



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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Abandoned Mine Land Project to win Regional Award at National Conference

Lower Rock Creek watershed restoration project

Frankfort, Ky. (Aug. 13, 2012) –The Kentucky Department of Natural Resources' Division of Abandoned Mine Lands will be recognized with a regional award in mine reclamation for the Lower Rock Creek watershed restoration project from the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Surface Mining.

The award will be presented this fall during the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land national conference in Des Moines, Iowa.

The division shares the award with 12 other state and federal agencies and conservation organizations that formed the Rock Creek Task Force.

"The Lower Rock Creek Watershed Restoration Project has been a success that exemplifies the need, purpose, and capability of the abandoned mine land program. The project overcame great obstacles from technical problems, minimizing construction induced sediment problems, to permits and funding," said Bob Scott, director of the Division of Abandoned Mine Lands. "The Rock Creek Task Force brought together regulatory public agencies that provided input from multiple scientific disciplines and created a "buy-in" effect for all parties involved."

Rock Creek is a boulder-strewn stream that flows from Tennessee northeast into Kentucky through the Daniel Boone National Forest and the Big

South Fork National Recreation Area into the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River.

The entire Rock Creek watershed is a major recreational attraction visited by thousands yearly for fishing, hunting, hiking, backpacking and camping. Upper Rock Creek is a Kentucky Wild River, serving as a major recreational attraction and a blue ribbon trout stream. However, Lower Rock Creek's aquatic habitat and fresh water supplies for terrestrial animals has been decimated from acid mine drainage (AMD) from more than 40 underground coalmine portals and eight pyrite-rich refuse dumps. In addition, exposed refuse dumps posed a fire hazard and supplied sediments to the water.

Underground coal mining began in the Rock Creek watershed in the early 1900s and continued through the 1960s.

The Rock Creek Task Force was formed in 1998 to address acid drainage. The project was completed in three phases: the installation of about six miles of open limestone channels, which provide a long-term alkalinity source needed to balance the mine acid; construction of a vertical flow pond system to treat water that seeped out of the hillside from a collapsed deep mine; and construction of a self-flushing limestone pond that added another treatment mechanism.

The project has provided teaching opportunities to children and adults across the Commonwealth. The stream now has zero acidity and has virtually eliminated the AMD impacts from the Rock Creek watershed into the Big South Fork while reclaiming the barren refuse piles reduced sediment erosion and suppressed the fire hazard.

"Most importantly, the restoration of the Rock Creek watershed has had a major impact on the lives of the residents of the area," said Energy and Environment Secretary Len Peters. "The environment of the region is much cleaner, allowing families to enjoy swimming and fishing again."

Since 1992, the Office of Surface Mining has presented awards to abandoned mine land reclamation programs that completed exemplary reclamation. The objective is to give public recognition to those responsible for the nation's most outstanding achievement in land reclamation and to encourage the exchange and transfer of successful reclamation technology.

Partners in the reclamation project include:

- Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands
- Kentucky Division of Water
- Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
- Kentucky Department of Mining Reclamation and Enforcement
- United States Office of Surface Mining
- United States Geological Survey
- United States Forest Service
- United States National Resources Conservation Service
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- United States National Park Service
- United States Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Trout Unlimited

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