



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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### **Kentucky Department for Natural Resources Joins James River Coal and the Office of Surface Mining for Arbor Day Celebration**

*Students plant tree seedlings on a surface coal mine to promote  
reforestation*

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (May 6, 2011) – On Tuesday, over 100 students and their teachers from R. W. Combs Elementary in Perry County, Kentucky, along with student members in the Future Farmers of America, the Boy Scouts and students from the Lexington Catholic Beta Club planted over 700 native hardwood seedlings and a large number of wetland plants to aid in reforestation and wetland creation on mined lands. The students also learned how to create forest-based pollinator habitat for honey bees and other insects.

The event was hosted by the James River Coal Co. on its coal surface mining operation located near Vicco, Kentucky. Representatives from the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet, the Kentucky Department for Natural Resources (DNR), the Kentucky Division of Forestry and the U. S. Office of Surface Mining participated in the event. Rep. Fitz Steele, Sen. Brandon Smith, Donna McClure of Sen. Mitch McConnell's Office and Perry County Judge/Executive Denny Ray Noble also attended.

The students planted tree species that included American chestnut, northern red oak, chestnut oak, red bud, gray dogwood, butternut hickory, yellow poplar and swamp white oak. With the exception of the American chestnut, the tree seedlings came from Kentucky Division of Forestry state nurseries. One mini-workshop led by Tom Biebighauser of the U.S. Forest Service focused on establishing forested wetlands on mine sites, and provided the students with a hands-on opportunity to plant wetland species around a constructed seasonal wetland on the mine. An additional mini-session led by Tammy "Bee Lady" Horn of Eastern Kentucky University focused on establishing a bee habitat on mined lands by planting trees and plants that they prefer.

Coal Mining Our Future hosted a "Trees, Bees, Frogs and Me" poster contest for the Combs Elementary students. The top three entries received \$100, \$75 and \$50 in savings bonds. All participants were given a white pine seedling at the close of the event to take home and plant in their yard.

Reforestation of previously mined lands has been encouraged in Kentucky since DNR and the University of Kentucky began researching its viability in 1996. Loose soil prepared according to specific DNR guidelines, Reclamation Advisory Memorandum (RAM) No. 124 or the Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA), has resulted in greater tree growth and survival rates than one may find on virgin forest soils. Planting native Appalachian hardwoods can provide landowners with a sustainable source of income, recreational opportunity, improved water quality, and offers habitat for forest animals.

Wetlands construction and bee colony establishment are relatively new partnerships which complement the reforestation initiative by interspersing wetland areas and bee habitats in the forest. Water fowl, dragonflies, frogs and salamanders now gravitate to the wetlands, providing another natural feature to the previously mined lands.

DNR Commissioner Carl Campbell presented the 2010 Kentucky ARRI Award to Heritage Coal Co. LLC for "Excellence in Reforestation" on their Ohio County surface mining operation.

According to Campbell, "The reforestation of Kentucky surface mining operations is of primary importance and a long-term goal of DNR. I am extremely pleased with the ongoing reforestation efforts of James River Coal Co. and other progressive companies in the coal industry, the University of Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky University and all other state and federal agencies who have partnered with us to achieve substantial progress with this goal."

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