



**NASLR**  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
STATE LAND RECLAMATIONISTS

**Winter 2021/2022**

<http://www.naslr.org>



## **“DEDICATED TO QUALITY LAND RECLAMATION”**

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# Carrying Forward!

## Farewell Message from the Outgoing President:

By Mike Haney

I'll begin this outgoing president's message with a grateful acknowledgment to everyone on the NASLR executive and officer boards. These people have given much of their spare time, effort, and talents to make this organization a great networking platform from which to share information, contacts, resources, and experiences related to the discipline of land reclamation and I am grateful for the journey thus far. I onboarded with NASLR in 2018 as a member of the public relations and education committee and have enjoyed every year since as I have had several career-enriching opportunities that have been a real blessing to me. Although my involvement as vice-president and then president have been markedly different in historical context due to pandemic conditions and limitations, NASLR has, along with myriad others these past two years, adjusted in real-time as best as we knew how to maintain the professional standards to which we have always aspired.

In addition to learning much about effective reclamation methods, streamlining bonding and bond-release processes, and trouble-shooting processes of administrating, planning, and enabling effective land reclamation, I learned a lot from this group about determination, teamwork, effective delegation, ingenuity, and perseverance. We continued and expanded upon our professional development hours awarded to conference participants despite doing so entirely by remote coordination and have hosted two consecutive highly successful annual conferences online. We have garnered more attention from members and have a freshly stocked roster of wonderful people on board to continue the work of maintaining NASLR at a high standard of quality and experience.

What's more, the internal discussions and efforts I have been privileged to be a part of continue to not only focus on maintaining a quality organization, but a

distinct focus of this group is to continue to improve our impact to members and expand our capabilities to help others. And we're all also really looking hopefully



toward an eventual end of the pandemic restrictions where we can again meet in person to share in the wonderful experiences of annual conferences and meetings. I can tell you all with absolute confidence the group of professionals involved at NASLR now will produce some impressive achievements such as updated and expanded newsletter content, a more user-friendly and relevant website experience, and an expanded repertoire of reclamation-specific topics and presentations that will continue to help us all do what we do better. Let me close by encouraging all who read this to plug in to the National Association of State Land Reclamationists this coming year. See what we have to offer. Help out and let students and professors know of our scholarship opportunities. Keep your colleagues in mind for nominations for reclamation awards and special recognition through our website and newsletter announcements and send us an email and reach out with your own success stories to share. And if you have an interest in joining us as a member of one of our committees, we would love to have you.

The deep gratitude, respect, and friendships I have from my experiences in NASLR are treasures I am happily carrying forward with me, so again – thank you for being a part of it all!

Sincerely, Mike Haney

# *Time to Rock!*

## **Welcoming Message from the Incoming President:**

**By Vishnu Srinivasaraghavan**

It's time for NASLR to get into HEAVY METAL (reclamation)!

We are living under unprecedented times where commodity prices and large operational decisions change within a few hours. No matter what the policy outlook may be, one thing is for certain: our need for mined metals will only continue to rise.

Clean energy technologies such as windmills, solar panels, and batteries all require mined metals and minerals to be built. Demand for these materials is expected to increase at least 6-fold over the next 30 years according to the International Energy Agency. Unless we start mining asteroids, these operations will have to be mined on Earth, which will require an increased focus on proper reclamation.

As a fairly new member of NASLR, I quickly discovered the vast knowledgebase and absolute dedication to innovation in reclamation among its professional members. What impressed me most was the comradery between all those who participate in this organization. Despite being separated by States, we are a common office working toward the same goals.

Therefore, the overall vision this year is to extend our office further West to include the States that currently or could potentially mine the metals and minerals that will build tomorrow's energy infrastructure. Operations in our western States face similar environmental and reclamation issues as our current docket of States. This presents a great opportunity for collaboration.

