



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE LAND RECLAMATIONISTS

<http://www.crc.siu.edu/naslr.htm>

January 2009

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Floyd Williams
**North Carolina Department
of Environment & Natural Resources**

I would like to again extend my thanks to all the folks from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that had a part in putting together an outstanding 2008 NASLR Annual Conference that was held at the Seven Springs Mountain Resort.

Bruce Ragon and The Great State of Tennessee are hosting the 37th Annual Conference which will be held at the Park Vista Hotel in Gatlinburg on September 20th through the 23rd, 2009. Thanks to Bruce for his hard work in getting things rolling for the 2009 Conference. If you can help with speakers, please let Bruce know and have abstracts submitted by May 1, 2009.

During the business meeting at the September 2009 Conference we discussed the issue of updating the CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS AND POLICES OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE LAND RECLAMATIONISTS. The last amendment was made in December of 1993. It is apparent that some fine tuning of document may be needed so please print a copy from the web page and make notes of any changes you would like to see and have your comments ready to be discussed at the next meeting.

We will also continue to work on the Reclamation Certification Program. Thanks to Joe Hager and others for your hard work related to the Certification Program.

As we all know, most, if not all States are facing difficult budget times which may present a problem regarding attendance at the upcoming Annual Meeting. If any of the NASLR officers can write a letter to whomever or make a phone call to explain how important it is to have each member state represented at the Annual Meeting, please let us know. It is very important for each member state to stay active in NASLR, and we will continue to work on getting more states to become members.

I would like to give special thanks to Michael Smith, Vice President, for his outstanding work and Tammy Cree for her help. Thanks also go to all NASLR Officers, the Executive Committee and other members for all you do for NASLR.

I look forward to seeing you at the 37th Annual Conference in Gatlinburg and hope all of you have a great 2009.

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2009 NASLR ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE

Now that the New Year holiday has passed, it is time to begin making plans to attend NASLR's annual meeting.

This year's meeting will be held September 20th – 23rd at the Park Vista Hotel in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Set well off the main street on top of a finger ridge, the hotel offers spectacular views of both the Great Smokey Mountains National Park (including Mount LeConte) and downtown Gatlinburg. Free trolleys run from the hotel (at about 15 minute intervals) to park access points, all parts of Gatlinburg, and even into nearby Pigeon Forge, which boasts some of the finest outlet shopping around.

On-site registration will begin Sunday afternoon. Technical sessions are planned for Monday and half a day Tuesday with the remainder of Tuesday reserved for the annual business meeting and awards banquet. A field trip to view local mining operations is scheduled for Wednesday.

So, begin your planning now. Additional details, including the e-address of an informational website, will be forthcoming in the very near future. In the interim, if you have questions, you may contact Bruce Ragon at bruce.ragon@state.tn.us or (865) 594-5547.

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NASLR Reclamation Certification Process Moving Forward

The period to comment on the pending Certification Program has been extended for ninety days to allow all interested parties the opportunity to review the draft procedure. Thus far, comments have not addressed some of the key components needed to make this program successful.

Reclamationists use many specialized or job specific skills, but also share general skills and knowledge that many of us employ. In order for this certification to be meaningful we must identify what abilities, training, and work experience distinguish us as Reclamation Specialists.

In order for the committee to move forward with the task at hand, we need for membership from all states to provide insight in developing this program. Please review the "DRAFT" proposal attached as the final page of this newsletter and forward your comments to Joseph.E.Hager@wv.gov.

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2008 Conference Summary

Michael Smith
Vice President

The 36th annual NASLR conference, held at Seven Springs Mountain Resort in Southwestern Pennsylvania was a great success with many excellent technical presentations and a well-attended field trip. Keynote Speaker PA DEP Deputy Secretary for Mineral Resources Management, Scott Roberts, gave a James Michener-like history of the Pennsylvania Laurel Highlands, starting with George Washington and the French and Indian wars, proceeding through coal mining and the industrial revolution, and culminating with the dramatic rescue of 9 underground miners at Quecreek and the 9-11 crash of Flight 93. Consol, Inc. received the coal reclamation award for their statewide revegetation efforts in Illinois. Two sites tied for the non-coal reclamation award: Bayer Construction Company, Inc. for the Moore Limestone Quarry in Kansas and Hanson Material Services for the Nokomis Quarry in Illinois. Rocky Parsons from West Virginia was named the NASLR Reclamationist of the Year. Details on the 2008 awards are posted on the NASLR web site at <http://www.crc.siu.edu/naslr.htm>.

