



NASLR
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
STATE LAND RECLAMATIONISTS

Spring 2025

<http://www.naslr.org>



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Goodbye and Thanks!

A message from the Outgoing President:

The last year as NASLR President has been exciting, interesting and challenging in many ways. The planning of the annual conference takes considerable time from start to finish and I leaned on many people along the way for advice and assistance. Thank you to the NASLR Executive Committee, NASLR PRE Committee and the Conference Planning Committee for all of the time, effort and heavy lifting you did to help make the conference so successful. To the 2024 Conference attendees - thank you for your participation and I hope that you learned something, gained insight or took back an idea or two to use in your own program.

As I've stated in previous messages, NASLR only works with engagement and participation from its members and the organization can only be as strong as those who volunteer their time to make it work and continue to evolve and move forward. We gained two new (returning) member states this past year and retained thirteen states. This is what we need to continue – we need to grow our membership and expand our network of volunteers within the organization. We do that by providing value to our members throughout the year, but especially with the annual conference where innovative reclamation ideas are presented and exchanged.

Piggybacking on my predecessors, we continued to make improvements to the NASLR website and under newly installed NASLR President Tyler Straight's initiative, we began hosting quarterly webinars for our members. This has been well received so far and it's something that I hope continues. We have used the Facebook platform to share information from member states, from OSMRE, about the webinars and conference. These efforts have directly contributed to the attendance numbers at the recent conference.

Over the course of the last few years I have had the privilege to work with some amazing, thoughtful and caring individuals who have been NASLR staples for a long time. Jeff Meitrott and Simone Rodriguez have both held the (almost thankless) position of Secretary/Treasurer in the last several years and they both continue to be a fountain of knowledge on the history and past practices of the organization. Their input during my year as president was invaluable and I cannot thank them enough for the patience and kindness they showed me.

I feel comfortable and confident that the organization is in good hands and has a good future with Tyler Straight at the helm. To Tyler – best of luck as President for the next year – the Annual Conference is returning to New York in October 2025 and promises to be invigorating and interesting. Congratulations also to the new Officers and Committee Members.

In closing, please consider volunteering your time and talents to NASLR, to consider nominating one of your projects or sites or a colleague for one of our awards and to share the information about our scholarship opportunity. NASLR needs you.

Thank you all for allowing me the opportunity to lead this organization. I will fondly remember this time and I will treasure the memories and friendships made during this journey. Thank you one and all for being a part of NASLR and helping to move the organization forward.

Sincerely,

Vickie

Hello from New York!

A message from the 2025 President:

Hello from New York! I am Tyler Straight, your 2024-2025 NASLR President. Compared to past presidents I am a “young gun” in the reclamation field and newcomer to NASLR. I have been with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s Mined Land Reclamation program since 2019, the first three of which was in the Region 9 Allegany office and since May 2022 in the Region 4 Schenectady office. I had the pleasure of attending the 2020 and 2021 NASLR virtual conference and I became active in NASLR on the PRE-Committee after attending the 2022 conference in Albany. My goals as President are to continue the great work that has been done before me, bring more states into the association, and most important to me make NASLR as beneficial as possible for its members. Last year we started quarterly webinars and overhauled the NASLR website which now includes new content such as *Past Conferences* page showcasing all of our past conferences and the *Jobs in Reclamation* page that provides resources to individuals interested in working in state land reclamation. Your new NASLR Executive Committee: Past-President Vickie Broomhead (IL), Vice-President Andrew Whisnant (LA), Secretary-Treasurer Simone Rodriguez (NY), Executive Secretary Jeff Meitrott (PA), members Brandon Brown (IL) and Shawna Riddle (NC), and the PRE-Committee led by Kristi Dodson has been working hard to keep the association running. I’d like to thank Simone and Jeff for their continued service and dedication to NASLR – without them the continued success of the association would not be possible! I hope you all enjoyed the conference in Illinois, many thanks to Vickie and the Illinois team for putting on an excellent conference. As a non-coal state reclamationist it was very interesting to visit an active coal mine and go underground. It was a good reminder of the important work that is done to produce the electricity that powers our homes. Currently, we are in the planning stages of the 2025 conference that will be September 29th thru October 2nd in Alexandria Bay, NY in New York’s Thousand Island Region. More to come on that later.

Here's to a great year!

Tyler

2024 Conference

The 52nd Annual NASLR Conference was held October 8-10, 2024 at Walker's Bluff Casino Resort in Carterville, Illinois. The conference attracted 70 in-person attendees from Oregon, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Missouri, Indiana, Arkansas, and Illinois. Forty-six virtual attendees tuned in from multiple states as well, including Georgia, North and South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, New York, and Illinois.

NASLR welcomed 12 unique presentations along our theme of Reclamation to Recreation over the day and a half-long conference. On Wednesday, October 9th, the in-person attendees hopped on two busses to tour an active underground coal mine, an active surface coal mine, an AML reclaimed site and a State Fish and Wildlife Area created on former surface coal mined land.

On Tuesday evening, NASLR invited Illinois Department of Natural Resources Director Natalie Phelps Finnie to give the keynote address during the Awards Banquet. NASLR presented awards for Coal Mine Reclamation, Non-coal Reclamation and a Scholarship recipient.

On Thursday, after conclusion of the conference presentations, the NASLR business meeting was held over a working lunch. During the business meeting the incoming President, Tyler Straight was seated into his new position and a nomination and election for new committee members and officers was held. Members in attendance at the business meeting did not propose any new business and there were no amendments to the NASLR Constitution or By-Laws.



