



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

# News Release



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## State Offices Win Top Honors for Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation from OSM

Editors note: Awards given to state agencies in Colorado, Indiana, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Utah.

(Durango, CO) Five state offices responsible for reclaiming mines abandoned prior to passage of the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) were awarded top honors for the 2008 competition sponsored by the US Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM).

The States were recognized at an awards banquet hosted by the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Professionals (NAAML).

In addition to ensuring that mines are reclaimed as America's coal energy is produced, SMCRA also provides for reclamation at sites abandoned before passage of the act. In the past thirty-one years all AML reclamation has eliminated safety and environmental hazards while creating useful land on over 314,108 acres.

### The National Award

Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety  
Inactive Mine Reclamation Program  
**Peanut Mine Reclamation Project**  
Crested Butte, Gunnison County, Colorado

Complicated by the presence of remaining anthracite along with coal waste and hard rock mine and mill waste, reclamation at this site shows how community involvement, innovative partnering between public, private and government groups, and careful planning combine to produce exemplary reclamation.

At this previously impaired and once dangerous site sixteen acres of mine and mill wastes are now reclaimed, adding three new acres of wetlands. The area is currently used as a park-like open space for hiking, bicycling and other forms of outdoor recreation.

### The National Award-Category II

(this award is reserved for states or tribes receiving less than six million annually in AML funding and for projects less than one million dollars)

New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department  
Mining and Minerals Division  
Abandoned Mine Land Program  
**Yankee-Vukonich Coal Reclamation Project**  
Colfax County New Mexico

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Mined sporadically since the early 1800s and as recently as 1971, this site contained substantial amounts of coal waste dumped down steep slopes, partially collapsed adits, and streams near gob piles. The coal waste was severely eroded polluting both ephemeral and perennial waterways. Coal waste, trash and old mining equipment including vehicles had been dumped into an ephemeral stream.

Mixing gob with native soil and adding lime, gypsum, wood waste and compost to support native vegetation has reclaimed much of the area to a point where the landscape conforms to undisturbed areas. Streams are geomorphically reshaped to a natural state, and historic buildings from the mining era have been preserved.

### **The Appalachian Regional Award**

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation  
**The Fishing Run Restoration and  
Maude Mine Reclamation Project**  
South Fayette Township, Allegheny County Pennsylvania

A remnant of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century mining this site included an open portal, a partially sealed mine opening, 1,500 feet of dangerous highwall and numerous dilapidated coal preparation load-out structures. An open mine portal captured all of the flow from the upper portion of a clean water stream called Fishing Run and channeled it through an abandoned mine to discharge acid mine drainage into a major stream.

Fill material from the project site and nearby areas was used to eliminate the highwalls; the open mine portal and partially sealed mine opening have been permanently closed; and, Fishing Run now has a natural stream bed designed using geomorphic principles while its banks are lined with trees.

### **The Mid Continent Regional Award**

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Reclamation  
**Log Creek Church AML Sites 900 & 2040**  
Pike and Warrick Counties, Indiana

Over one hundred years of surface mining left dangerous near vertical high walls and a devastated landscape within yards of a mid-eighteenth century church and a heavily travelled county road. Acid mine drainage from exposed sites was extensive and complicated by the use of coal and coal waste to construct haul roads.

At Log Creek Church, over 70 acres of acid producing waste has been sequestered, forested wetlands are established and, using geomorphic modeling, sustainable stream channels and drainage areas are in place, while four thousand feet of highwall have been replaced with natural slopes.

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## **The Western Regional Award**

Utah Division of Oil, Gas & Mining  
Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program  
**Cottonwood Wash Reclamation Project**  
San Juan County, Utah

An archeologically rich area inhabited for three thousand years and extensively mined for vanadium and uranium in the 20th century, this site was littered with radioactive waste and open mines that threatened public safety. At Cottonwood Wash, cooperative partnering between agencies maximized both funding and expertise to reclaim 264 acres and bring the land back to productive use. Seventy-three miles of mine exploration roads have been reclaimed, 213 adits have been sealed and 66 shafts are now safeguarded.

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