Participation was down somewhat due to very tight state budgets. Seventy-two registrants from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Florida, Arkansas, Kansas, and Tennessee participated in the conference, while our friends from especially hard-hit New York State sent in an excellent presentation on bonding via DVD. For a CD of all the presentations given at the conference, contact conference coordinator Mike Smith at michaesmit@state.pa.us. And don't forget to block out September 20-23 for the 2009 conference in Gatlinburg, TN.

Being an Effective Reclamation Inspector: Notes from the Field

Dean Spindler
Illinois Office of Mines and Minerals

Occasionally I feel inspired to write an article, so here goes. Having trained a few reclamation inspectors over the years, including a few who went on to become heads of reclamation divisions, I thought I might throw out some "pearls of wisdom" or more accurately, lessons learned from my mistakes as an inspector.

When I first started, one thing we did each year was to spend a week with another inspector at their mines. This was done for two reasons. The first was to maybe learn how other mines were doing something different, hopefully better, and the second was to have a set of fresh eyes out there as a method of internal oversight to see if a problem was being overlooked. Even with a staff of only 10 for several hundred mines and quarries, it was well worth the effort.

For those coal states that have access to training classes with opportunities for their staff to visit mines in other states, this is a big benefit from SMCRA. I still recommend the instate oversight as well.

Last year, at our annual conference in Pennsylvania, I visited with the reclamation award winner from Consol who worked out of the Pittsburg office. I didn't recognize him, but he remembered me from years ago when he was a mine superintendent in Illinois and I was the inspector. My response was that this was probably a good thing because I mostly remembered superintendents at problem mines where my only meetings with them were a last resort when a problem wasn't being fixed by one of their staff. I have changed my philosophy about meeting mine superintendents since then. The mine superintendent is where the buck stops locally. Their responsibility is to get it mined, make production, make it safe, get along with the neighbors, get it reclaimed, and also make money for the company.

I have found it very productive to meet the superintendant early and talk about our respective roles. Our role is to enforce the regulations AND to help them solve problems to prevent a non compliance IF they are interested in our assistance. Good communication can save problems and expense for the operation and save a lot of headaches for the inspector. So many times I have dealt solely with a reclamation foreman or environmental staff who was gun shy of bringing issues to the superintendent. Shoot the messenger. Problems festered until the problem became serious. Most superintendents are too busy to meet with inspectors on a regular basis. Ask them to delegate some real authority to the person you are to deal with or at least understand their staff needn't be gun shy.

A good superintendent, just like a good inspector will be good to his word. Make sure he understands hiding problems, half truths, or an obvious abuse of "Gee, I didn't realize I couldn't do that" will change that professional relationship.

Every inspector has their stories. Each one will have their site from hell and their dream mine. The bad ones will burn an inspector out. The good ones are almost easy to forget they are out there, because if an issue comes up they will call you to help solve or prevent it. I have seen mines go from the former to the latter, because of that one personnel change, the

superintendent. Those same sites went from reclamation that was just OK to outstanding. In those cases reclamation became another source of professional pride for the superintendent and got him a real plus from his bosses, as well. Well, my deadhead time between the site and the office is over. See you at the annual conference in Gatlinburg.

STATE NEWS/REPORTS

ARKANSAS

Jim Stephens

Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality

'Tis a new year in Arkansas and the members of the state legislature have started their struggle to balance the budget with decreasing revenue and state-wide program needs for more money. Two voter approved initiatives for yearly legislative sessions and a lottery to support education will need to be translated into workable legislation. We will probably not have any department initiated reclamation related bills be considered this year.

Those of you that have been associated with NASLR for a while should remember my trials and tribulations with in-stream gravel mining in Crooked Creek located in north-central Arkansas. I am happy to report that we have enjoyed a two-year suspension of all of the Crooked Creek in-stream permits due to the listing of Crooked Creek on the State's 303(d) list as being impaired by gravel mining. The mine operators have cooperated with the suspensions and we have not received a single complaint from the area. The suspensions could be lifted in a couple of years if the water quality data shows improvement and we will be looking hard at any requests to reinstate the in-stream permits.

ADEQ's Mining Division continues to do everything we can to enforce the state's reclamation laws. We currently have a full staff for the first time in over six years. We are working to complete mine inspections and initiate enforcement as necessary at coal mines, non-coal mines, and quarries along with the reclamation of abandoned coal mines.

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ILLINOIS

Dean Spindler

Office of Mines and Minerals

Coal

Underground coal mining applications are still keeping us busy with a remaining backlog from last year. We are finding that most are being contested by the Sierra Club and others. This lengthens the review and hearing process considerably. Never enough staff when you really need them. Subsidence

from longwall mining, groundwater and wildlife are the key controversial issues. It was a great year for crops on reclaimed prime farmland. We had lots of 200 bu/ac corn and 50 bu/ac soybeans. As coal production shifts underground, acres at surface mines are being released faster than new acres being mined.

