

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Dept. of Environmental Protection

Commonwealth News Bureau
Room 308, Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg PA., 17120

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

09/26/2013

CONTACT:

Colleen Connolly, DEP's Northeast Regional Office
570-826-2340

DEP Announces National Award for Schuylkill County Abandoned Mine Reclamation Project

The Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) has received the National Excellence in Reclamation Award for its work on the Newtown South II-2 reclamation project in Schuylkill County.

"The Newtown South project demonstrates how DEP develops innovative solutions to complex environmental problems," Acting DEP Secretary Chris Abruzzo said. "This award recognizes how our problem-solving has made DEP a national leader in successfully reclaiming abandoned mine lands."

The National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs sponsored the awards to recognize agencies that reclaim mine sites and this week presented them at their annual conference in West Virginia. Eric Cavazza, the Director of DEP's BAMR, Mike Korb of BAMR's Wilkes-Barre District Office and John Stefanko, DEP's Deputy Secretary for Active and Abandoned Mine Operations accepted the award on behalf of the department.

"This is a great example of the good work accomplished by Pennsylvania's abandoned mine land reclamation program," Stefanko said. "That work - reclaiming hazardous abandoned mines, restoring lands and waters affected by legacy mining, and working with partners - helps our communities by creating jobs, usable land, restored waters and an environment free from hazards."

The Newtown South II-2 project, located between the boroughs of Newtown and Tremont in Schuylkill County, reclaimed 50 acres of abandoned mine land. The reclamation efforts used approximately 260,000 cubic yards of onsite material to fill in four hazardous water bodies and seven pits that contained dangerous high-walls, totaling 1,200 feet in length. Two passive treatment systems were installed to remediate three mine discharges that were contributing to the pollution of the Swatara Creek watershed.

The work was performed by Berner Construction Inc. of Gap, at a cost of \$680,756.

The project was part of an ongoing multi-year effort between BAMR, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Office of Surface Mining to clean up a watershed that has returned fish to more than seven miles of mine-impacted stream and reclaimed open mine hazards in an area visited annually by thousands of hunters. Mine openings within the project have been backfilled to prevent water infiltration into the underground mines. The Newtown South II-2 reclamation project also created wetlands and improved wildlife habitat.

This is the eighth consecutive year that a Pennsylvania project has won the Appalachian Regional or National Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Award, and is the fourth National Award that BAMR has received since the recognition was initiated by the U.S. Office of Surface Mining in 1992.

For more information, call 570-826-2511 or visit www.dep.state.pa.us.