at [Richard.Davis@dmme.virginia.gov](mailto:Richard.Davis@dmme.virginia.gov).

## Arbor Day continued from page 1...

Dave Johnson, administrator of Jennings Environmental Center, dedicated a plot of land presently covered by abandoned underground coal refuse material. This land is being used to demonstrate the principles of the Forest Reclamation Approach (FRA) as incorporated in the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative.

The Jennings Environmental Center is operated by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation of Natural Resources and serves as an important educational resource for Western Pennsylvania school districts, as well as the general public.

Stream Restoration Incorporated, a leader in environmental restoration of abandoned and current coal mining sites, and Quality Aggregates, a local mine operator, worked together to have mine spoil delivered to the site and placed using the FRA.

Tree seedlings were planted by local school children under the super-

vision of Jennings Environmental Center staff. In addition to several varieties of native hardwoods, American chestnuts and several blight resistant hybrid American chestnut seedlings were planted.

Representatives from The American Chestnut Foundation were

present and spoke to the audience.

The site, which also includes a functioning coal mine drainage treatment system, will become a part of the educational programs offered at the Jennings Environmental Center and will be monitored over the coming years.



(Adults back row from left) Scott Bobeck, Pennsylvania OSM inspector, and Karen Orwig, OSM Pittsburgh, assisted children in tree planting.



# Ohio Employees go ‘Nuts’ for Arbor Day

Story and Photos by Mike Hiscar

The Ohio Division of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement’s (OSM) Arbor Day event was held April 11, 2008 on state property in Harrison County, Ohio. The property is being mined by Oxford Mining Company, LLC, using permit number D-2255.

This years planting was in conjunction with The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) and Ohio University. Ohio University supplied 1,000 hybrid American chestnut seedlings and the TACF supplied 1,000 American chestnuts to plant.

Enduring a drizzling rain, 32 volunteers came out to plant the American chestnuts on Friday. Volunteers from the Ohio chestnut society planted on Saturday, April 12, 2008.

Oxford Mining Company, LLC, reclaimed the site using the Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA). To implement FRA, soil is hauled in end-dump trucks and dumped in piles that are from five to eight feet high and closely abutted. These piles contain stumps, roots, and other organic material which creates the best re-soiling material for tree growth. These piles are then hand planted.

In addition to the chestnuts planted this Arbor Day, 28,000 other hardwoods such as oaks, maples, poplars



This group of tree planters were tired and dirty when they posed for this picture after a long day of planting.. (From left) Todd Crum, Jeremy Scherf, Tom Shope, Jeff Emmons, Mark Bonaventura, Cathryn Loucas, Brent Heavilin, Wayne Light and Jeff Fomenko.

and early successional trees for wildlife such as dogwood and chokeberry were also planted on site.

Hopefully, in 15 years when these chestnut trees begin producing nuts, this planting will help the American chestnut regain its once prominent status in the forests of the Northeastern United States.

ODNR and OSM thanked all who participated in the event for enduring the cold and the rain and for their help in reestablishing this site with American chestnuts. Additional thanks also go out to AEP, Denoon Lumber, OSM, Oxford Mining, and Ohio Caterpillar for their donations of supplies, stakes, tubes, and Terra Sorb, which protects the seedlings and nuts from the animals.

We are also in partnership with the Barnesville Area Reforestation Committee (BARK) and their efforts on planting trees on surface mines around Barnesville, Ohio. Their Arbor Day event was for May 17, 2008. This was their 5<sup>th</sup> year of planting on surface mined lands. We planted 4,000 hardwoods and 200 American chestnut seeds on a surface mine just below the Barnesville Hospital.

Volunteers are always welcome. If you couldn’t make this year’s events look on our web site early spring next year for other events being planned in Ohio. If you would like to support our efforts you can also sign our Statement of Mutual Intent which is on the web site. (<http://arri.osmre.gov>) We thank you for your support and hope to see you sometime when we are planting trees on Ohio surface mines.



Arbor Day 2008 was a huge success. One-thousand backcross American chestnut seedlings and 1,000 American chestnut seeds were planted in Ohio. The pictures above are before and after the planting.

