

WRTT Conference Call

March 17th, 2008

Monday 1:30 PM (MST)

Call: (877) 931-2837: Passcode: 128 093

WRTT

Topics of Interest:

1. **WRTT Annual Meeting:** To be held the week of April 21st, 2008 at the Hilton Santa Fe in Santa Fe, NM. The room block is reserved under “WRTT”. Phone number: #505-988-2811. The hotel does NOT provide a shuttle. You can call: Sandia Shuttle, 888.775.5696. The price is \$45 round-trip from the airport in Albuquerque. The room block is now CLOSED! Please let me know if you are unable to attend, and, who might be taking your place at the meeting.

Discussion Topic:

The first AML distributions have already begun to take place. States and tribes will receive 1/7 of their unappropriated share balance from treasury funds. The AML distribution process (as described by our OSMRE New Releases) is paraphrased below:

“The 2006 Amendments provide that in addition to the funds distributed to eligible States and Tribes based on Interior’s prior year AML fee collections, each State and Tribe will be paid, over the next seven years, the equivalent of its unappropriated State or Tribal share balance from Treasury funds.

These unappropriated share balances – the difference between the amount of AML fee collection funds allocated to the State or Tribe by law and the amount that Congress had appropriated -- will remain in the AML fund and continue to earn interest to be transferred to the United Mine Workers of America health benefit plans. The first of these Treasury payments to States and Tribes for unappropriated share balances will be made as part of the FY 2008 distribution.

States and Tribes that have not completed all of their coal reclamation projects will use the existing grants procedures to continue AML coal work. States and Tribes that have been certified as having completed their AML projects will be able to apply for grants for their equivalent unappropriated State or Tribal balance funds. The grants process for these certified States and Tribes is being streamlined to reduce paperwork and eliminate the requirement for subsequent approvals for projects or expenditures under the grants as long as all known coal problems are addressed”.

And,

“States and Tribes that have remaining work to do on coal reclamation projects (uncertified States and Tribes) will use the existing grant procedures to continue AML coal work. States and Tribes that have completed coal reclamation (certified States and Tribes) will be able to apply for grants under a new simplified process and use the money as directed by their legislatures. However, if new coal is identified, the funds must be used to address reclamation prior to other uses”.

1. Should certified and non-certified states/tribes go through the same grant process to obtain their AML funds?
2. Should the unappropriated share balances remain in the AML fund and continue to earn interest, and, should those balances continue to be transferred to non-AML projects such as the United Mine Workers of America health benefit plans?
3. Should the coal tax gradually be phased out? At this time, the coal tax is to be phased out in the year 2021.

Surprisingly enough, there was not much discussion on this topic. I attribute this to that fact that we had Ron Sassaman at the teleconference. Ron's explanation of the current state of AML funds and distribution procedures to both certified and uncertified states left little to the imagination, and, thus quashed any remaining questions. A big THANKS to Ron Sassaman for attending and for Howard Strand for inviting him to the teleconference!

WRTT Member Reports/Information

Alaska: Russ Kirkham/Roger Allely.

No report.

Arizona (Navajo Title IV/V): Madeline Roanhorse/John Stucker

Madeline did not have anything new to report at this teleconference. John noted that his group attended the all hands inspector meeting in Albuquerque, NM. John also noted that their 2008 grant had been approved.

Arizona (Hopi Title IV and V): Norman Honie

No report.

Colorado: Sandy Brown/Jeff Graves.

Jeff reported that a new person had been hired and that this person would perform both data and mobile computing “clean up” within their database. Sandy was not present, but called and stated that a new permit had been submitted (Northfield mine?) and that this permit was the first new mining permit submitted in approximately 10 years.

Montana: Angela McDannel/Heather Luinstra.

Angela stated that she had a good finding of \$250,000 in her program. Heather stated that it was business as usual in the AML department.

Montana (Crow Title IV and V): Marvin Falls Down

No report.

New Mexico: David Clark/James Smith.

James stated that it was business as usual for NM.

North Dakota: Guy Welch/Kraig Nelson.

Guy stated that it had been very busy. The most recent IFB's had been posted. He also stated Bruce Johnson would be attending the WRTT conference.

Utah: Steve Fluke/Jeanny Miles.

Steve stated that Geri Ann? was leaving the program. He also stated that they were gearing up for upcoming field work. SOI's for coal maintenance inventory and coal fires was being done.

Wyoming: Carol Bilbrough/Marcelo Calle.

Marcelo stated that AML funds would be coming in and projects were being planned to use those monies. Marcelo also mentioned that the GIS/GPS class was a success.

Program Support Division/Field Operations: Bob Postle/Jerry White.

No report.

Casper Field Office: Alan Boehms.

Alan noted that a new employee had been hired (Dale Herbort).

Denver Field Division: Howard Strand.

Howard reported that state program amendment work is ongoing. Field evaluations/inspections were increasing.

Denver Program Support Division: Heather Erickson.

Heather noted that Rick Holbrook had been promoted as the new Program Support Division Chief.

TIPS: Lou Hamm

Lou reminded everyone of the upcoming Geospatial conference. On-site courses are available. Course tracks are being developed.

Technical Assistance, Training and General Information

All information regarding the TIPS/NTTP/TECHNOLGY TRANSFER programs can be found at the following websites:

- www.techtransfer.osmre.gov
- www.tips.osmre.gov
- www.doilearn.gov

**Next Meeting: Hilton Santa Fe,
Santa Fe, NM
April 22nd-24th, 2008**