Non Coal

If national economic stimulus funds are issued, the aggregate industry will probably gear up production. The industry's education committee will be working with us on a state fair exhibit about the materials that go into an interstate highway. Each year we rotate in a new rock or mineral produced in the state and what it is used for.

The Interstate Mining Compact Committee produced a really nice mineral educational calendar complete with activities.

The next newsletter will feature articles from Alaska, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Deadline for copy to be received at the Coal Research Center office is March 30, 2009.



CALL FOR PAPERS

2009 ANNUAL MEETING

September 20 – 23, 2009

Gatlinburg, Tennessee

THEME: WATER ISSUES IN MINING AND RECLAMATION PROCESSES

The Planning Committee is soliciting the submission of abstracts for presentations to be made during the technical sessions of NASLR's annual meeting. Major areas of consideration include, but are not limited to:

- Surface and Groundwater Hydrologic Considerations
- Stream Relocation and Restoration
- Wetland Identification, Mitigation, and Creation
- Acid Mine Drainage Avoidance and Treatment
- Water Treatment Technologies and Advances
- Stormwater Management Techniques
- Land Forming and Vegetative Considerations in Restoring Hydrologic Balance
- Long Term Water Treatment and Monitoring Systems
- Protection and Re-establishment of Aquatic Biological Communities
- Effects of Soil Amendments on Water Quality

Other topics open for consideration can include:

- Enhancement of Post-Mining Natural Resource Value (i.e. Wildlife, Fisheries, etc.)
- Material Handling (i.e. End-Dump vs. Compaction, Slope Stability, etc.)
- Controlling Invasive Species
- Utilization of Native Plant Species
- Unique or Creative Reclamation Projects

Abstracts must be submitted by **May 1, 2009**. Please forward to:

Bruce Ragon
TN Dept. of Environment and Conservation
3711 Middlebrook Pike
Knoxville, TN 37921

-or-

bruce.ragon@state.tn.us

DRAFT PROPOSAL

NASLR RECLAMATION SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION PROCESS

An applicant should possess a minimum of five years of regulatory reclamation experience. An applicant should have three letters of recommendation from senior reclamation professionals; two of those references must include his or her immediate supervisor, and their program administrator. The third letter of recommendation should come from an actively certified Reclamation Specialist.

An applicant must successfully complete and provide documentation for a core group of approved technical training courses associated with accepted reclamation practices. (Recommend a minimum of 120 contact hours, or equivalent CEUs)

An applicant must successfully complete and provide documentation for a group of elective technical training courses associated with accepted reclamation practices. (Recommend a minimum of 80 contact hours, or equivalent CEUs)

NASLR could present a two day training/certification program in conjunction with the Annual NASLR Conference. The certification program should include a program fee, in addition to the Annual Conference fee, payable to NASLR.

One possible format for the training/certification program might be:

Day 1 could be held on Sunday preceding the NASLR conference or on Monday, independent of the general presentations. The former option would allow the course attendees to also participate in the NASLR presentations on Monday and the field trip on Tuesday. Topics common to all areas of reclamation practices would be presented during this portion of the training/certification program.

Day 2 of the certification process would be held on Wednesday afternoon after the Annual NASLR Conference has adjourned, when a general standardized examination is administered. Professional certification may be required to be renewed through NASLR after three years or more frequently based on membership recommendations. The renewal would be accomplished by providing documentation of participating in 24 contact hours of continuing education courses or by attending the Annual NASLR Conference.

Where do we proceed from here?

- Input is requested to identify comparable vocational or professional experience to satisfy the requirements to be eligible for certification.
- All NASLR members are requested to detail key elements related to their particular environmental discipline. The goal of this task is to identify common skills utilized by our membership. Examples of these skills might include but are not limited to basic engineering skills, soils and revegetation, surface/ground water hydrology, geology, spoil handling, and erosion prevention and sediment control, to list a few.

- Upon receipt of written input from the NASLR membership, the data will be compiled and distributed for review by the same.
- Once the common skills and abilities utilized by NASLR members have been identified; work can begin to develop continuing education core requirements.
- Secondary to the previous task, the elective core education requirements will be developed.
- Once continuing education criteria have been identified in conjunction with shared vocational skills by NASLR members, the certification test could be developed and administered.
- As the program is developed, a litmus test using members or member's direct reports could be used to evaluate the process.
- A tracking data base can be established for maintaining the certification process and archive.

As NASLR members will are being asked to provide written comments by March 1, 2009 in response to this draft proposal. Email comments to Joseph.E.Hager@WV.GOV