

Five Major OSM Accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2009

OSM Issues Final Rule for the Abandoned Mine Land Program

November 2008

After more than six years of review, public comment and revision, OSM published a final rule on the Abandoned Mine Land program, which included several changes designed to align current regulations with amendments Congress made to SMCRA in 2006.

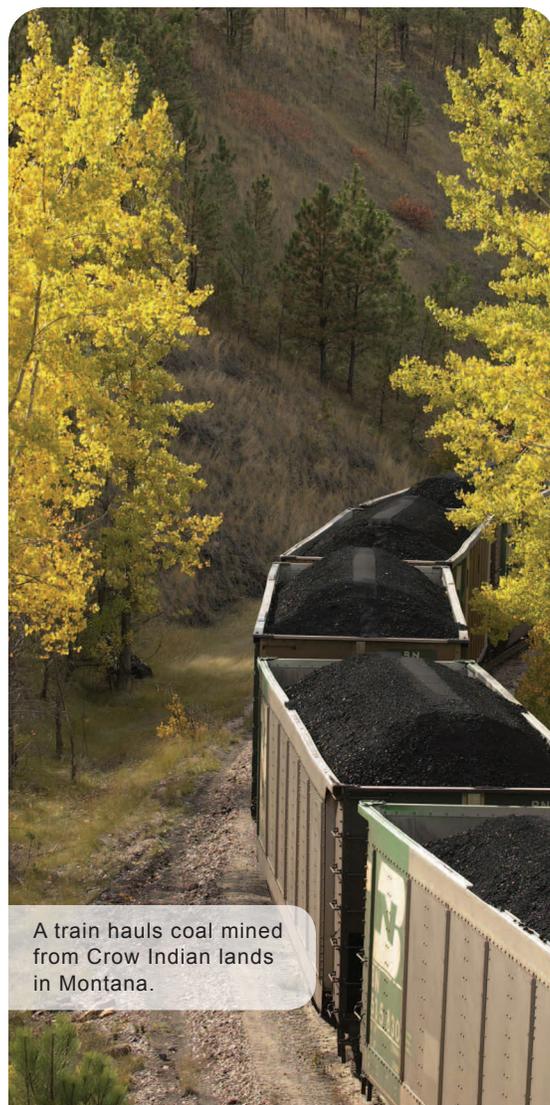
The amendments were signed into law on December 20, 2006, and significantly changed the AML program, including dramatically increasing the funds available for reclaiming abandoned coal mines. After an initial phase-in period, about 83 percent of fees collected annually are allocated for AML mine reclamation.

Publishing the rule brought OSM's regulations into line with the changes enacted by the 2006 amendments to the bureau's organic act. The rule set the course for how OSM will collect fees that improve water quality and provide other benefits by funding important reclamation activities.

In the amendments, Congress mandated a reduction in the fee that the coal industry pays on each ton of coal that it mines. This fee is used to abate and remediate the environmental impact of historic coal mining. The fee rates are reduced by 10 percent from the levels established in 1977 for the period from October 1, 2007, through September 30, 2012, and reduced again by another 10 percent from the 1977 lev-

els for the period from October 1, 2012, through September 30, 2021.

The rule implements the statutorily required reduction of the fee rates and extends OSM's authority to collect reclamation fees through September 30, 2021. The changes also affect the activities that state and tribal reclamation programs may perform and the funding they can use. Finally, the changes reauthorized incentives for the re-mining of certain lands and waters adversely affected by past mining.



A train hauls coal mined from Crow Indian lands in Montana.



OSM Approves Permit for Coal Mine on Montana's Crow Indian Reservation

August 2009

OSM issued a permit to Westmoreland Resources, Inc., of Colorado Springs, Colorado, which extended an existing coal mine operation onto the Crow Indian Reservation in southern Montana. The decision allowed, for the first time, mining within the boundaries of the Crow Reservation.

The permit for the Absaloka South Extension Mine authorized the recovery of approximately 64 million tons of coal, which extended the reach and operational life of the existing Absaloka Coal Mine near Hardin, Montana. The mine has historically produced major revenues for the Crow Tribe through the generation of coal royalties and the employment of about 120 members of the Crow Tribe.

Approval of the permit ensures continued royalty payments to the Crow Tribe and allows 13 more years of employment for a substantial number of tribal members. About 70 percent of the mine personnel are members of the Crow Tribe, and these jobs provide a source of stability for local communities.

Since the Absaloka mine began operations in 1972, the Crow Tribe owned most of the coal, but the mining had thus far been outside of the reservation boundary. The existing mine is located adjacent to the Crow Reservation on lands known as the "Crow Ceded Area." In the early 20th century, this

area was ceded to the U.S. Government and opened for settlement, but Congress subsequently restored all undisposed land within the ceded area, along with all coal rights, to the Crow Tribe.

In early 2009, Westmoreland Resources submitted a proposal to expand the existing permit area within the Crow Ceded Area and mine coal on the Crow Reservation itself. OSM and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality jointly issued the appropriate permits.

OSM, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and CONSOL Energy Fund Pennsylvania Mine Mapping Initiative

January 2009

A collaborative effort among OSM, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the University of Pittsburgh, and CONSOL Energy has made thousands of historic maps of closed or abandoned underground coal mines in Pennsylvania available to the public, and expanded OSM's extensive archive of mine maps.