# Students Plant American Chestnut Trees to Reclaim a Forest

Story and photos by Linda Keene



From left: Kenny Fannin, Kentucky Division of Forestry helps Phillip Fuller, kindergarten student from W. B. Muncy Elementary, Wooten, KY, plant his tree during the Kentucky Arbor Day event on May 9, 2008.

Arbor Day is about planting trees, but in Kentucky it is a whole lot more. School children, teachers, government officials, bee keepers, American chestnut tree and Rocky Mountain elk enthusiasts gathered at ICG Hazard, LLC's Tip Top Mine in Perry County, Kentucky on May 9, 2008 to celebrate Arbor Day and plant the reclaimed coal mine into the forest it was before mining.

Seventy five students from Leslie County's W. B. Muncy Elementary and Perry County's Robinson Elementary saw a reclaimed mine that is planted in hardwoods and bee friendly sourwood trees. The kindergarten, fifth and sixth grade student's added trees to the future forest by planting pure American chestnut and oak seedlings. They were assisted in properly planting their seedlings by the Kentucky Department of Forestry. Each student tagged the tree they planted so that in the future they can return to the reclaimed mine site and see the growth of their tree.

Lieutenant governor Daniel Mongiardo, M. D., spoke at the event. He said that a mountain goes through a process during surface coal mining much like a surgical operation. The process may not be aesthetically pleasing during the process, but the success

should be judged by the end result. Mongiardo's vision of adventure tourism in Kentucky after coal mining reclamation is that tourists can travel roads and trails riding horses or all terrain vehicles, hike, bike, fish and view the largest elk herds east of the Mississippi River. Mongiardo believes adventure tourism will boost the economy for the area.

C. Stephen Allred, Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management for the Department of Interior said that the woods of Mt. Vernon used to be filled with American chestnut trees, but those were all gone until a few weeks ago when the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) team members planted a couple there. Allred stated that the partnerships ARRI has built with The American Chestnut Foundation and other groups are great. He said, "They have made the partnership work by identifying their common goals, defining the best course of action and designing their efforts so that everyone is successful."

ARRI is a team of State, Federal and University employees that have partnered together to plant more high-value hardwood trees on reclaimed coal mined lands in Appalachia, increase the survival rates and growth rates of planted trees and expedite the establishment of forest habitat through natural succession.

ARRI promotes using the five steps of the Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA) to reclaim mined lands with the intended outcome of a forest.

The first step is to create a suitable rooting medium for good tree growth that is no less than four feet deep and comprised of topsoil, weathered sandstone and/or the best available material.

*(Reclaim a Forest continued on page 5)*



From left: Alexis Taylor Feltner shows Jordan Estridge, kindergarten students from W. B. Muncy Elementary, Wooten, KY, the tag she created. She later attached the tag to the tree she planted for the Kentucky Arbor Day event. Each child wrote their name on the tag so that in the future they can go to the mine site and find their tree.



## Reclaim a Forest continued from page 4...

The second step is to loosely grade the topsoil or topsoil substitute established in step one to create a non-compacted growth medium.

The third step is to use ground covers that are compatible with growing trees.

Next, plant two types of trees, early succession species for wildlife and soil stability and commercially valuable crop trees.

Finally, use proper tree planning techniques.

Scott Freidhof, President of the Kentucky Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation discussed the state's progress in developing blight-resistant American chestnuts. The American Chestnut Foundation has been working for 25 years to develop a blight-resistant American chestnut that will be used to repopulate the eastern forests. Since these new trees, known as backcross American chestnuts, will not be available for widespread distribution for several years, pure American chestnut seeds are being used as proxies on mine sites until the backcross trees are available in large quantities. This year is the first year of a long-term effort to use mine sites as "springboards" for returning the American chestnut into the Appalachian forests.

Dr. Tammy Horn, Eastern Kentucky University honeybee researcher said, "Complimenting the good things they (ARRI) were already doing with a little more creative planting mix you can start up a bee keeping industry. Trees help bees."

