



OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING  
PITTSBURGH FIELD DIVISION  
NEWSLETTER  
July 2004



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**OHIO AWARDED \$8.3 MILLION  
TO RECLAIM DANGEROUS ABANDONED MINE LANDS**

The Interior Department's Office of Surface Mining (OSM) has awarded Ohio's annual \$8,326,099 grant to help reclaim dangerous abandoned mine lands (AML). OSM estimated last year that 169,198 Ohioans are living less than a mile from a dangerous abandoned mine site. Ohio has about \$109.8 million worth of unreclaimed high-priority AML problems.

High-priority AML problems threaten public health and safety and could cause substantial physical harm to persons or property. 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.

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 on September 30. President Bush has proposed legislation that would continue the program and accelerate the rate of reclamation for the most dangerous sites.

Today only 52 percent of the funds OSM disburses under the 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.

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.

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**ADVANCED INTEGRATION OF GEOSPATIAL  
TECHNOLOGIES IN MINING AND RECLAMATION**

OSM is jointly sponsoring a geospatial conference along with the Interstate Mining Compact Commission (IMCC), the Western Interstate Energy Board (WIEB), and the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs (NAAML). The conference will be held in Atlanta, Georgia at the Renaissance - Waverly Hotel, December 7-9, 2004.

The conference provides an opportunity for industry, academician, and regulatory practitioners of geospatial techniques to exchange ideas on the application of this technology to SMCRA-related issues.

The conference is open to all Academic, Federal, and State regulatory and coal industry personnel using geospatial techniques in their day-to-day jobs. The conference will include sessions on GIS, GPS, Remote Sensing, Electronic Permitting and Mobile Computing. Space is available for technical presentations, posters, vendors, and exhibits.

For more information, see the website at <http://www.tips.osmre.gov/GeoSpatial/GeospatialConference2004.htm>.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Bill Winters at: [bwinters@osmre.gov](mailto:bwinters@osmre.gov), or by phone at 412-937-2105.

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**OSM/ARCC REFORESTATION INITIATIVE**

On May 25, 2004, the first joint State and OSM Reforestation Initiative Core Team meeting was held in Charleston, West Virginia.

Representatives from the States of Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia met with their OSM counterparts

over a two-day period to discuss the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI).

The initiative is a cooperative effort between the various states and OSM along with partners in industry, environmental organizations, academia, and the public to plant more trees on reclaimed coal mined lands in Appalachia.

The Initiative stresses the establishment and implementation of a Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA) program that involves planting trees using practices such as loose grading creating a suitable rooting medium for optimum tree growth, planting two types of trees, using native and non-competitive ground covers and using proper tree-planting techniques.



From left to right: Mike Hiscar, OSM; Jeff Emmons, OH; Ike Isaacson, OSM; Nevin Strock, PA; Mike Garner, MD; and Pete Hartman, OSM

During the meeting, State representatives selected Paul Rothman of Kentucky and Scott Eggerud of West Virginia as state co-chairs of the Reforestation Core Team.

Future plans for the ARRI include:

- The signing of a Statement of Mutual Intent
- Publication of a pamphlet outlining the Reforestation Initiative
- Developing a Reforestation Training course
- Developing additional partnerships for the purpose of planting more trees while overcoming technical, regulatory, and cultural barriers

If you'd like information on the ARRI, please contact one of the following OSM or state representatives:

Maryland:  
Mike Garner – MDE (301) 689-6764; X317  
Pete Hartman – OSM (412) 937-2905

Ohio:  
Jeff Emmons – DNR (740) 439-9079  
Mike Hiscar – OSM (614) 416-2238; X108

Pennsylvania:  
Nevin Strock – DEP (717) 783-8845  
Ike Isaacson – OSM (814) 533-4398

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**WATERSHED ASSOCIATION AND COAL COMPANY  
INSTALL INFILTRATION DITCHES**

The Braddock Run Watershed Association, in partnership with United Energy Coal Company, the Maryland Bureau of Mines, and the USDA/NRCS, recently installed Infiltration ditches and planted trees on a backfilled surface mine in Allegany County, Maryland. The project was carried out with the support and encouragement of the landowner, Will Jenkins.

The project involved the installation of what are normally called "ripper ditches" on a 7-acre backfilled and revegetated portion of the surface mine. The ditches were cut approximately 2-3 feet deep using a dozer ripper blade. Each trench was cut along the contour in a parallel fashion and approximately 10 to 30 feet apart. Pine trees were planted in the ripped portions of the ditches and in the area between the ditches.

