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3 W.Va. sites receive coal mining reclamation awards

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— Eight coal mine operations in five states, including three from West Virginia, gained top honors in the annual competition overseen by the U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement.

“These awards recognize the highest achievements in innovative techniques, reforestation, preparing mined land for long-term agricultural use and building enduring community infrastructure,” said Brent Wahlquist, OSM director.

The coal mining companies and their employees were recognized at an awards luncheon hosted by the National Mining Association.

“All of the entries demonstrated a commitment to the environment and the coal field community,” Wahlquist said, “which is especially important as nearly half of our electricity comes from coal.”

Mine operations in West Virginia receiving awards in 2008 are:

National Awards for Excellence in Surface Mining — International Coal Company, ICG Eastern, Birch River Complex
“ICG has pioneered development of bench refuse disposal, avoiding hollow fill impoundments and using materials handling methods that prevent acid mine discharges,” officials said. “Careful use of innovative practices analyzed and evaluated in partnership with West Virginia University are used here, resulting in exemplary post-mining water quality, soil suitable to support 750,000 trees, vegetation and forage for a wide variety of wildlife, a task complicated by re-mining a pre-law mined site.”

Massey Energy, Road Fork Development, Superior Surface Mines

“As an integral part of the mine plan at an area with 50 acres of pre-law mined land,” officials said, “Superior Surface mines took an approach that would strengthen a pre-law slurry pond, one of the largest and oldest in the world. Their innovative and practical approach demonstrates that good engineering and a commitment to the environment can go together with efficient mining. Where once refuse material had caught fire and seepage occurred at the pond toe, Superior’s efforts have buttressed the pond walls with alkaline material ensuring safety and environmental protection for the heavily populated Main Island Creek Watershed.”

The Gold Good Neighbor Award — Arch Coal, Coal-Mac Inc.

“This award honors the company’s involvement in the community with special emphasis on its educational efforts,” officials said. “From kindergarten through high school and into college, the personal involvement of managers, executives and employees is both extensive and exemplary. Mining and reclamation are demonstrated and explained as educational excellence and effort are encouraged. Baseball fields have been built, cultural and recreation activities are encouraged, as is the study of local and regional history.”

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