2024 Conference



2024 NASLR Award Winners

A Showcase of Innovative Ideas and Thoughtful Reclamation

By: Kristi Dodson

The 2024 NASLR Conference Awards Banquet was held on October 8, 2024, and provided a wonderful opportunity for networking, catching up with old friends, making new friends, and recognizing the important work in the reclamation field occurring all across the country. The NASLR Conference Planning Committee would also like to extend a special thank you to the IDNR Director, Natalie Phelps Finnie, for her inspiring opening remarks and helping to make the Awards Banquet a great success!

The 2024 NASLR Scholarship Award went to Mohsen Rabbani, a PhD student in Mineral Resources at the University of Nevada, Reno. Mohsen is working on an innovative solution to reclaim lands degraded by mining while at the same time extracting globally important minerals with an overall goal of restoring the lands ecological balance. His project has been recognized by the United State Department of Energy and focuses on a dual application of phytomining and phytoremediation by using native plants to recover critical elements and clear up soil contamination. The NALSr Scholarship Award of \$2000.00 will hopefully support Mohsen's academic and career aspirations to advance sustainable land management practices.

The 2024 NASLR Outreach Award was presented to Gary Weller of Graystone Quarries, Inc. for exemplary and thoughtful reclamation at the Keyser Road Quarry located in Jefferson County, New York. Keyser Road Quarry began as a 26.6-acre commercial limestone aggregate production facility, and after an ownership change in 2000, transitioned to production of dimension stone. Reclamation began in 2023 and focused on creating a space designed for outdoor enthusiasts. The site boasts a kayak access ramp, viewing and fishing platforms, a camping area, and stone amphitheater with outdoor seating. The fact that Mr. Weller had to travel back and forth from his home in Pennsylvania to the site in New York, and the reclamation work was conducted by one man in less than one year makes this an even more amazing story!



Keyser Road Quarry – Before and After Reclamation

2024 NASLR Award Winners cont.

The 2024 NASLR Coal Reclamation Award was presented to Monty Parke of Peabody Midwest Mining, LLC for excellence in reclamation at the Vermilion Grove Mine located in Vermilion County, Illinois. The Vermilion Grove Mine is a 413-acre conventional room and pillar underground mine that was active from Dec 2001 to March 2009. The pre-mining land use at the site was mostly row crop and after reclamation the land and community benefit from a significant increase in fish and wildlife habitat, deepwater habitat, and highly productive agricultural ground. In addition, the 88-acre refuse disposal facility was designed to limit any potential risk associated with long term slurry storage by utilizing filter press technology which allowed for a much smaller refuse footprint than typically seen. An enhanced soil cover plan on the refuse disposal facility limits water infiltration and the vegetation establishment reduces the potential for erosion and function as excellent wildlife food and cover. Congratulations to the Vermilion Grove Mine and Peabody for outstanding reclamation success!

The 2024 Non-Coal Reclamation Award went to the McCoy Rock Quarry located on the Spring Valley Ranch in the Flint Hills near Alma, Kansas. The site produced 14” thick limestone blocks used for retaining walls, home veneer, and counter tops. Operations were conducted with a minimalist approach, disturbing as small amount of acreage as possible at any given time and concurrently replacing subsoil and topsoil as operations progressed forward. The reclamation motto at the McCoy Rock Quarry was “As Good or Better” and focused on making improvements to the land. Reclamation at the site is an example for other companies because it showcases what can be achieved by using environmentally sustainable concurrent reclamation practices.



Vermilion Grove Mine – Before and After Reclamation

2024 NASLR Award Winners cont.



SAVE THE DATE



Join NASLR's 54th
Annual Conference
Sept 30th – Oct 2nd, 2025
At The RiverEdge Resort
in Alexandria Bay, NY

Featuring Field Trip Stops
in the World-Class
Balmat-Edwards
Mining District!



CALL FOR PRESENTERS

Contact Tyler Straight @
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518-357-2172



Notes From the Field

THE CLOSER

By: Dean Spindler

Many critical positions exist on any staff such as engineers, inspectors, biologists, soil scientists, foresters and computer specialists. One of the overlooked positions is “the closer”, an inspector who may serve in the bond release section, if one exists. This inspector might be who ends up guiding a mine to reclamation completion and final bond release after cessation of mining. Larger mines may require several years to reach closure and final bond release and having “the closer” on staff can make this process more efficient. This is particularly true of mines that have a large preparation facility, large acreages of refuse, and surface mines with haul roads, highwalls, inclines and many other support acreage or structures. Closing out a mine consists of several main projects which include:



1. Assessing the approved reclamation plan to determine how close it mirrors existing field conditions. Often, submittal of an as-built reclamation map is required, as the original reclamation plan may have been approved decades earlier. The required accuracy of these maps has evolved over the past decades therefore some fine-tuning line work may also be required. This issue will likely end up becoming a standalone article topic in the future!
2. Coordinating with the permittee to establish a working reclamation schedule to allow work to proceed on a reasonable timeframe for completion of all grading and revegetation activities required.
3. Ensuring all the required reclamation is completed on schedule and properly documented to establish and track required responsibility periods and revegetation success standards.
4. Ensuring all erosion concerns are addressed timely and vegetation maintenance is completed according to the approved plan or as field conditions warrant.

“The closer” is typically an experienced inspector and if the regulatory program has the luxury of having one on staff, all the above tasks can be systematically and efficiently addressed. Both the field conditions and required paperwork can be expected to be in proper shape for the bond release application. This efficiency makes the actual release process mostly a formality with little relearning of the site to gather the required documents.

NASLR NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2025

REMINDER:

Scholarship Applications and Award Nomination Applications are DUE JULY 1st



To submit material for future newsletters:

Please contact

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Please use a

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