



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

News Release



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Coal operators recognized for outstanding reclamation

Editor's note: Includes information relevant to Wyoming, Missouri, North Dakota, Kentucky, West Virginia, Indiana, and Colorado.

(Washington, DC) Ten coal operators seized top honors when the US Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) presented its annual Excellence in Surface Mining and Reclamation Awards here Tuesday (September 21).

OSM is the Interior Department agency that oversees surface coal mine reclamation. The operators were honored by OSM at an awards banquet hosted by the National Mining Association. The awards recognize accomplishments in reclaiming mined lands, restoring the environment and benefiting local communities.

"Nearly half of America's electricity comes from coal today," said OSM Director Brent Wahlquist. "We have an obligation to balance this need for energy with protecting the environment for future generations.

"We celebrate this attribute with these awards as they represent innovative reclamation projects in which the operators went that extra mile to ensure the land was restored and, in some cases, was made even more productive after mining was concluded."

The Excellence in Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation awards program began in 1986 to publicly recognize outstanding active coal mine reclamation and to highlight exemplary reclamation techniques.

Mining operations receiving awards for 2007 were:

Director's Award:

Foundation Coal West, INC., Belle Ayr Mine, Caballo Creek Channel Reclamation, Wyoming.

Noting the importance of water in this semi-arid area, reclamation began before the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) was signed in 1977 and has resulted in 3.3 miles of reclaimed stream. It has been built to replicate the pools and runs of a typical prairie stream system enabling fish and wildlife to survive in all but the driest conditions. As the stream restoration continues furthering the perennial designation, reconstruction of a small recreational lake is planned

National Awards:

Peabody Energy, Black Beauty Coal Company Somerville Central Mine, Indiana

This mine, opened in 2000 has already produced over 18 million tons of bituminous coal while at the same time seamlessly moving to reclamation that includes erosion control, reforestation, establishing native species and developing drainage across the mine to maintain seasonally adjusted wetland areas. The identification and development of prime farmland is a major advantage to this rural community and a five year plan to develop hybrid American chestnut trees is a praiseworthy commitment to reforestation.

Associated Electric Cooperative, INC., (AECI) BeeVeer Mine, Missouri

Mining at this site began in the 1930s and gained full bond release in 2006. Innovative practices and careful planning enabled extensive recovery of coal from earlier mining, reduction in acid mine drainage potentials, and reshaping and covering un-reclaimed areas has resulted in sections dedicated In some places the land has been used for hay production and planting of cold and hot weather grasses has been done to support habitat.

North American Coal Company, Falkirk Mine, North Dakota

This extensive re-mining operation at two underground mines has resulted in a high level of stabilization that required special mining methods to mine through sinkholes and old underground mining operations. Although time consuming, the methods employed have ensured a high degree of safety to the miners and the return of useless land to pre-crop vegetation that has already made useless land desirable for farming

Peabody Energy, Northwest Colorado Operations – Seneca Mine, Seneca Yoast Mine, Twenty-Mile Mine, and Hayden Gulch Mine and Terminal, Colorado

Covering a broad steep sloped area in Colorado, reclamation at these mines has long been characterized by careful consideration of native vegetation and wildlife. The special consideration to expanding the now limited population of what was once one of the most abundant species in the United States – The Columbian Sharp Tailed Grouse – marks a high point in care for our native resources. Through study, suitable landscaping, and careful planting they now have a safe habitat in which to thrive.

Arch Coal, Coal-Mac, INC. Holden 22 Surface Mine, West Virginia

Careful planning and dedicated efforts enabled rapid establishment of a post mining land use combining wildlife habitat and rangeland. Starting with a previously mined site that left behind dangerous high-walls and eroded fill, Coal-Mac's re-mining, mining and repair leaves behind ponds, gentle slopes and rock lined ditches designed to enhance the post mining land use.

Peabody Energy, Peabody Coal Company, Gibraltar Mine, Kentucky

Gibraltar Surface mine ceased operations in late 2003 after thirty years of active mining. Its reclamation, aimed at a diverse post mining land use has resulted in areas productive for crops and pasture together with enhanced fish and wildlife habitat. Intermittent streams have been relocated, and together with the University of Kentucky the company has developed a research project testing planting methods for trees, sedimentology and carbon sequestration. Additional plots are devoted to reestablishing hybrid American Chestnuts.

Good Neighbor Awards:

The "Good Neighbor" Awards were established by the Office of Surface Mining to recognize operators who take measures to establish good working relations and interaction with mine neighbors.

Gold Award:

Arch Coal, Mingo Logan Coal Company, West Virginia

Integrating mine site development with community needs, Mingo Logan minimized the operational footprint, devised means to maintain streams, and developed a Community Advisory Panel to maintain a free flow of information between the mining operation and area residents.

Further efforts have supported wildlife management, potable water supplies, and university courses on mining.

Silver Award:

Peabody Energy, Black Beauty Coal Company Somerville Central Mine, Indiana

In addition to a post mining land use that would continue crop growth in this agricultural community, Somerville Central has directly supported an extensive variety of educational, recreational, and civic community services including area police and ambulance service and construction of a Soccer complex and Ball Park.

Bronze Award:

Peabody Energy, Caballo Coal Company, Caballo Mine, Wyoming

This mine, nearly 20000 acres in a semi-arid ranching community has produced over Over 460 million tons of coal since 1978. Not only has reclamation for rangeland, wildlife habitat, crop and pastureland been ongoing, special efforts have been made to provide water to livestock, drilling new wells and preserving reservoirs, and utilizing cleaned water from mine operations. Area ranchers and their employees have been contracted to maintain fences and can lease reclaimed pastureland at low fees.