



OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING
PITTSBURGH FIELD DIVISION
NEWSLETTER
April 2004



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**MARYLAND AWARDED \$1.5 MILLION
TO RECLAIM DANGEROUS ABANDONED MINE LANDS**

Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced that the Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining has awarded Maryland's annual \$1.5 million grant to help reclaim dangerous abandoned mine lands.

Maryland's grant will be used to reclaim dangerous high-priority Abandoned Mine Land (AML) sites. High priority AML problems are those that threaten public health and safety and could cause substantial physical harm to persons or property, and to which people are currently exposed. They include clogged streams and stream lands, dangerous highwalls, impoundments, piles, embankments and slides, hazardous or explosive gases, hazardous water bodies, underground mine fires, surface burning, portals and vertical openings, subsidence and polluted drinking water.

The Office of Surface Mining (OSM) collects fees on current coal mining to fund reclamation of coal mine sites abandoned before 1977. However, OSM's authority to collect the fee is scheduled to expire September 30. President Bush has proposed legislation to continue the program and accelerate the rate of reclamation for the most dangerous sites and get more Americans out of danger sooner.

Today, only 52 percent of the funds the Department of the Interior disburses under the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program actually go to high-priority coal mine reclamations. The Administration's proposal would direct more funds to where problems remain and eliminate all significant health and safety problems within 25 years. The same job would take almost 50 years if the current system were continued.

"The Abandoned Mine Land program has made thousands of Americans living in the coalfields safer, but the job is not finished," said Norton. "Even after 25 years of extraordinary national effort, we still have almost \$3 billion worth of high-priority hazards to health and safety waiting to be cleaned up. The

President's proposed legislation will let us get serious about finishing this job."

In Maryland, about \$14 million worth of high-priority problems remain. OSM estimated last year that more than 30,950 Maryland residents are living less than a mile from a dangerous abandoned mine site.

Under the Administration's legislation, Maryland would receive an additional \$500,000 annually. That would raise Maryland's share of cleanup funds from \$1.5 million yearly to \$2 million, a 33 percent increase. Total funding would amount to about \$18 million over the next 22 years.

Sen. Arlen Specter (PA) has introduced the Administration's proposal as S. 2049 and Rep. John Peterson (PA) has introduced the legislation in the House as H.R. 3778.

"The grant we've just awarded will give Maryland's reclamation program a lot of what it needs to continue working on this enormous problem," said Norton. "But we aren't yet doing the best we can do. With the President's proposed legislation, we can put our money where the worst problems are, better protect the people of Maryland, and eliminate these unnecessary dangers to life and limb 22 years sooner."

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MARYLAND PROGRAM AMENDMENT APPROVED

In the *Federal Register* dated March 11, 2004, OSM approved a program amendment for Maryland. The amendment includes changes to the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) to revise four program areas:

1. Augering (COMAR, 26.20.03.07, A. and B.) – This change was prompted by a recommendation contained in the EY2000 OSM Maryland Permit Findings topical study.

The revision makes Maryland regulations consistent with 30CFR785.20(c) by requiring a written finding before augering operations may be conducted.

- 2. Lands Eligible for Remining (COMAR 26.20.03.11, A., B., (1), (2), C., and D.) – This change was prompted by a recommendation contained in the EY2001 Maryland Remining topical study. The revision makes Maryland regulations consistent with 30CFR785.25, which requires certain information regarding potential environmental and safety problems be present in permit applications that include lands eligible for remining.
- 3. Required Written Findings, (COMAR 26.20.05.01, A., B., C., L., (1), (2), and (3)) - This change was prompted by a recommendation contained in the EY2001 Maryland Remining topical study. The revision makes Maryland regulations consistent with 30CFR773.15, which requires documented written findings in twelve program areas.
- 4. Topsoil Handling (COMAR 26.20.25.02 D.) – This proposed revision was made to mirror 30CFR 816.22(d)(4), which requires nutrients and soil amendments to establish vegetative cover. The proposed wording of COMAR is identical to 30CFR.

Please contact Jeff Smith at (412) 937-2827, if you would like further information.