In the fall, an additional 35 acres of reclaimed land will have trenches installed and trees planted. The Braddock Run Watershed Association undertook the infiltration trench project as a means of reducing runoff in the watershed and thereby possibly reducing flooding in downstream areas such as Braddock Run.

The trees will further enhance the watershed project by providing future forest cover. The trenches have a secondary benefit of providing a good location for tree planting due to less vegetative competition and no compaction.

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### LITTLE TOBY CREEK WATERSHED NEWS

Little Toby Creek is one of seven major tributaries to the Clarion River in Elk and Jefferson Counties of Pennsylvania. The Clarion River is designated a National Wild and Scenic River. There are 23 miles of streams within the boundaries of the 126 square mile Little Toby Creek watershed. The watershed has been extensively surface and underground mined for coal, oil and natural gas since the 1800's. Limited surface mining activities continue today. This legacy of mining severely impacted a large portion of the watershed and its streams.

For the last 30 years, the Toby Creek Watershed Association has been actively working to restore Little Toby Creek to a recreational trout fishery. Significant progress has been made over the last 15 years through the installation of numerous AMD treatment systems. Systems range from passive aerobic wetlands, and vertical flow ponds, to chemical treatment, to a plant that grinds up limestone and adds it to the AMD to neutralize acidity and precipitate iron and aluminum.



The success of Toby Creek Watershed Association in meeting its goals for cleaning up Little Toby Creek has in great part depended on its success in creating a strong partnership of Pennsylvania and Federal agencies, local organizations, foundations, industries, and volunteer participants. Major partners include the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), which owns and operates the active treatment plants, and has provided funding for passive treatment projects; the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which has installed several large passive treatment systems; and OSM, which has provided assistance in several projects under its Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program (WCAP). Water quality in several stream segments has improved enough to allow trout-stocking activities.

Recently, PADEP through its Growing Greener program, provided 1.3 million dollars to the watershed association to construct a chemical treatment plant for a 300gpm net alkaline, low iron, AMD discharge from the abandoned Blue Valley underground mine. OSM added \$150,000 through the WCAP.



The interesting part of this project is that the treated water will be suitable (temperature and pH) for use in a trout hatchery, to be constructed using state funds, under direction of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boating Commission (PFBC). The hatchery will use the treated mine water in a re-circulating system, which will also collect the solid wastes for disposal, thereby avoiding a growing problem with trout hatcheries, which use large amounts of water that is discharged directly into streams laden with nutrients. The PFBC anticipates raising 400,000 half-pound trout a year for release into segments of Little Toby Creek, and surrounding suitable streams.

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### OHIO'S MONDAY CREEK GETS \$125,000 FOR ACID CLEANUP

OSM has granted \$125,000 to Rural Action, Inc., an Ohio watershed group, to help fund the cleanup of Monday Creek in Perry County in the Wayne National Forest.

The Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative makes funds available through cooperative agreements to not-for-profit organizations, especially small watershed groups, that undertake local acid mine drainage (AMD) reclamation projects. Applicants must have other partners, contributing either funding or in-kind services needed to complete the project.

Rural Action, Inc., based in Athens, Ohio, will use the grant at the Jobs Hollow Reclamation Project, where a lime kiln dust doser will be installed to treat the

approximately 10.5 tons of acidity per year coming from Jobs Hollow. Once fully operational, the doser will treat approximately 8.5 miles of Monday Creek.

Other partners involved in the cleanup are the U S Forest Service, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mineral Resources Management, and the Monday Creek Restoration Project. Total estimated cost of the project is \$324,500.

More than 7500 miles of streams in Appalachia are impacted by acid mine drainage. Impacted streams typically have low pH levels and contain high concentrations of iron, manganese, and other metals. These impacts render the streams incapable of supporting aquatic life.

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### OSM COMPLETES TOPICAL STUDIES

#### MARYLAND

The Pittsburgh Field Division (PFD) recently completed a topical study in Maryland entitled Abandoned Mine Lands Information System.

The study reviewed Maryland's processes for adding, updating, and maintaining information in OSM's Abandoned Mine Land Inventory System (AMLIS) to ensure conformance with OSM Directive AML-1 and associated law, rules, policy, and procedure. OSM reviewed accuracy, conformance with directive requirements, and timeliness of data entry.