Instrumental to this effort will be our newly elected Vice-President, Scot May from Pennsylvania DEP. As another newcomer, Scot's energy and enthusiasm bring a fresh perspective to NASLR. I am excited to see what

we will accomplish together. I would also like to extend a warm thank you to Mike Haney who fearlessly led NASLR as President last year. I have learned a lot working with him and will count on his continued guidance as I step up to this new role.

If there is a common theme that defines 2020 and 2021, it is "adaptability." The mining industry adapted to changing markets, State programs adapted to hybrid work schedules, and thanks to technology, NASLR adapted to Covid. The virtual conferences opened the organization to a broader audience who may not have had the opportunity to attend otherwise (including myself in 2020). I am looking forward to working with each of you as we build NASLR and emphasize the "National" part of our name. Here's to forging a great year ahead!

~Vishnu



# *NASLR's 2021 Mined Land Reclamation Award— Non-Coal Vondra Mine*

**Nominated by Scott Carlson,  
Kansas Department of Agriculture**

**Acme Brick Company  
Vondra Clay Mine**

The Vondra Pit is approximately 370 acres located just east of Kanopolis, Kansas in Ellsworth County. The Vondra Pit lies in the Dakota Formation soil formation, which is Late Cretaceous in age (approximately 108 to 94 million years old). Due to the sporadic deposit within the Dakota Formation, the depth of material that was mined ranged from 10 feet to 30 feet. All of the overburden was removed and stockpiled in a non-



active portion of the mine property to be used for reclamation. The removal of the overburden exposed the clay that is utilized in the manufacture of brick. All mining was performed using heavy equipment such as excavators, scrapers, front end loaders, and haul trucks. The clay was stockpiled on site, then hauled by truck to the brick plant as needed.

The scope of the reclamation was straightforward in design and the implementation was executed as proposed. The site was organized into three areas (A, B and C) and each area had its own set of guidelines. It is estimated that 150,000 cubic yards of material was moved during reclamation activities and the site was completely seeded with indigenous grass.



Area A (22 acres in the eastern portion of the property) - The bottom one-half of the highwall was backfilled with stockpiled overburden to a minimum 3 to 1 slope. The remainder of the highwall was not sloped due to landowner boundary issues. The remainder of the area was graded with a minimum of 3 to 1 slopes. A berm was created to hold a small volume of stormwater during heavy rain events.

Area B (30 acres in the center of the property) - The eastern portion of the area was stabilized with curlex and developed with a surface water body. The

western portion of the area was graded to form terraces. A ravine in the center of the area drains from north to south. Earth berms were developed in the northern portion of the drainage, perpendicular to the flow direction. Brick bat/rock check dams were formed in the southern portion of the drainage.

Area C (19 acres in the western portion of the property) - Stockpiled overburden was graded to a minimum of 3 to 1 slopes. A terrace was stabilized with curlex.

The affected portions of all areas were revegetated with indigenous grasses, ensuring all areas were stabilized to prevent erosion after reclamation.

**Continued on page 6**

# *NASLR's 2021 Mined Land Reclamation Award—Coal*

**Nominated by Nick San Diego,  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources**

**Prairie State Generating Company, LLC  
Jordon Grove Mine**

The Jordan Grove Mine is located 3 miles southwest of the village of Marissa in Randolph County, Illinois. The facility took its name from a church and cemetery (Jordan Grove) located on the south side of the facility. The site represents a long history of coal mining, as surface coal mining activities occurred from 1969 thru 1972. All mining took place prior to 1977, and a preparation plant facility operated on the site until 1999.

In October 2017, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR permit #378) approved the Jordan Grove facility permit for a total area of 1063.8 acres. The original permit included plans to surface mine a small area of coal reserves that existed within the permit area, as well as plans for disposal of coal combustion waste from the Prairie State Generating Company power plant and breaker waste material from the Lively Grove Mine.



