



NASLR

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE LAND RECLAMATIONISTS

<http://www.naslr.org>

Spring 2015

President's Message "Getting the Word Out"

Mike Smith

Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection

You may remember back to last year, when NASLR was wrestling with the issue of whether or not we should combine our annual conference with similar reclamation-oriented organizations. We considered combining forces with NAAML (National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs), ASMR (American Society for Mine Reclamation), and IMCC (Interstate Mining Compact Commission). The future of NASLR was questionable. But last September's annual meeting in New York went well and a spirit of optimism prevailed. The Commonwealth of Virginia stepped up to the plate and offered to host the 2015 conference. So we decided to remain independent for at least another year. Significantly, many good ideas were offered as to how we could get more states to join and pay their annual dues, increase participation in the annual meeting and newsletter, and build on the success of the NY conference.

Among the ideas, which are actively being supported by the executive committee, were to increase NASLR's visibility by having NASLR members attend the upcoming IMCC conference in Baltimore, the ASMR conference in Lexington, KY, and by having members of the newly formed Public Relations and Education (PRE) Committee pay visits to decision-makers in states with larger

mining programs. I want to thank PRE Committee members: Gina Bell from Arkansas, Derek Giebell from West Virginia, Jeff Meitrott from PA, Janet Yates from VA, and Committee Chairman Jennifer Keese from Alaska who have been diligently working on getting the word out about NASLR, our newsletter, reclamation awards, and scholarship. Our annual conference and field trip is one of the best deals going, and apparently also a fairly well-kept secret. With the PRE Committee's work, that's all about to change.

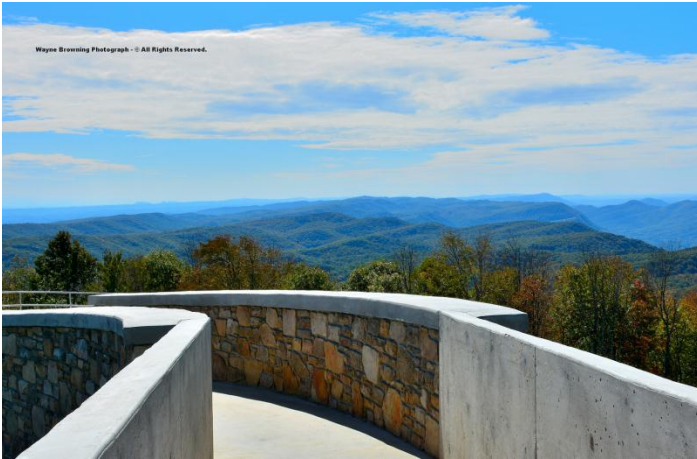
So please, join in the PRE Committee's efforts and spread the word about NASLR and talk up the upcoming conference at Wise, VA. The success of this year's conference will ultimately determine the direction and future success of NASLR.

43rd Annual NASLR Conference



Welcome to the Inn at Wise, our 2015 Conference location.

Registration for this year's conference in Wise, VA will be available soon on the NASLR website. We are also looking for speakers to present on any topic related to mining and reclamation. The conference dates are scheduled for September 13-16, 2015. Go to www.naslr.org/conference for details. For more information or to become a speaker at the conference, contact Janet Yates at (276) 523-8289 or janet.yates@dmme.virginia.gov.



High Knob Lookout in nearby Jefferson National Forest is a short drive from Wise, VA. More information on Wise and the surrounding area can be found at <http://www.visitwisecounty.com/>.

Awards and Scholarship Deadline

The deadline for the NASLR awards and scholarship submissions is July 1, 2015. The award categories include the NASLR Mined Land Reclamation Award for both coal and non-coal, the NASLR Outreach Award for an individual or group, the Dean Spindler Reclamationist of the Year Award for both regulatory and non-regulatory personnel, and the \$1,500 NASLR Educational Grant Award. The links to all the awards are at www.naslr.org/awards. On the individual award pages, you will find more information about the awards, downloadable applications, and submission information. Please submit applications electronically and keep emails to 5MB or less. If you are interested in being on the awards committee, we can use a few more members. As a

member of this committee, you will have the opportunity to review all award applications that you are not affiliated with and vote for the best in each category. Email Mike Smith at michaesmit@pa.gov with award applications or to become an award committee member.

Notes from the Field

*“On being a good inspector-
The generalist and getting the big picture.”*

Dean Spindler

Illinois Office of Mines & Minerals

Field inspectors come from a range of backgrounds. Most inspectors come from a background in the natural sciences, such as forestry, biology, agriculture, geology, and geography. Each of them comes with basic principles of science. Agencies hopefully will have their technical specialists review permits and assist the inspector with the more advanced field problems, but the inspector is the first line of decision making in the field. States come with a wide variety of statutes and regulations for the wide variety of minerals found around the country. This may include regulatory programs such as coal with hundreds of pages of regulations to other minerals whose regulations do little more than reference the generic language of their statute. Each of these comes with their own challenges for the inspector. Even after working with the SMCRA regulations for over 35 years I still run across a reg that I had forgotten about; or have to search to find some hidden standard. Most states will have a thorough checklist which reference very specific numerical standards or deadlines to meet to ensure their inspectors will cover all the field requirements. The programs with general regs will require a broader form of inspection to ensure the intent of the regulations are met.