Horn has placed bee hives on several reclaimed mines. She encouraged ICG Hazard, LLC to include sourwood trees to the mixture of hardwoods that were planted at Tip Top Mine to give the area bee-friendly trees. She is also encouraging a beekeeping infrastructure among the people in Hazard. Horn sees bees as a boost to the economy by giving the potential for cottage industries to make candles, lotions, and beeswax.

David Ledford, Initiative Director for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation asked the students if they had seen an elk. Nearly every student raised their hand. Ledford told them that they are the first generation in 150 years that has seen elk in Kentucky. He stated that reclaimed surface mined lands are essential to the elk restoration effort in Kentucky.

Hank List, Deputy Secretary of the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet and Paul Rothman, Director of the Department for Natural Resources, Division of Mine Reclamation, presented two ARRI awards for outstanding reclamation in Kentucky.

One award went to Appalachian Fuels, LLC for their exceptional use of the FRA at their Bent Mountain site in Pike County, Kentucky.

Robert Addington, Don Cooke, David Maynard and Ronnie Keaton accepted the award for Appalachian Fuels, LLC.

The other award was presented to ICG Hazard, LLC for their

superb efforts in reclaiming the Tip Top site in Perry County, Kentucky using the FRA.

Greg Feltner, President, Rodney Campbell, Manager of Operations, ICG Hazard, LLC and Don Gibson, Director of Permitting and Regulatory Affairs-Kentucky for ICG, LLC accepted the award for ICG Hazard, LLC.

During the ceremony Allred signed ARRI's Statement of Mutual Intent on behalf of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE).

Other speakers at the Arbor Day event included: Larry Arnett, Deputy Commissioner Department for Natural Resources, Kentucky; W. Scott Perkins, Senior Vice President, Kentucky Operations, International Coal Group, Inc.; List; Rothman; Barry Thacker, Geo/Environmental Associates, Inc.; Dr. Carmen Agouridis, University of Kentucky Hydrology Research; and Joe Blackburn, Lexington Field Office Director, OSMRE.

The event was sponsored by ICG Hazard, LLC.



From left: Greg Feltner, President, ICG Hazard, LLC; Assistant Secretary Land and Minerals Management, C. Stephen Allred; Thomas Shope, Regional Director, OSMRE; Joe Blackburn, Field Office Director, Lexington Field Office, OSMRE; Debbie Feheley, Chief, AVS-OSMRE; Larry Arnett, Deputy Commissioner Department for Natural Resources, Kentucky Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet; and Barbara Russell, Special Assistant to the Deputy Director, OSMRE. The group posed in front of active mine at East Mac and Nellie Branch Operation on May 8, 2008.

# Two Coal Companies Win Awards in Maryland

By Pete Hartman

Photo by Barbara Murphy

The Maryland Department of the Environment, Bureau of Mines held an Arbor Day tree planting program at Tri-Star Mining Inc., Russell Road operation located near Barton, Maryland on April 9, 2008

The program was attended by representatives of the Coal Mining Industry, the American Chestnut Foundation (ACF), the State Reclamation Committee, the Bureau of Mines and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM).

Speakers included Ed Larrimore of the Maryland Department of Environment, Mark Carney of the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI), Essie Burnworth, ACF and Glenda Owens, Deputy Director of OSM.

Reforestation awards were presented to Douglas Coal Company

and Vaughn Miller of Vindex Energy Corporation, for their efforts in planting high quality hardwoods on reclaimed mine sites using the Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA), which is part of ARRI.

The FRA is a surface mining reclamation practice that involves limiting compaction by reducing grading, limiting ground cover competition for better tree survival, and planting trees that will develop into commercially valuable hardwoods.

One of ARRI's most active partners is the American Chestnut Foundation. ARRI and the ACF are partnering to reintroduce the American chestnut to the Appalachian Region on reclaimed mine lands. The initiative is part of "Operation Springboard" 2008, where 4500 pure American chestnuts were distributed for planting on these lands.

At the Tri-Star Mining Inc. site, 325 American chestnuts were planted on a portion of the mine site that was

left in an un-compacted condition. Other hardwood seedlings were also planted.