The collective fund of \$400,000 from the collaborators paved the way to scanning and then posting more than 8,000 historical underground mine maps covering much of the coalfields in southwestern Pennsylvania. The maps are maintained in a publicly accessible geographic information system, OSM's National Mine Map Repository.

The National Mine Map Repository provided staff and equipment in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the University of Pittsburgh to create digital copies of the maps, some of which date to the 1850s. CONSOL Energy first donated the maps to the University's library system in 2000.

Since 2005, OSM has provided over \$1 million to 32 underground mine map-archiving projects in 15 coal-producing states. OSM has also worked with states and other Federal agencies to acquire mine maps and make them available to the public. These maps are a valuable resource to stakeholders seeking information about past mine operations.

OSM and The American Chestnut Foundation Sign Historic Partnership Agreement

October 2008

OSM and The American Chestnut Foundation signed a groundbreaking agreement joining both entities in an effort to use former coal mine lands for new American chestnut tree plantings. The five-year agreement is designed to bring back a classic American tree while providing for an innovative approach to coal mine reclamation.

The partnership concept grew from a 2008 Arbor Day project in which the coal industry worked with the Foundation to bring together company employees, university scientists, and young students to plant nearly 12,000 chestnut trees on a reclaimed mine site.

The native range of the American chestnut and the Appalachian coal fields are in near-perfect alignment, which means surface mines can serve as very effective vectors of dispersal where chestnut trees can be an effective part of reclamation work. Reclaimed surface mines have been shown to produce superior tree growth and rapid reestablishment of forests, as mine operators have learned how to control competition to tree seedlings from herbaceous vegetation and create loose rooting mediums.

For each American chestnut seed that is planted on a surface mine, up to 600 other native, high-value hardwood trees, such as red oak, sugar maple, yellow-poplar, black walnut, and white oak, may also be included in the planting mix.

Reintroducing the American chestnut tree in the reforestation effort significantly improves the survival and growth rate of the other high-value hardwood trees and also enhances ancillary environmental benefits of properly reclaimed forests, such as increased carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, reduced runoff, erosion, sedimentation, and downstream flooding.

Then-President and CEO of The American Chestnut Foundation Marshal Case said that the return of the chestnut will provide a boost to an economy that was decimated by the loss of the American chestnut in the early part of the 20th century.

"Our partnership with OSM comes down to three simple things: people, wildlife and science," said Case. "The American



THE
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FOUNDATION®

chestnut is truly a tree of hope for each of these.”

The American Chestnut Foundation is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization with more than 6,000 members nationwide and chapters in 17 states. It is headquartered in Bennington, Vermont, and has research facilities in Meadowview, Virginia, and a regional office in Asheville, North Carolina.

OSM Employee Receives Service to America Medal

September 2009

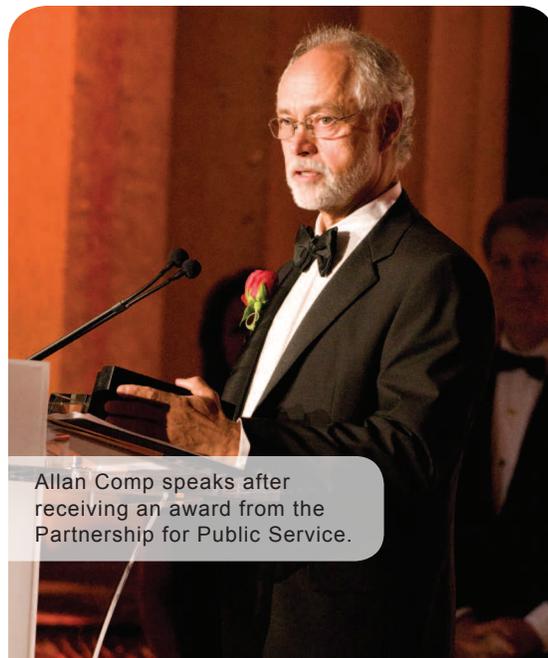
The Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit organization, awarded one of its 2009 Service to America Medals to OSM’s Dr. T. Allan Comp for his work with volunteers who address environmental and economic issues in coal-producing states.

Comp founded and coordinates the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team (ACCWT) and the Western Hardrock Watershed Team (WHWT), which are part of a joint initiative between OSM and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). The ACCWT serves communities in Alabama, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, while the WHWT operates in Colorado and New Mexico.

Each team member works in a host community to recruit volunteers to monitor water quality, educate the public about coal country watershed issues, and perform other watershed reclamation efforts. Since ACCWT began its work in 2002, OSM/VISTA workers have recruited volunteers who have logged more than 122,000 volunteer hours. The WHWT, founded in 2007, has enlisted volunteers who have logged more than 4,000 hours.

The Partnership for Public Service awards eight medals based on recipients’ significant contributions to the country. Honorees are peer nominated and selected for their commitment and innovation as well as the impact of their work in addressing the needs of the Nation.

Dr. Comp’s award, the Environment Medal, was given in recognition of his coordination of efforts to address mining-related environmental problems in Appalachian and Western watersheds.



Allan Comp speaks after receiving an award from the Partnership for Public Service.