



Public Service Commission

NEWS RELEASE
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PSC Presents The Coteau Properties Company with Award for Excellence in Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) recently announced that The Coteau Properties Company (Coteau) is the recipient of this year’s Award for Excellence in Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation. The PSC’s Reclamation Division recommended that Coteau be recognized for their efforts to mine around a significant archeological site at the West Mine Area at the Freedom Mine.

“Key leaders from both Coteau and the Three Affiliated Tribes, as well as everyone out in the field accomplishing the task, have demonstrated that energy development can happen, and it can actually not just maintain but enhance maintenance and enjoyment of cultural resources and the environment,” said Commissioner Randy Christmann, who holds the coal mining and reclamation portfolio.

Cultural resource surveys for the West Mine Area identified many significant cultural resource features or sites. One such feature is a rock turtle effigy that Native American tribes indicated has special significance to their culture and requested that it be preserved. As a result, visionary leaders from Coteau and the Three Affiliated Tribes agreed on a unique mine plan over a decade ago to effectively mine the coal and enhance access to important native cultural resources. This year marked an important milestone when mining around the site was completed, leaving a four-acre hilltop that became an undisturbed island surrounded by mining operations approximately 200 feet below.

Reclamation of the area surrounding the site will include revegetation using traditional native plants. Following bond release of the surrounding mined lands, the turtle effigy will be part of 1,240 acres donated to the Indian Education Trust, which was created by legislation within the Department of Trust Lands. The agreement between the Three Affiliated Tribes and The Coteau Properties Company is the first of its kind between a tribal organization and a mining company. The donation establishes provisions to manage donated lands and generated income and make disbursements to the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation Cultural Education Foundation for use in financing cultural education activities and programs.

Former Chairman Marcus D. Levings “Eah-Bah-Dah-Gish” of the Three Affiliated Tribes (2006-2010), proclaimed the proven commitment exhibited by Coteau Properties Company to respect the Cultural Site(s) in this cooperative mine plan with the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara is greatly appreciated. “As our beloved Ancestors pray at the hundreds of Cultural and Sacred Sites for harmonious living and survival along the Missouri River areas, sites such as this respective Rock

Turtle Effigy are the very reason we are in existence today. This donated land into the Indian Education Trust on behalf of the Three Affiliated Tribe is also greatly appreciated as it will provide for the very important cultural education activities and programs for our youth. Mod-Zi-Gidaz! (Thank You!).”

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, 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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Photo Courtesy: The Coteau Properties Company