Ed Larrimore, Administrator, Maryland Mining Program, presented the ARRI award to Vaughn Miller of Vindex Energy Corporation.

## The Sunday Creek Watershed Group Plants 8,500 Trees in Ohio

Story by Max Luehrs

Photos by Mike Hiscar

The recently completed Rodgers Hollow Stream Capture Project in Perry County, Ohio entailed closing several mine entries in an abandoned strip pit that were capturing 2.18 square miles of surface drainage, and then creating a stable channel to reroute the stream away from the pit. The project was funded through an Ohio EPA 319 grant received by the Sunday Creek Watershed Group (SCWG), and AMD Set Aside funds from the Ohio Division of Mineral Resources Management (DMRM). This is expected to reduce the AMD entering Sunday Creek by over 76 million gallons per year.

In order to provide long term stability in the new stream channel, it is necessary to establish riparian vegetation on the stream banks and flood plain. The SCWG sponsored the tree planting with the volunteer assistance of DMRM, Rural Action, and Reuse Industries.

The planting took place over several days beginning on March 24, 2008. By planting early in the season the group has increased the odds of survival for the button bush, silky dogwood, and willow seedlings. In addition to

the riparian plantings, the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement provided 10 pure American chestnut seedlings that were planted in tree tubes on an upland location. The tubes were donated by Mitch Farley of DMRM.



Emily Boyer of SCWG planted trees.



Amy Macky and Bill Jonard of DMRM plant trees.



# Students Plant Trees at Massey Coal Mine

By Joanie Newman

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Nearly 100 students from Madison Middle school and their teachers helped to plant American chestnut seedlings on reclaimed land at the Black Castle mine, property of Massey Energy Company, in Boone County, on Friday, April 18.

"This is the first year that I can remember us having this here," Massey employee Tim McCourt said.

"I think this is the first time at Black Castle; it's not the first time at Massey. We plant about a million trees a year or so. We do this on occasion, and we're pleased that Black Castle won the Excellence in Reforestation Award this year," Don Blankenship, Chairman, President, and CEO of Massey Energy told reporters gathered for the event.

"Basically, we're trying to make sure they have a balanced understanding of what energy production and the environment is all about," said Blankenship. "We're trying to let them see and learn on their own. We're not really trying to teach them so much as to expose them to things that their minds are open to learning of their own effort. We're trying to give them a chance to do it," he said.

When asked what the Excellence in Reforestation Award meant for Massey, Blankenship said, "It means that we're doing the right thing. One of the things in our slogan is doing the right thing with energy, and we're trying to do our part – whether it is reforestation or creating jobs for West Virginia."

According to Human Resource Manager Doug Kennedy, there are nearly 400 people currently working at the Black Castle mine. "We're adding a new coal trucking company and adding 5500 units of excavator equipment," he said.

The CVN posed a few questions to Massey's Chairman, Don Blankenship, and a few of the miner.

Strip mining is a very controversial practice in this area and recently Massey was fined by the EPA for more than 4,000 violations of the Clean Water Act, where pollutants from coal slurry were dumped in West Virginia's waterways.

When asked what steps the company has in place, or are you going to be taking, to make sure that won't happen in the future, Blankenship said, "Well, first of all, our performance from the environmental and the safety side are better than most, and of course that gets overshadowed."

"And secondly, we've done more than anybody that I know of in the industry where our impounds are three

times as strong as other peoples' are that we keep coal slurry or dark water in. We're constantly adding environmental improvements with computer monitoring so we can tell whether the water is actually doing what it should do and we have written manuals on training on a constant basis to try to improve our peoples' efforts. So, we're doing everything that we know to do and certainly we are doing better than anyone else in this line of business," Blankenship told the CVN.

"Once strip mining is done, the land is left in much better condition, appearance-wise, and the land can be used for area development to make golf courses, airports, and housing. Before the mining begins, it's usually an area that you can't get to easily that is very remote," Massey employee Jimmy Baisden said.

"Massey considers reclamation efforts to be part and parcel of any successful mining operation. We are proud of the efforts made by the members at Black Castle," Blankenship said.