The study found that Maryland generally follows the requirements found in OSM Directive AML-1 for making entries, updating, and maintaining the AMLIS system. Cost estimates are generally accurate and have a logical basis, though the format of the AMLIS system lends itself to inherent problems involving distribution of funds, which is outside Maryland's control. Areas that need further attention include:

- Ensuring that problem areas are entered under the correct AMLIS Program
- Ensuring that priority documentation form records are maintained for each problem
- Using separate program PADS for multi-program funded problem areas
- Ensuring that non-OSM program funding sources are recorded separately
- Ensuring Problem Areas are not duplicated among programs
- Ensuring that updates are entered in a timely manner

Maryland is in the process of updating the entire inventory database included in AMLIS. This update will include taking advantage of technological advancements through use of geographic positioning systems (GPS) and the global information system (GIS), as well as gathering more detailed data on existing problem areas to better reflect an accurate inventory. When complete, the updated files will be entered into AMLIS. The expectation for completion of this effort is eight months to one year.

If you would like a copy of the report, please contact Jeff Smith at 412-937-2827 or [jasmith@osmre.gov](mailto:jasmith@osmre.gov).

#### OHIO

#### Processing of Water Supply Complaints

OSM conducted a review of the timeliness of the Ohio Division of Mineral Resources Management's (DMRM) response to water supply complaints. The study considered the effectiveness of DMRM's changes to the complaint process in providing timely resolution to complainants' concerns.

OSM identified 56 water supply complaints related to coal mining that Ohio logged between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2003. We met with the field hydrologists responsible for conducting and reporting on the complaint investigations. We reviewed 47 of the 56 complaint files maintained by the two field hydrologists to determine the status of the complaint, the investigation time, and the total time from receipt of the complaint until final resolution. We also reviewed the files for documentation that citizens were provided their rights to informal review and to maintain confidentiality. The reviewers made no attempt to evaluate the conclusions reached by DMRM's investigation.

OSM's review concluded that DMRM has significantly improved on the timeliness and conclusiveness of water supply complaint investigations and final reports. In comparison, OSM found in a 1998 report that Ohio had 30 unresolved water supply complaints with an average age of 400 days. For the complaints received in 2002 and 2003, Ohio provided final responses in an average of 74 days with seven complaints pending final resolution. Program managers acknowledge needed improvements in monitoring of investigations and review of final reports. They have developed and proposed plans to make these improvements. File documentation of informing citizens of their rights to confidentiality and informal review has improved.

Ownership and Control and Use of OSM's Applicant Violator System (AVS)

The purpose of this review was to determine how effectively DMRM consults with OSM's AVS office prior to issuing a permit to ensure that they only issue permits to those eligible in accordance with their laws and regulations and the MOU between Ohio and OSM.

Please send your suggestions for oversight topics to:

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3 Parkway Center  
Pittsburgh, PA 15220  
[grieger@osmre.gov](mailto:grieger@osmre.gov)

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OSM met with two members of DMRM's staff who are responsible for permits to obtain an understanding of their process. We reviewed a sample of DMRM's files of all permits, adjacent areas, and renewals issued since January 1, 2003, for compliance with the laws and regulations.

OSM's review found that:

- o DMRM is effectively consulting with OSM's AVS office prior to issuing permits to ensure that they only issue permits to those eligible.
- o DMRM could improve their documentation of their AVS checks to verify ownership and control information and to ensure that there are no outstanding violations.
- o To ensure that unabated violations and bond forfeitures are entered into the AVS, DMRM needs to revise their process. They need a method of tracking these to ensure that they are sent to the person responsible for entering them in the AVS.

For a copy of either of these reports, please call the Columbus office at 614-416-2238.

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**CALL FOR INPUT ON ANNUAL OVERSIGHT PERFORMANCE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN OSM AND MARYLAND, OHIO, AND PENNSYLVANIA**

OSM and the state regulatory authorities in Maryland, Ohio, and Pennsylvania will be developing annual oversight performance agreements over the next few weeks. The annual performance agreements specify OSM oversight, inspection, and assistance activities that may be beneficial in each state.

In a continuing effort to involve the public, OSM is soliciting comments on possible topics for these three annual Performance Agreements. Topics may include evaluation, review, and possible improvement to the program. Suggestions are requested for both the Title V (current mining) and Title IV (abandoned mine reclamation) programs in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.