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OSM Honors Coal Companies

Adapted from a press release by the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement



Jockey Hollow East Mine reclamation site. Photo courtesy of ohiodnr.com

The U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSM) recognized four coal companies for their commitment to reclaiming waters and land after completion of mining.

OSM gives awards in three categories: National, Good Neighbor, and Director's Award.

The National Award honors mining companies which exhibit the best reclamation practices. The Oxford Mining Company and The Big Horn Coal Company both received the National Award for their reclamation skills. Oxford, based out of Columbus, Ohio, was recognized for embracing the OSM's reforestation initiative goals. Oxford used this approach at their Jockey Hollow West Mine where they reclaimed 85 acres* and perfected a technique used to minimize erosion during water runoff. Big Horn from Sheridan County, Wyoming, was recognized for integrating a geomorphic mine reclamation plan. The company covered 705 acres*, fully reclaiming a large coal pit; restored a 2500-foot* section of the Tongue River, designed and constructed a post-mining reservoir; and integrated all of these works into the surrounding environment.

The Good Neighbor Award is given to an operator who works closely with communities while reclamation plans are being executed. Oxford Mining Company was also honored with this award for a variety of community projects it carried out in Harrison County, Ohio. The company allowed its Jockey Hollow West site as an outdoor classroom for different groups to study reforestation and train coal mine inspectors.

Two companies were recognized with the 2011 Director's Award for exhibiting exemplary use of geomorphic reclamation techniques allowing land to return to similar conditions before mining began. The Western Energy Company of Colstrip, Montana, received the award for its Thin Breaks site reclamation. Native species were reintroduced to the area, and the company took a proactive approach showing equipment operators the native areas near the mine giving them an idea of how to create the topography, and even put computers on bulldozers to help operators achieve the proper contours. The Big Sky Coal Company of Colstrip, Montana, won for its Big Sky Mine Area B project where they used a cost-effective geomorphic approach. They developed sustainable landforms in reclamation, restored land utility, and protected the public while maximizing the recovery of the coal resource.

Other projects were also recognized by the OSM. Several projects in Ohio, Montana, and Wyoming received OSM's

2011 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Award. The award recognized companies who exceeded reclamation requirements of the Surface Mining Reclamation and Control Act of 1977.

*(1 acre ≈ .405 hectares)
 (1 foot ≈ .304 meters)

In addition to foot guards and safety shoes, leggings (e.g., leather, aluminized rayon, or other appropriate material) can help prevent injuries by protecting workers for hazards such as falling or rolling objects, sharp objects, wet and slippery surfaces, molten materials, hot surfaces, and electrical hazards.

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