This Boone County event was part of Operation Springboard 2008, Restoring the American Chestnut on Mined Land in the Appalachians, a regional effort to revive a piece of Appalachia's natural heritage, according to press release statements.

Scott Eggerud from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and Brad Edwards from the United State Office of Surface Mining attended the event.

According to Edwards, generally in order to receive a permit to strip mine, a coal company had to have a plan on what that land would look like after the mining was finished.

"Today, you'll see rows where a bulldozer has gone and loosened the ground up. This promotes tree growth," Edwards said.

*(Students Plant continued on page 9)*



Students from Madison Middle School walk among rows of turned-up earth, planting American chestnut tree .

# Chestnuts Used to Restore Strip Mines

By DUNCAN MANSFIELD  
The Associated Press  
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PIONEER, Tenn. -- In a double-barreled approach to environmental restoration, Appalachian mountains scarred by strip-mining are being planted with American chestnut trees, a species that has been all but wiped out in the U.S. by a fungus.

For the past 30 years or so, federal regulations essentially said that once a forested mountainside was scraped open and the coal extracted, mine companies had to smooth the soil over and seed it with grass.

But recently, federal regulators have begun promoting the planting of chestnuts and other hardwoods to improve drainage, reduce erosion and return the landscape to a more natural state.

The project has the added advantage of helping to bring the American chestnut back from the brink of extinction.

American chestnuts "were a critical part of the forest and they are gone now, for all intents and purpose," said John Johnson, a former leader in the militant environmentalist group Earth First! and now an employee and student in the University of Tennessee forestry program. "So this in a way is like double research \_ like, how to bring chestnuts back and how to reclaim these sites."

Earlier this month, 60 volunteers in a public-private partnership clambered over a coalfield on Zeb Mountain, 50 miles north of Knoxville, and planted chestnut seeds. The same thing will be done in the coming weeks in Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland and Virginia.

The Zeb Mountain planting was so popular, volunteers had to be turned away. Students, retirees, min-

ing regulators, mine operators, researchers and conservationists participated. They left muddy, wet and enthusiastic after planting more than 200 germinated nuts over a two-acre plot of rocks, boulders and sandstone.

"I was just so excited to be part of it," said Jeff Gately, a senior in civil engineering at the University of Tennessee. "I just thoroughly enjoyed it, just being a part of something that could help reclamation in the future."

In pioneer days, American chestnuts towered 100 feet over the American landscape, providing timber, oil for tanning hides and food for people and wildlife. But a still-lingering blight wiped out 3.5 billion chestnuts from Maine to Mississippi during the first half of the 20th century.

With any luck, the seeds on Zeb Mountain will be 3- to 5-foot saplings next year. But the trees are still susceptible to blight, and Barry Thacker, an environmental engineer and organizer of the Zeb Mountain planting, said they will probably live for only 10 or 15 years. But by then, scientists hope to have developed a blight-resistant hybrid.

Marshal Case, president and chief executive of the Vermont-based American Chestnut Foundation, a partner in the venture, said he has long dreamed of seeing chestnuts planted on reclaimed mine sites in Appalachia, for this was where America's great chestnut forests used to be.

"It just seemed like it would be a natural for us. We could do a lot of things, including healing the land," he said. The American chestnut "is a legacy of hope now. People are getting the idea that this tree has a tremendous future for the landscape in the Eastern forest."

Nearly 2.7 million acres of strip-mined land will need restoration in coming years, according to the Interior Department. Case said at least 300,000 acres could be suitable for chestnuts and other hardwoods.

The project got its start in 2004, when regulators and university researchers in Appalachia and the mid-Atlantic states formed a network to push for the planting of chestnuts. It joined forces with the American Chestnut Foundation, and the idea soon gained backing from the U.S. Office of Surface Mining and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Office of Surface Mining has given nearly \$100,000 for chestnut research, and the American Chestnut Foundation is providing \$1.8 million. It is supplying the seeds and operating a research nursery in Virginia.