The Jordan Grove facility is owned by Randolph Land Holding Company, which is solely owned by Prairie State Generating Company, LLC (PSGC). The development of the PSGC power plant, along with the Lively Grove Mine, resulted in the need for a refuse disposal area and a portion of the Jordan Grove site was designed and constructed to accept waste material from these facilities. The design for the waste disposal area included compacted clay and a synthetic 60 MIL HDPE geomembrane liner. Liner placement started July 1, 2011. Refuse disposal activities took place at Jordan Grove starting in early 2011 until November 2015.

Due to the high cost to transport waste from the PSGC power plant to the Jordan Grove site, an alternative disposal facility was developed adjacent to the power plant. This resulted in the premature closure of Jordan Grove facility. Reclamation plans were developed and approved by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) for the reclamation of the site. Reclamation of the refuse disposal site began January 2018.

The surface of the refuse was graded to a maximum slope of 3h:1v. The refuse material was tested for net neutralization and found to be acceptable without the addition of lime treatment due to the alkaline nature of the coal combustion waste materials. Four feet of soil material was used for final cover. Terraces, rip rap down drains, and geofabric were installed to ensure surface water could safely flow from the slopes to the bottom of the covered refuse material. Depending on the steepness of the slopes, two different seed mixes cool and warm season grasses were utilized for the reclaimed area. The combination of effective engineering designs for the refuse liner, rip rap down drain structures for water conveyance, and good agronomic practices for the vegetation establishment has resulted in a successful reclamation product.





The Jordan Grove facility included acres that were previously disturbed by historic mining, as well as areas that were undisturbed. During the build-out of the refuse area, 17 acres of high capability soil was encountered. A permitted area that was previously disturbed by mining was graded and the high capability soil was replaced. The land was placed into production, with productivity testing being completed within three years. The final bond release for these areas was approved in 2017. Timely productivity testing and submission of bond release documents are important to both the company and the regulatory authority, to minimize future liability.

The herbaceous land use for the reclaimed refuse area was chosen to provide a good cover and to enhance wildlife use. The herbaceous plantings included warm season grasses and cool season species. The use of both cool season and warm season grasses provides a broader period of vegetative growth for wildlife populations. Pollinator species (milkweed) were planted and are growing in several areas on site. An alternate mowing schedule was developed for areas where milkweed is present. Early spring and late fall mowing allow plants to grow, flower, and set seeds during the late spring through late summer period. This alternate mowing schedule reduces mowing costs while improving habitat use. The Jordan Grove site has been extensively used by various wildlife species. Deer, racoon, opossum, turkey, geese, duck, bobcat, and bald eagle have been observed on site.



### Vondra Mine continued from pg 4

The accuracy of the earth moving and the tremendous growth of the vegetation has transformed this property into a gem in Ellsworth County. Drone footage flown at 100 ft shows the remediated property blending with the adjacent property naturally. This property now has so much to offer, including good hunting, fishing, and excellent cattle grazing. The northern portion of the property has scenic views and a potential building site for a house or hunting cabin. A property provides a significant



amount of cover and suitable habitat for a significant amount of deer and other wildlife activity. The rolling terrain adds to the character of the landscape and makes the property much more diverse. The ravine bottom is not visible from the road, providing seclusion for wildlife. Large trees in the ravine provide opportunities for an avid hunter to place stands near trials and transition areas. The trees are also accommodating to turkeys, which are abundant, as evidenced by many feathers found scattered around the site.

## *NASLR's 2021 Scholarship Award Winner*

### *Anna Vietmeier*

We would like to congratulate Ms. Anna Vietmeier for winning the 2021 NASLR Scholarship! Ms. Veitmeier is a PhD student at Duquesne University and her research focuses on a novel approach to acid mine drainage remediation through selective microbial metabolism utilizing bacterial isolates. Her research has already produced promising results in the field and suggests the work could be scaled to sites around the country. In addition to being a stellar student, Ms. Veitmeier is involved in (and leads) a variety of community and university organizations that advocate for education and open access to the public. As a first-generation college student herself, Ms. Vietmeier advocates the importance of higher education by mentoring undergraduate students and encourages them to follow her path into research. We are very excited to learn about further developments in Ms. Vietmeier's research and wish her all the best as she gets started on her already very illustrious career.



