



NEWS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release, Contact:
Randy Christmann, (701) 328-4091
Julie Fedorchak, (701) 391-1140
Brian Kalk, (701) 261-0373

PSC Receives National Award for Abandoned Mine Lands Project

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Public Service Commission’s Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program has been awarded the 2016 Small Project Award from the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. The award is given annually to honor the highest quality projects across the nation to reclaim abandoned coal mines.

North Dakota’s AML Program has been selected to receive the award for the exceptional work done as part of the 2015 drilling and grouting project at the Halleck Mine approximately five miles north of Bowman. The Halleck Mine was an underground mine that operated from about 1919 to 1944. The coal seam at this mine was 30 to 40 feet thick and the top of the coal seam was only 10 to 50 feet below the surface. Sinkholes were common in the area and previous exploratory drilling had located mine voids near public roads and a large 30-inch diameter high-pressure natural gas pipeline. In 2014, emergency repairs had to be completed due to several large sinkholes that severed a fiber optic telecommunications cable and were within 90 feet of the pipeline.

The Halleck Mine reclamation project primarily involved drilling and grouting to locate and fill underground mine voids along public roads and near the pipeline. Special safety measures had to be taken during the drilling and grouting to prevent any damage to the pipeline while ensuring the voids were filled.

“Because of the reclamation fee being paid by current mine operations, the PSC is able to repair some of these sites that were abandoned decades ago,” said Commissioner Randy Christmann, who holds the coal mining, reclamation and AML portfolios. “It allows us to protect our infrastructure and our citizens without using taxpayer dollars. This was a particularly challenging project and our team did a great job.”

The award will be presented in September as part of the National Association of Abandoned Mine Lands Programs annual meeting in Bozeman, Mont. Joan Breiner, Environmental Scientist and project manager for the Halleck Mine reclamation, will also present a paper on the project at the meeting.

The goal of the AML Program is to eliminate hazards related to coal mining that was conducted prior to the enactment of the 1977 federal reclamation act. The Commission receives funds for the program from the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement from the collection of a federal reclamation fee that is collected on all coal that is mined.

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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