Tree scientists know that American chestnuts actually grow better in loose, rubble-strewn soil than they do in compacted earth. But mine companies that took pride in their ability to turn coalfields into rolling meadows initially resisted the idea of leaving mountainsides ungroomed, even though the practice could save them money.

"They said, 'Absolutely no. It is not the way we do things,'" Thacker said. "But, boy, you mention the idea of restoring the American chestnut and it is a whole different ballgame because of the history that is there and the desire, if you will, to return to our roots. Once they realized they could be part of restoring the American chestnut, they changed their minds."

Dan Roling, president and chief executive of Knoxville-based National Coal Corp., which owns the 2,000-acre Zeb Mountain mine, agreed: "Everything we have been seeing across the country in reforestation suggests this is the way to go."



Pure American chestnut seedlings



# Students plant continued from page 7...

Known as the “Redwood of the East,” the American chestnut once flourished in West Virginia, providing early pioneers with resources from the cradle to the grave, until a fungus nearly wiped out the species in the early 1900s, explained Edwards.

“The American Chestnut Foundation has been working for 25 years to develop a blight-resistant American chestnut,” said Marshal Case, President and CEO of the American Chestnut Foundation in a press release.

“Working with partners like Massey Energy, The American Chestnut Foundation, and WVU, Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative is helping to ensure a future for these mighty giants in the Appalachian region,” Case said in the prepared statement.

Madison Middle School’s 7th grade students from Mr. Bias, Miss Ellis and Miss Russell’s classes were invited to tour the mine, learn about reclamation and reforestation, and help replant American chestnut trees. Students also enjoyed lunch and were provided educational materials, t-shirts and other Arbor Day gifts.

The middle school students were instructed to dig a hole, then using a blue tree tube, to place the seedling 1 to 2-inches in the soil.

“The tree tubes are there to try and keep animals away and it increases a little bit of moisture to the seedling,” Edwards said.

According to Edwards, the seedlings being planted on Friday are not of the blight-resistant variety. Rather, he expects that after about 20 years, the trees will succumb to the disease.

“This is sort of an experiment to see how well they do in the mine soil,” Edwards said.

According to Edwards, the reforestation efforts include planting a variety of three or more hardwood trees in the reclaimed area.

When asked how many species of trees were destroyed in order to mine the land, Edwards was uncertain.

According to Edwards, other varieties of trees will make their way to this area as their seeds are carried on the wind.

Rounding out the day’s events, an explosives demonstration was staged for the assembled group of students, employees, and media. As Massey employees counted down from 10, the students chimed in, 3...2...1, and a set of explosives were discharged on a facing mountainside.

“Planting the trees was fun, but I liked the explosion the best,” seventh-grader Blake Lambert told the Coal Valley News.

Contact Joanie Newman at [jnewman@coalvalleynews.com](mailto:jnewman@coalvalleynews.com) or call 369-1165.

## Photos from Arbor Day Events Around Appalachia



(Photos from left) (1) Kenny Fannin, Kentucky Division of Forestry, and Karen Ridgeway, Lexington Field Office, planted a tree. (2) Glenda Owens, Deputy Director, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement planted trees in Maryland. (3) Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy put in stakes and tubes around their trees. (4) In Pennsylvania, Will Taylor, Jennings Environmental Center staff, assisted several school children while they planted a tree. (5) Ralph Mongold and Ray Karlstrand planting trees at the Tri-Star Mining 434 site in Maryland.



# Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative



**The Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative was started in 2004 with the goal of encouraging the planting of high-value hardwood trees on reclaimed coal mine sites using the Forestry Reclamation Approach. The initiative is a coalition of the States of the Appalachian , the Office of Surface Mining and their partners in industry, environmental organizations, academia, local, State and Federal government agencies and local citizens who have come together to support this valuable initiative.**

**For more information on ARRI see our website at: <http://arri.osmre.gov/>**

## **GOALS OF ARRI**

- **Plant more high-value hardwood trees on reclaimed coal mined lands in Appalachia.**
- **Increase the survival rates and growth rates of planted trees.**
- **Expedite the establishment of forest habitat through natural succession**

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