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COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT AWARDED TO CLAY VALLEY FOUNDATION

On March 18, 2004, OSM awarded \$113,000.00 to Clay Valley Foundation to install a soil-bentonite slurry wall downstream of a pond and upstream of a coal refuse pile. The slurry wall will create a low permeability barrier that will significantly reduce the flow of water from the impoundment into the coal refuse and eliminate the negative impact on the Black Fork of Moxahala Creek. The project goal is to remove 100 percent of acid load flowing into the Black Fork. The total cost of this project is \$1,375,975.00. The funding sources for this project are the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mineral Resources Management, 319 Clean Water Act, Moxahala Watershed Restoration Commission, and the Clay Valley Foundation.



AMD seeping through the pile and coming out at the toe of the pile.



AMD entering a tributary to the Black Fork of Moxahala Creek

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MID-ATLANTIC WATER POLLUTION BIOLOGY WORKSHOP

Max Luehrs, of the Columbus Office, attended the Mid-Atlantic Water Pollution Biology Workshop at Cacapon State Park in Berkley Springs West Virginia in March 2004. While there, he presented a poster entitled "A Report on the Cumulative Off-Site Impacts from a Large Area Mine in Southeast Ohio."



OSM wrote the report in the 2000. It was compiled from a combination of data from the Ohio EPA and the Central Ohio Coal Company. The data included water quality data from 1980 through 1983 and from 1987 and 1999. Also included were the results from biological monitoring by the Ohio EPA in 1987 and 1999. The water quality data showed that sulfate and conductivity had increased at the monitoring points on Rannells Creek and Collins Fork from 1980 to 1999. Mining in the area began in the 1950's and ceased in 1994 with the shutdown of the "Big Muskie," the world's largest dragline ever built. In spite of the fact that mining and reclamation activities were ongoing during much of the study period, and that sulfates and conductivity increased, the fish community showed marked improvement in both streams from 1987 to 1999. The macroinvertebrate community index (ICI) remained unchanged and was at or near attainment status for warm water fisheries. However, normally common mayfly taxa were noticeably absent. The Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (QHEI) showed both streams with impaired habitat due primarily to sedimentation. There was only a slight improvement from 1987 to 1999. However, overall the results were encouraging. The streams appear to be improving over time, and are far from devastated.

For copies of the report or further information contact Max Luehrs at 614-416-2238 extension 110, or e-mail at mluehrs@osmre.gov.

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NEW TYPE OF RETAINING WALL CONSTRUCTED TO ABATE COAL MINING RELATED LANDSLIDE

A new technique for retention of a landslide in Hazard, Kentucky has been completed. It uses steel galvanized guardrail and steel rail piling in combination to implement the final phase of this emergency abatement project. Phase I design has been in place for over six months for protection of a house and was provided by in-ground steel rails for temporary stabilization. The final design eliminated the need for a reinforced concrete wall, which represents a substantial savings to the Office of Surface Mining. This final project design was a long-term solution for stabilizing a slide that had penetrated under a house affected by mine drainage and spoil from an old abandoned surface and underground mining operation conducted in the 1920's.

The newly developed design utilized a combination of steel rails with galvanized steel guardrail for retention panels. This technique is generally valid for walls less than 10 feet in height with granular backfill and with a footer that can be placed on shallow soils or on bedrock. The landslide below the wall was excavated to prevent any further encroachment on a state highway that had also been affected by the original slide. The combination of guardrail and steel rail piling allowed a savings of 50 percent of the cost of a comparable reinforced concrete retaining wall. These walls are planned as a standard design in the future for similar height structures.

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A TECHNICAL INTERACTIVE FORUM

Since May of 1994, OSM has taken an active role in encouraging and promoting technological advances, research, and technology transfer related to the placement of Coal Combustion By-products (CCBs) at mine sites. As a part of OSM's ongoing efforts related to CCBs, OSM and the Pennsylvania DEP, Bureau of Mines and Reclamation, are hosting a forum on state regulation of CCB placement at mine sites May 4-6, 2004, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. For more information, contact Kimery Vories at 618-463-6463, ext. 103, or visit this website: <http://www.mcrcc.osmre.gov/ccb/>.

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