



U.S. Office of Surface Mining
**News
Release**



**Embargoed for release at 6 a.m.
Wednesday, October 1, 2003**

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Coal operators recognized for outstanding reclamation

*OSM 2003 Excellence awards honor reclamation in
Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Texas,
Utah, Wyoming and the Navajo and Hopi Indian Reservations*

First "Good Neighbor" Awards given

(WASHINGTON, DC) Jeff Jarrett, Director the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining, today announced that this year's national awards for excellence in surface mining and reclamation go to coal operators in Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Wyoming and the Navajo and Hopi Indian Reservations.

Deputy Secretary of the Interior Steven Griles will present the awards today (October 1) at an awards banquet sponsored by the National Mining Association in Washington, D.C.

This year three types of awards will be presented: the Director's Award, National Awards, and for the first time, Good Neighbor Awards.

Director's Award:

Each year, one coal mining operation in the country is selected to receive the prestigious Director's Award for outstanding achievement in a specific area of reclamation.

This year, the award is presented to both the **United Minerals Company and Black Beauty Coal Company**, for working together to create exemplary wetlands at their Deer Ridge Mine in Selvin, Indiana.

This reclamation resulted in 44 shallow wetlands covering approximately 160 acres. In addition, there are now 72 permanent impoundments covering approximately 246 acres. Many of the impoundments were constructed with remnant standing timber that provides protected bird nesting sites.

Although many of the reclamation techniques are not unique to the mining industry, the quality and extent of the project leaves a valuable wetland resource.

National Awards:

The Drummond Company, Cedrum No. 4 Mine, located in Townley, Alabama has many unique aspects that make it one of the best in 2003.

Extensive mitigation of premining natural areas was accomplished by constructing wetlands that now provide a diverse plant and animal community.

Today, without any trace of coal mining this land provides a rich wetland and a pastoral Alabama landscape that is even more diverse than the surrounding unmined areas.

Peabody Energy, Caballo Mine, located just south of Gillette, Wyoming has returned the land to a livestock grazing and wildlife habitat. Small ponds were constructed replacing wetlands that were eliminated during mining. These areas are an oasis for water fowl and shore birds and provide a dependable source of water for the native wildlife.

TXU Mining Company's Monticello Mine reclamation in East Texas has shifted from predominantly agriculture to trees and native vegetation, resulting in the wildlife habitat becoming a significant percentage of the land use.

Reclamation at this 412-acre site near Mount Pleasant included native grasses, pasture, hardwood trees, and ponds. Twenty-two different species of trees were planted with upland and bottomland oaks emphasized around the wetland areas. In the years to come this vegetation will continue to grow and enhance this reclaimed Texas landscape.

Kennecott Energy's Antelope Mine located at the southern end of Wyoming's Powder River Basin has achieved innovative relocation work that shows reclaimed mine lands can be used to enhance wildlife habitats and increase long-term survival of the native species.

Field studies indicated that the Mountain Plover, a migratory bird under status review, has a strong affinity for black-tailed prairie dog colonies at the mine. As a result, part of the reclamation plan included establishment of artificially constructed colonies of prairie dogs. Today, following reclamation both prairie dogs and Mountain Plovers have been successfully reestablished on the reclaimed land.

Castle Gate Holding Company, Castle Gate Mine is located in a steep, mountainous canyon near Price, Utah, where underground coal mining started in the 1880's. Before reclamation, the site contained buildings such as a coal cleaning plant, bath houses, and truck loading facilities, along with large quantities of coal refuse.

The entire area was covered with soil and native grasses, forbs, and shrubs were planted. Today, after reclamation all that is left of this underground coal mine is a magnificent, picturesque mountain canyon.

The Consolidation Coal Company, Burning Star No. 5 Mine at DeSoto, Illinois, reclaimed 3,200 acres of land that previously contained wetlands and prime farmland.

More than 148 acres were restored into wetlands and approximately 1,400 acres of cropland was reestablished, providing feeding areas for resident and migratory wildlife.