## *NASLR's 2021 President's Award Winner*

### *Iuri Lira Santos*

It was a distinct pleasure to be able to award Iuri Lira Santos with the first-ever NASLR President's Award, which recognizes excellent professional initiative and motivation to succeed within the field of mined land reclamation. His enthusiasm was evident in the nomination materials and was confirmed when meeting him in "virtual" person. Having come to the USA as an exchange student from Brazil in 2015, Iuri found a deep interest in the field of land reclamation, returning after earning his 2016 B.S. at Universidade de Pernambuco in Recife, Brazil and enrolling in graduate studies at West Virginia University, where he continues his collaborative work studying dewatering AMD slurries for potential rare earth metal extraction. He describes his motive as a desire to make a positive difference in reclamation and contributing to convert mine waste materials into useful resources. NASLR again congratulates Iuri and his colleagues at WVU for their continued outstanding work and looks forward to his many great accomplishments.



**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF THE  
2021 NASLR CONFERENCE RANDOM-DRAW GIFT CARDS !**

Tech Session 1 – Kay Spyker  
Tech Session 2 – Charlotte Brett  
Tech Session 3 – Paula Barber

**CALLING ALL NASLR MEMBERS!!  
WE WANT YOUR NOMINATIONS FOR THE  
2022 NASLR AWARDS!**

**DEDICATED  
RECLAMATIONISTS**



**OUTSTANDING  
RECLAMATION  
WORK**

**AND PROMISING STUDENTS WORKING IN THE FIELD OF  
RECLAMATION**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE  
JULY 1ST IS THE DEADLINE FOR ALL NOMINATIONS AND APPLICATIONS.**

**MINED LAND RECLAMATION AWARD (COAL & NON-COAL)  
[HTTPS://NASLR.ORG/AWARDS/NASLR-RECLAMATION-AWARD/](https://naslr.org/awards/naslr-reclamation-award/)**

**OUTREACH AWARD  
[HTTPS://NASLR.ORG/AWARDS/NASLR-OUTREACH-AWARD/](https://naslr.org/awards/naslr-outreach-award/)**

**DEAN SPINDLER RECLAMATIONIST OF THE YEAR AWARD  
[HTTPS://NASLR.ORG/AWARDS/THE-DEAN-SPINDLER-RECLAMATIONIST-OF-THE-YEAR-AWARD/](https://naslr.org/awards/the-dean-spindler-reclamationist-of-the-year-award/)**

If you are not already a member or know someone interested in becoming involved with a group of reclamation professionals promoting excellence in reclamation please contact us or forward this newsletter to them. You are cordially invited to join NASLR, a group of member state reclamation agencies throughout the United States, as well as government reclamation professionals and industry associates that seek to develop resources and strive to restore mined lands to productive uses.

The four categories of membership are *State, Individual, Associate and Corporate Sponsor*.

To join, see conference information or request additional information, please visit our website at:

[www.naslr.org](http://www.naslr.org)

**Watch For The Upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> Annual**



**Conference and Technical Sessions  
STAY TUNED FOR DATES!**

**PLAN TO JOIN US IN ALBANY, NY**

**More information on conference speakers and continuing education opportunities will be forth coming.**

**Be sure to check the NASLR website for up-to-date information. <http://www.naslr.org>**

**NASLR IS SEEKING PRESENTERS FOR THE 2022 CONFERENCE**

**Please contact : Simone Rodriguez ([simone.rodriguez@dec.ny.gov](mailto:simone.rodriguez@dec.ny.gov) or 518-402-8493)**

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

### Are you rejuvenated?

*By Dean Spindler*



The Annual Conference was last week, with high attendance figures. Even though retired, I felt rejuvenated in our profession. I managed to assist the successors to my position at the IDNR LRD with our conference presentation, but suddenly felt inspired to follow up with them on some possible program improvements from information I learned from other presentations. I have written several times before about the value of the information I have taken away from the annual conference and how that value has been shared with the agency. That value was in the form of the talks that were presented, but also through the contacts made with other reclamation professionals willing to share their ideas, common problems, and solutions. The 2021 annual conference was no different.

