

News Release

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement
A Bureau of the U. S. Department of the Interior



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 16, 2021

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OSMRE Announces Recipients of the 2021 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards *Bureau to Honor Five States for Exemplary Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation*

WASHINGTON – The [Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement \(OSMRE\)](#) is pleased to announce the winners of its [2021 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards](#). This year's winning projects represent the Nation's highest achievements in Abandoned Mine Land (AML) reclamation, demonstrating innovative reclamation techniques and outstanding results in restoring previously mined lands.

Established in 1992, the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards recognize exemplary State and Tribal reclamation projects that reclaim coal mine sites that were abandoned before the enactment of the [Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 \(SMCRA\)](#). Eligible projects are funded wholly or in part by OSMRE's AML Reclamation Fund. OSMRE's AML Reclamation Program addresses the hazards and environmental degradation posed by two centuries of coal mining that occurred before SMCRA was enacted.



OSMRE managers, together with State and Tribal reclamation officials, determined this year's winners. There are three categories of Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards: Small Project, Regional and National.

SMALL PROJECT AWARD - Recognizes a project that costs less than \$1 million and is in a state that receives less than \$6 million in annual AML funds

The 2020 Noonan Foamed Sand AML Project

Abandoned Mine Lands Division
North Dakota Public Service Commission

An abandoned mine site, located within a Wildlife Management Area, contained multiple subsidence features, which posed a hazard to the public. Due to the remoteness of the site, as well as the lack of any structures in the area, an opportunity presented itself. The North Dakota AML Program evaluated the effectiveness of foamed sand versus cementitious grout mixes to reduce costs associated with traditional drilling and grouting projects. The project is considered small in scale by reclamation standards, but proved that in non-dipping coal seams, foamed sand could provide the same support as cementitious grout at a reduced cost.



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REGIONAL AWARDS - Honors the best projects from around the country

Stineman Refuse Pile – Path of the Flood Trail

Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Appalachian States

Approximately 27 acres of coal refuse piles located along the "Path of the Flood Trail" in South Fork Borough posed multiple environmental threats to the area. Frequent erosion clogged the unnamed tributary to the Little Conemaugh River and highly acidic water leached into and subsequently impaired local streams. To address these hazards, Pennsylvania's AML Program removed all of the refuse piles. This improved the Little Conemaugh watershed, while creating new opportunities in the area for recreation, tourism and a safer walking trail.

Wolf Branch Middle School Sag Subsidence

Division of Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Interior States

Significant sag subsidence under the Wolf Branch Middle School severely damaged the school building, forcing it to be condemned while displacing more than 400 students and staff. The Emergency Unit of Illinois' AML program worked with the local school district to address the hazards in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of restricting public access to the potentially unstable building while conducting a subsurface exploration. Phase 2 consisted of backfilling the underground mine with grout designed to stabilize the subsidence and prevent further collapse. Although a portion of the school was damaged beyond repair, it is currently being reconstructed and expected to reopen for the 2021-2022 school year.

The Dutchman Canyon Reclamation Project

Abandoned Mine Land Program
New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Dept.
Western States and Tribes

The Dutchman Canyon Reclamation Project addressed public safety concerns and the environmental damage caused by 11 acres of coal refuse piles that were clogging drainages and leaching chemicals in Colfax County, New Mexico. Furthermore, a total of 75 acres had been disturbed by past mining. The New Mexico Abandoned Mine Program took actions to make the area safe for the community by re-grading the coal refuse embankments, removing coal waste where possible, installing drainage structures, rerouting the ranch road, restoring sinuosity to the stream channel and establishing a wetland.

NATIONAL AWARD – Recognizes the overall highest-rated reclamation project

De Ronde AML Reclamation Project (IA-061 & IA-320)

Mines and Minerals Bureau
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship



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Over 2,000 feet of dangerous highwalls, 17 acres of hazardous piles and embankments, six ponds and nearly 25 acres of clogged stream lands located near the City of Beacon posed multiple environmental threats to the area. An attractive nuisance for children and young adults, the site had also been a safety concern for years. To address these hazards, Iowa's AML Program implemented the conventional approach of clearing and grubbing, pit pond dewatering, mass grading, shallow water wetlands, soil neutralization, using intakes and terraced design to control and direct water flow, utilizing geomorphic reclamation in some areas and permanently seeding the reclaimed area. As a result of the Program's efforts, the local watershed has been dramatically improved, leaving the area once again safe for the public.

OSMRE will present the 2021 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards in a virtual awards ceremony in September, in conjunction with the Annual Conference of the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs (NAAMLPL).

-- OSMRE --

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.

