



News for Immediate Release

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Pennsylvania Mine Reclamation Project Wins National Award

Elk County Project is the Second Straight National Award-Winning Project for Pennsylvania

Harrisburg – The Department of Environmental Protection announced today that the U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement has given the 2012 national Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Award to a \$14.2-million mine reclamation project in the Dents Run watershed in Benezette Township, Elk County.

The project, which began in 2002 and was completed in March 2012, restored and re-vegetated 320 acres of abandoned mine lands that will now serve as crucial habitat for the state's wild elk herd, which roam the adjacent Elk State Forest and game lands, and other wildlife. In addition, the reclamation restored nearly five miles of the lower Dents Run stream by neutralizing acid mine water, marking the first time in more than a century the stream can support aquatic life. Waterways north of the impacted streams provide habitat for wild trout.

"This award rightly recognizes that a key part of Pennsylvania's ecosystem has been restored and, by extension, a key part of the state's tourism industry," DEP Secretary Mike Krancer said. "Trout fishing and sightseeing for the elk herd have a bright future as a direct result of this project, which could not have happened without the many partners who worked on this with our staff."

More than half a million tons of limestone were mined at the site and used to neutralize the thousands of gallons of acidic mine water that was flowing through the site from 14 different discharge points. This represents the largest use of alkaline materials to neutralize acid mine drainage in Pennsylvania history.

More than 5,000 cubic yards of waste coal were removed from the site and used as fuel at a coal-fired power plant, providing electricity to homes and businesses.

DEP also closed or remediated 23 mine openings and re-graded ten dangerously steep highwalls that totaled 30,850 feet. The cost of the project was paid out of state and federal abandoned mine land funds, which are supported by fees paid by the active mining industry, as well as funding from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and contributions from P&N Coal Co.

DEP's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation worked with the Bennett Branch Watershed Association; Pennsylvania Game Commission; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Office of Surface Mining; Pennsylvania Department of Conservation

and Natural Resources; Elk County Conservation District; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; Elk County Commissioners; Western Pennsylvania Conservancy; local mining companies P&N Coal Co. and Original Fuels; and contractors Stream Restoration Inc. of Pittsburgh, Gannett-Fleming Consultants of Clearfield County; and Berner Construction Inc. of Lancaster County.

Mining began at the site in the late 1800s and continued through the 1960s, when the site was abandoned, leaving devastating environmental degradation.

The project, which is part of broader efforts to restore the entire Bennett Branch watershed, won the federal award, beating out entries from Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia and Utah. This is the tenth year that a DEP mine reclamation project has been recognized by the U.S. Office of Surface Mining and the second year in a row that a project has won the national award.

In 2011, a reclamation project in Newport Township, Luzerne County, won. DEP worked to reclaim 36 acres of abandoned mine lands at the Newport North site and re-graded more than 3,150 feet of dangerous highwalls that were up to six stories in height. Most importantly, the reclamation filled in a hazardous water-filled pit that stood at the foot of one of the now re-graded highwalls that had claimed the lives of six people over the years who had been off-roading at the site in 4x4 vehicles.

For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us or call 717-783-2267.

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