



NEWS RELEASE
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PSC Receives High Marks on Federal Review of Abandoned Mines Lands Program

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission’s Abandoned Mines Lands (AML) Program recently received results from its annual federal evaluation with the report concluding that North Dakota “administers an excellent AML program in full compliance with their approved plan.” The evaluation conducted by the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) concluded that no issues or concerns were raised and that the PSC “continues to administer an efficient and successful AML program.”

Since the state program began in 1982, the North Dakota AML program has conducted over 155 primary reclamation projects, 29 emergency projects and numerous construction maintenance and sinkhole filling projects. More than 24 miles of dangerous surface mine pits and highwalls, and over 1,600 acres of underground mine subsidence have been reclaimed. OSM states in the report that “these projects have reduced the likelihood of death or injury to property owners and the public.”

“With the help of our staff, contractors, and active coal mining companies this program allows us to use modern equipment and technology to fix problems that resulted from coal mining many decades ago,” said Commissioner Randy Christmann, who holds the coal reclamation and abandoned mines portfolio. “It is really a cooperative effort to enhance safety and quality of life for everyone.”

OSM reviews many components of the AML program annually. The goal of this program is to eliminate hazards related to coal mining that was conducted prior to the enactment of the 1977 federal reclamation act. PSC staff in the AML program design and manage the reclamation projects, and then the actual reclamation work is done by contractors. In this year’s report, federal evaluators said that PSC inspectors are experienced, knowledgeable and dedicated to the goals of the program. OSM also agreed that all projects for the year met their goals and were completed successfully.

“This is further validation of the tremendous work being done by members of our AML division, the coal mining industry, and the contractors that perform the work,” said Commissioner Brian Kalk.

The Commission receives funds from OSM for the AML program from the collection of a federal reclamation fee that is collected on all coal that has been mined since the late 1970s. The North Dakota AML program received about \$3.4 million this year. The report highlights the efficient use of those funds in North Dakota stating “the ND PSC maintains a very cost effective program with 11 percent of the grant dedicated to administrative costs. The remainder of the grant is spent on project design and construction.”

“The work of our Abandoned Mines Lands division is having a real impact on eliminating potential serious hazards and improving the safety of areas in western North Dakota where early mining and reclamation practices left the land vulnerable to sink holes,” said Commissioner Julie Fedorchak.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, grain elevators, auctioneers, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

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