The Squaw Creek Coal Company, Squaw Creek Mine, located near Chandler, Indiana, was reclaimed with a mixture of crop land, pasture, forest, water impoundments, wildlife habitat, and a residential area.

Native species of grasses were used for the wildlife areas to add diversity and provide cover and food for grassland birds. These grasses produce hay crops, yield additional seed for planting natural grass areas, and provide wildlife with a unique habitat.

Good Neighbor Awards:

This year, for the first time the Office of Surface Mining presented three Good Neighbor Awards. The awards were created by OSM Director Jeff Jarrett to recognize coal operators for working cooperatively with their communities.

The awards are presented for achievement of exemplary interaction, communication, and involvement with the surrounding land owners and local community. Establishment of good working relations and interaction with mine neighbors is an important element of the Surface Mining Law that mine operators are achieving in many different ways. These awards recognize this achievement and promote the Good Neighbor concepts so others can use them.

“When I instituted the Good Neighbor Awards this year, I wanted to recognize not only excellence in implementing the Surface Mining Law; but, excellence in being part of a community...being a good neighbor” Jarrett said.

“I wanted to identify and honor companies that set the example, that have not only excelled in reclamation, but have done it in a way that strengthens their local communities. That takes working out issues like neighbors -- person to person, with common courtesy, listening, and finding common ground. These three award winners have done just that and we’re proud to recognize them.”

Bronze Award: Between 1988 and 2000 the Bridgeview Coal Company in Farmington, Pennsylvania mined and reclaimed just over 800 acres that is now actively farmed just as it was before mining.

The company and community continually worked together.

- o A dangerously twisting township road was changed to a safe, reasonably straight road.
- o The company donated a water truck to the local fire department and built a stock car racetrack that is the principle source of fund raising for the fire department.
- o A ball field was constructed at the local park, and the company made their excavators and loader available for township use.
- o A safe shooting range was built for a nearby hunting and shooting club.
- o Culverts and drainpipes were installed, and township roads resurfaced.

The Bridgeview Coal Company, with community cooperation, mined the coal and reclaimed the land to the highest standards. And, throughout the operation the coal company was an integral part of the community.

Silver Award: The Vigo Coal Company constructed a 45 acre wetlands/flood control area at its Cypress Creek Mine in Boonville, Indiana.

Newspaper headlines tell the story... Historic coal mining had created continuous downstream flooding in Boonville, Indiana. Farmers had crop losses. The city's waste water treatment plant was frequently flooded, and Roads were often not passable.

As part of its mine plan, Vigo hauled approximately 2 million yards of excess spoil to create the 250 acre-feet of storm water storage for the drainage system.

The benefits to the community are obvious, downstream flooding has been eliminated. And, the integral wetland area is enjoyed by the community.

Vigo's good neighbor policy has been a boon to Boonville.

Gold Award: Located just South of Monument Valley on the Navajo and Hopi Indian reservations, Peabody Western Coal Company's Kayenta and Black Mesa Mines have reclaimed more than 12,000 acres, and made being a good neighbor part of everyday life for residents of the area.

- o A supply of potable drinking water is available at two stands.
- o 150 miles of local roads are maintained and graded by the company on a regular basis.
- o A cultural plant program restores plants for medicinal, ceremonial, and cultural purposes.
- o More than 90 percent of the work force is Native American and the operations inject \$2 million weekly into tribal communities.

For more than 30 years this good neighbor policy has helped many residents and established a unique company/community relationship.

These awards are sponsored by the Office of Surface Mining, the Interior Department bureau responsible for regulating the environmental impacts of coal mining. Nominations from coal mine operators were first judged by state mining and reclamation agencies. State-level winners were then judged at the national level by a panel of Office of Surface Mining experts.

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. A brochure announcing the 2004 program, with complete details about how to nominate a project and other awards program information is available from the Office of Surface Mining website (www.osmre.gov/awards.htm).