



Alabama Department of Labor

News Release

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ADOL Receives Award for Abandoned Mine Reclamation Project

The Alabama Department of Labor's Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Program was recently recognized during a national conference for a project that not only improved a dangerous old mining site, but also enhanced the lives of those in neighboring communities.

The program won the 2013 Mid-Continent Region AML Reclamation Award, presented by the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs (NAAML), for its work on the Mulga Gob Fire Project. The project was selected from a group of six states in the region. It marks the first time ADOL has submitted a nomination to the NAAML for consideration.

According to State Mine Land Reclamation Supervisor Chuck Williams, a gob pile is made up of underground mine refuse. "There's a lot of dirt and rock and mixture of earth that is a byproduct of coal mining that ends up being very ignitable." A gob fire results when a gob pile ignites, which can burn for a very long time if not dealt with properly.

Abandoned since 1977, the Mulga gob site was 80 to 100 feet deep in places and burned for years before the project began on Jan. 2, 2007 and lasted through March 22, 2010. The burning area covered an estimated 32 acres; however, a total of approximately 52 acres were required to reclaim the site, including borrow and disposal areas. It is estimated that the gob pile initially contained approximately 2.9 million cubic yards of coal mining refuse material.

ADOL partnered with Drummond Coal Company who initially cleared the site, and through a Cooperative Agreement with the Walker County Soil & Water Conservation District Board (WCB) who extinguished the fire, graded the site and stabilized it with vegetation. ADOL also partnered with the WCB, Black Warrior Clean Water Partnership, and the Dora High School FFA Chapter this past spring to plant trees on the borrow areas.

The reclamation work took 39 months to accomplish at a total cost of \$2.731 million which was made available to ADOL through a federal AML grant. Although the construction was

completed in 2010, ADOL has monitored the site for the last three years to ensure long-term success.

A major criteria used in grading the project was how it eliminated an extreme danger to public health and safety, and helped the community at large.

“Extinguishing this burning gob pile has benefited numerous citizens of this area of Jefferson County,” said Williams, who noted that since the project’s completion the dense smoke which was previously prevalent is no longer a major health or traffic concern. The threat of fire to nearby residences and the severe danger to hunters, ATV enthusiasts and others who frequent the site have also been eliminated. Additionally, residents in nearby communities are once again able to go outside without fear of experiencing smoke-related breathing issues.

Held from Sept. 22-25 in Daniels, W. Va., the 35th annual NAAML P conference presented five different awards that were voted on by AML Programs in 28 states and three Native American tribes. According to NAAML P, the objective of the awards is to publically recognize “those responsible for the nation's most outstanding achievement in land reclamation and to encourage the exchange and transfer of successful reclamation technology.”

Representing ADOL at the conference were Williams, Jeff Butler and Charles Whitson.

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Members of the media seeking more information should contact Public Information Specialist Will Whatley at (334) 353-1548.