In either case, it is critical that you understand the intent of the rule and the goal to be accomplished

in the reclamation process. To accomplish this, it is very important for the inspector to broaden their background to learn the fundamentals of every aspect of reclamation. For example, the inspector who comes from a background in forestry needs to learn the basics of: geology or geomorphology to understand the mineral and the overburden, the engineering to understand erosion and sediment control, the chemistry to understand the basics of water quality, and wildlife biology to understand what plants and animals might be involved at the site. They also must learn the principles of earth moving and the capabilities of the different types of equipment. A good example of this was a situation where an operator was way behind in his grading. To solve this, promises were made to move a given amount of spoil over a thousand feet in a specific time period. The equipment committed to this was one D8, one shift per day. An inspector's familiarity with the Cat Handbook quickly tells them this plan was unrealistic. Although agencies don't usually stipulate equipment, it was easy to reject the plan and secure additional commitments without waiting for the plan to fail.

In addition, the inspector must be able to look at both the mining and reclamation operations as an interrelated process. One thing I have noticed over the years is that inspectors can become so regimented in their focus on inspection parameters that they overlook the larger picture of the reclamation plan. Here are some examples of situations where this can occur. In surface mining if the operation starts carrying a pit wider than envisioned in the operation plan it is easy to end up with a final cut lake substantially larger than envisioned. This may not be a problem if the plan has sufficient flexibility built in. However in the case of high percentages of cropland obligation the land use change to water may not be permissible. A similar situation can occur where a pit is nearing its end and a subsoil stockpiling may need to be accelerated to ensure sufficient volume is available

to complete the reclamation. If the inspection focus is to ensure immediate compliance on the reclamation side of the pit (which may be in compliance), it would be easy to overlook the opportunity to ensure that the final reclamation plan could be achieved. Each of the above cases may also cause the site to be underbonded as well. Similar situations can occur when looking at specific slopes during reclamation of small areas and missing the circumstances where surrounding elevations will result in undesired slopes in adjacent areas or drainage directions which cannot be achieved.

One way to enhance your familiarity of the site as the inspector is to regularly view the most recent aerial photography and the approved reclamation plan. If you have access to a GIS layer of both then you are way ahead of many. Prior to GIS I used to put a copy of the reclamation plan and most recent aerial on the wall so it was committed to memory and easier to visualize when in the field.

State News/Reports

Restoration of Gin Creek and Stone Creek in Lee County, VA

*Joey O'Quinn
Virginia DMME*

The implementation of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) by the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME) and other watershed stakeholders has contributed to biological recovery of Gin Creek and Stone Creek in Lee County, VA. A 2.6 mile long segment of Gin Creek and a 3.3 mile long segment of Stone Creek (Powell River tributaries in Lee County) were listed as impaired on the 2002 303(d) list for violations of Virginia's general water quality standard. The sources of the impairments were a combination of impacts from abandoned mine lands and acid mine drainage (AMD). The following photograph, taken in 2001, shows an acidic mine discharge into a tributary of Stone Creek.



A TMDL for the watersheds was developed in 2006 that identified pollution reduction needs; and a TMDL implementation plan was cooperatively completed in 2008 that identified some of the best management practices needed to improve water quality. DMME, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), local coal companies, and local stakeholders worked together to develop the plan.

Since the segments were listed, over 230 acres of mined land have been reclaimed in the watersheds, and a successful AMD treatment project, using a passive wetland treatment system, was completed. The AMD project involved several partners including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), DMME, and Lee County, VA.

The following photograph shows the current status of the successful passive wetland treatment system.

Recently completed benthic assessments indicate that both Gin Creek and Stone Creek are fully supporting biological health and meet the state's general water quality standard. The state has recently removed the streams from Virginia's 303(d) list.

Where are we meeting next year?

We're looking for a host state for the 2016 NASLR Conference. If you would like to host the 2016 Conference and show off your great state, please email Mike Smith at michaesmit@pa.gov.

NASLR Newsletter Submission Form

Newsletter submissions are welcome anytime.

Author Name(s) and Title(s):

Author Agency/University/Affiliation:

Author Location:

Author contact information:

Are pictures, graphics, etc. attached? If so, how many?:

Article Title:

Article Body:

Note to Authors:

- 1) Please save this form as a doc file. If you submit another way (i.e., email body or a file other than this form), please save as plain text or doc.
- 2) Make sure you include all the information requested on the form.
- 3) The preferred form of pictures, graphs, charts, etc. is JPEG or PNG. Please attach these separately if possible. You can notate where you'd like them placed in your article.
- 4) Please keep the diversity of your audience in mind when writing about specific issues. Please define all acronyms upon first use in the article and think about other terms that may need to be defined.
- 5) Please proofread your article before submitting.
- 6) Your article may be edited for clarity and length.
- 7) Questions? Contact Jeff Meitrott at jmeitrott@pa.gov.

Send your submissions to:

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jmeitrott@pa.gov