

News Release

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement
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OSM Honors Navajo Transitional Energy Company, North American Coal, Bisti Fuels, and Arch Coal's Leer South Mining with 2020 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards

WASHINGTON – The [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement](#) (OSM) today announced the winners of its 2020 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards. The [Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards](#) are presented to the coal mining companies that achieve the most exemplary coal mine reclamation in the nation. Past winners have demonstrated a commitment to sound mining practices and effective reclamation plans that enhanced the post-mining use of the land.

“OSM is proud to recognize operators who exemplify what it means to balance coal mining and environmental protection,” said **OSM Principal Deputy Director Lanny E. Erdos**. “Congratulations to these deserving winners and thank you on behalf of OSM for your commitment to the American people.”

The awards program, established in 1986, is designed to encourage citizen and private sector involvement in the care of America’s resources, to recognize outstanding reclamation achieved by companies under the [Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act](#) (SMCRA), to capture and infuse in others a spirit of commitment to restoring the land after it is mined for coal, and provide a catalyst for the transfer of new or innovative technology for wider use.

The winning projects went beyond the reclamation requirements of SMCRA to achieve superior results in returning a site to productive use after completion of mining. A team of judges reviewed the nominations and voted on projects based on the following criteria:

- Difficulty of achieving reclamation under existing conditions
- Effectiveness of the on-site work
- Extent to which project exceeds the spirit and intent of SMCRA
- Increased public awareness of SMCRA
- Long-term benefit to the community
- Transferability of the on-site practice to other reclamation projects

OSM honors mine operators in two categories for 2020:

National Awards

This award is presented to coal mining companies for achieving the most exemplary mining and reclamation in the country. A coal mining operation may be nominated for achievement in a specific aspect of the reclamation, such as the design and implementation of sedimentation control practices, or for its overall performance in meeting the goals of SMCRA.

Good Neighbor Awards

The Good Neighbor Awards recognize mine operators who successfully work to benefit the surrounding landowners and the community while completing mining and reclamation.

This year's awardees are both repeat winners.

National Award

*Navajo Transitional Energy Company, North American Coal Company, Bisti Fuels
Navajo Mine*

San Juan County, New Mexico

This Navajo-owned mine held several areas that were already reclaimed to the most current reclamation techniques available when they were finished, going back more than 35 years. However, the reclamation would not support the use that tribal members envisioned; that of raising livestock, and as a watershed. At a cost of nearly \$14 million, the operator reconfigured the reclamation using a more current technique. The effort required a big investment in time, money and effort; the operator had to find and move more than eight million cubic yards of material to fill a previously reclaimed mine pit. It then used geomorphic reclamation on a second site to restore two watersheds, improve sedimentation control, and reintroduce historic drainages that were cut off since 1980. In both areas, while the previous reclamation had been approved, the mine operator determined the reclamation techniques used previously were not conducive to the desired land use, nor to the environment. The judges cited this effort for going well beyond the requirements, spirit, and intent of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act.

This same mine operator won the *2019 Good Neighbor Award* for supporting a post-secondary education program, developing STEM career events at local schools, creating teacher workshops, funding internship and scholarship programs, and working with academia to create a new species of plant that adapts to harsh New Mexican deserts for reclamation purposes.

Good Neighbor Award

*Wolf Run Mining, LLC
Leer South Mine Complex
Grafton, West Virginia*

Wolf Run Mining's Leer South Complex carried out four projects that highlighted the company's efforts as a good neighbor. Starting in 2017, the company went beyond the basic legal obligation to develop an Emergency Warning Plan (EWP). In addition to writing the EWP, the mine operator held several briefings with local authorities, and performed multiple tabletop exercises to simulate potential emergencies, including a catastrophic failure of a coal slurry impoundment dam. This action exceeded federal and state requirements for emergency action planning to reduce potential loss of life and environmental degradation. The company cooperated with local authorities to plan for and provide an extension to the city's current sanitary system, a project that will benefit an expansion to the mine, but also provide service for up to 90 new homes in the area. The company also established a Community Advisory Panel to provide feedback between the company and citizens. Finally, the company took an innovative approach to mine water management to support the responsible use of water resources.

The Leer Mine Complex won the *2019 Good Neighbor Award* for its efforts to reduce noise and visibility of its mining operations, installing centrifugal fans inside sound-insulated buildings to lessen noise levels for underground mine air supplies, and other activities.

The *Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Reclamation Awards* are presented in partnership with the National Mining Association. This year's awards will be presented in a virtual ceremony via YouTube and Facebook from Washington, D.C. on Oct. 15, 2020.

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