



NEWS RELEASE
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PSC Plans for Three Major Reclamation Projects at Abandoned Coal Mines

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) has been awarded more than \$3 million through its annual federal grant from the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) within the Department of the Interior. The grant money is used to carry out reclamation projects to eliminate hazards associated with abandoned coal mines that were mined prior to the enactment of the 1977 federal reclamation act.

“The Commission’s Abandoned Mine Lands Program is a valuable arrangement made possible by active mining operations,” said Commissioner Randy Christmann. “It allows our experts at the Commission to make these abandoned mine lands as safe as possible for future generations.”

This year’s total grant awarded to the PSC is \$3,382,106. The Commission has plans to carry out three major reclamation projects at abandoned coal mines in western North Dakota. An abandoned surface mine project is planned west of Hazen on the north side of Highway 200. About 3,500 feet of steep highwalls that are up to 80 feet high will be eliminated at this site.

Two drilling and pressurized grouting projects to stabilize underground mine workings are also planned. The projects involve locating underground voids beneath public roads and structures by rotary drilling and filling the voids with cement-like grout. One of the projects will be conducted at underground mine sites near Scranton, Bowman and Reeder and the other project will be at a large underground mine north of Beulah. An exploratory drilling project to locate underground mine voids southeast of Wilton is also planned.

Work on projects should begin in early June and last into the fall. Also, some dangerous mine sinkholes will be filled this year under a contract that was issued in 2013.

The federal funds for the abandoned mine lands reclamation program comes from a federal reclamation fee that is paid by active mining companies on each ton of coal that is mined in the United States. This fee has been in place since the late 1970s. Since 1981, the PSC has conducted more than 130 major abandoned mine reclamation projects and numerous sinkhole filling and maintenance projects with a total construction cost of nearly \$45 million.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate 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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