Knowing our presentation was focused on bonding and the associated risks and the many upgrades we have made to our process from learning and encountering new situations, I listened to the other presentations with bonding in the back of my mind. Low and behold, some of the discussions red flagged issues we have either already encountered or might someday encounter, that are not fully addressed in the current version of our bond calculation methodology. I was also reminded of a past presentation Illinois did at a NASLR conference 20 years ago on similar issues, and how that presentation spurred an exchange of ideas with several other states after the meeting, as hopefully this one did too.

We can too easily get caught up in the usually terribly busy routine of our professional jobs, be it inspection, technical services, support services, or administration and not dedicate time for what I call Research and Development (R&D). Dedicating time toward R&D can tend to make the job easier, better and/or more efficient. Sometimes even the normal everyday work grind can cause a person to burn out from the demands or to become too complacent that we are “doing the best that can be done”, leaving no opportunity for improvement. When I was a kid, one of the things that was drummed into my head was to “learn something new every day”. Even though most of us have experienced the feeling of “look at all the work that piled up while I was at the conference”, participating in professional organizations and conferences will rejuvenate you, push you to do more based on what you learned, and it will make you a better professional. You will then be more valuable to your own agency or organization.

Although I still miss the in-person conferences, particularly the additional after 5 exchange of ideas, meeting new people in our profession, and the field trip, the online version did open the door to many who could not attend otherwise. Next year’s meeting in New York will be in-person and I am sure I will be equally invigorating to all who attend, and we will hopefully have an online version as well.



# 2021-2022 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## 2021 NASLR Officers



**President – Vishnu Srinivasaraghavan**  
Energy Coordinator  
Illinois CMS Environmental Health & Safety  
(217) 782-3521



**Vice President - Scot May**  
Geoscientist  
Pennsylvania DEP Cambria District Office  
(814)472-1712



**Secretary/Treasurer –Simone Rodriguez**  
Mined Land Reclamation Specialist  
New York DEC Central Office  
(518) 402-8493

## 2021 Executive Committee



**Mike Haney**  
Professional Geologist  
Pennsylvania DEP Cambria District Office  
(814) 472-1892



**Vickie Broomhead**  
Senior Hydrogeologist, EPS IV  
Illinois DNR Land Reclamation Division  
(217) 782-9565



**Hannah Hill**  
Geologist  
Georgia DNR Land Protection Branch  
Surface Mining Unit  
(470) 251-2558

## 2021 Public Relations and Education Committee



**Jeff Meitrott**  
Geoscientist  
Pennsylvania DEP – Moshannon District Office  
(814) 342-8116



**Danielle Duhé**  
Geologist  
Louisiana DNR  
(225) 342-7231



**Psalm Wyckoff**  
Mined Land Reclamation Specialist  
New York DEC Region 4  
(518) 357-2254



**Shawna Riddle**  
Environmental Senior Specialist  
North Carolina DEQ  
(828) 296-4500



**Kristi Dodson**  
Bond Unit Manager  
Illinois DNR, Land Reclamation Division  
(217) 785-0399



**Halina Duda**  
Mined Land Reclamation Specialist  
New York DEC Region 3  
(845) 256-3064

## **NASLR NEWSLETTER** **Winter 2021/2022** [naslr.org](http://naslr.org)

To submit material for future newsletters please contact Jeff Meitrott [jmeitrott@pa.gov](mailto:jmeitrott@pa.gov).  
Please use a [NASLR Newsletter Submission Form](#) (or [download here](#)).

Editor: Jeff Meitrott, PA DEP  
Layout and Design: Psalm Wyckoff , NYSDEC