

Final Report
“Conservation District Mining Program Project”
Fiscal Year 2006-07
Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
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Through 319 funding provided through this project, the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR) finished another successful year (2006-07 fiscal year) in its ongoing mission of encouraging and implementing the reclamation of abandoned mine lands and degraded waters of Western Pennsylvania.

Note: The major headings of this report follow the four major goals or WPCAMR’s strategic plan. <http://www.wpcamr.org/organization/WPCAMRStrategicPlanE.pdf>

WPCAMR continued to affirm its role as a credible, responsible leader in AMR through various outreach efforts.

- Without doubt, the most significant development for WPCAMR and the AMR community in this fiscal year was the passage of amendments to the federal Surface Mining Reclamation and Control Act (SMCRA) which promises to deliver \$1.4 billion to Pennsylvania’s abandoned mine reclamation efforts over the next 15 years. In a coordinated effort to promote the reauthorization of SMCRA Title IV for the last several years, WPCAMR was a very active member of the AML Campaign. This group consists of PA conservation organizations intent on passage key amendments to SMCRA including renewing the per ton fees on coal for reclamation purposes with reformulation of how funding is distributed to states. With a lobbying presence in Washington, DC, the AML Campaign increased the prominence of reclamation issues in the overall debate and was instrumental in keeping the legislation in play during the 109th Congress. Passage of the legislation was a sort of “Hail Mary” with Congress passing it as the last act in the final hours of the last day of the Congressional session at a time when most hope had already been abandoned. The AML Campaign worked closely with PA’s Congressional delegation with both the Senate and House contingents. WPCAMR played a key role for the AML Campaign by analyzing proposed legislation and providing legislative staff with tools to evaluate legislative proposals. Almost every item of the AML Campaign’s “wish list” was accomplished including the virtually impossible task of taking reclamation funding to the states “off budget” (meaning that those funds are no longer subject to the normal appropriation process). The bottom line is that PA will see an approximate tripling of funding for abandoned mine reclamation with much greater flexibility to address acid mine drainage problems than ever before.

Now that the new legislation has passed, WPCAMR’s focus has changed to the state level where planning for use of the new-found resources becomes

imperative. DEP Secretary Katy McGinty and Deputy Secretary (Mineral Resources) Scott Roberts have properly recognized the new funding is one of the most significant opportunities for reclamation the Commonwealth will ever have, yet one that still falls very short of total need. Strategically developing a roadmap for future reclamation efforts to make the most of the limited resources is a Departmental goal. Sec. McGinty enabled a series of 8 roundtable meetings throughout the coal regions to gather public input of the how those resources should best be used. WPCAMR and EPCAMR partnered with DEP and the Citizen's Advisory Council in holding the meetings. WPCAMR's role was one of public education and produced a 40 minute video on the basics of the new legislation, which included new flexibility in spending reclamation funding. WPCAMR also produced other educational documents that are on the wpcamr.org website and were distributed by its email newsletter *Abandoned Mine Posts*. The public meetings clearly showed the public wanted to use funding to address acid mine drainage (AMD) to the greatest extent possible and wanted to protect the Commonwealth's already significant investments in passive treatment systems by establishing funding specifically for operations and maintenance. The Regional Coordinator also made presentations to a variety of groups, agencies, and state legislators on the changes to the amended SMCRA. WPCAMR intends to remain active during this crucial planning period. For its efforts, WPCAMR was honored at the PA Environmental Council's Annual Environmental Awards ceremony for work enabling passage of the amended SMCRA.

- Planning began for the 2006 AMR Conference (8th annual) and was spearheaded by WPCAMR in cooperation with the 20+ member steering committee. The theme "Back to Basics" focused on the ongoing needs of watershed groups for training and refreshers and a variety of technical and organizational subjects important in running the watershed associations. Of particular interest was a change in how the planning process of the occurred: because of limited funding, various electronic means of communication (phone, email, conference calls, listserv, a supporting website, on-line meeting software) proved to be very successful in drastically cutting travel costs for steering committee meetings. The conference itself was held at the Atherton Hotel in State College, Aug 25-26, 2006, where nearly 200 participants selected presentations in 4 separate tracks. Outside of being a little cramped for space, the critiques of the conference were extremely positive, with the "Back to Basics" theme very well received. The conference committee was able to raise sufficient funding to make the conference affordable to the participants while still operating in the black. The proceedings of the conference are archived on the website www.treatminewater.com.
- Lead sponsorship for the 2007 AMR Conference (9th annual) alternated back to EPCAMR, with WPCAMR acting in close support for the all-volunteer planning committee. The theme of the conference "Getting Your Priorities Straight" was decidedly issues oriented, with the amended SMCRA legislation topping the bill. As was the case with the 2006 conference, the conference committee stayed with

electronic means to keep costs to a minimum. Other than the actual conference program, there were no costs for paper, printing, or postage and few travel expenses, as well as less time devoted to the overhead of travel. (This will likely be the standard for future AMR conference planning.) The conference itself was held July 20 - 21, 2007 (actually fiscal year 07-08) at the Ramada Inn in State College. This year's conference focused on the following topics

- Highlights of the SMCRA Reauthorization, Draft Regulations and Roundtable Discussions
- Operation, Maintenance and Replacement for AMD Treatment Systems Specifics
- Permitting Considerations for AML/AMD Projects
- Presentations from the Vendors of New and Proven Treatment Technologies

The conference attracted about 150 participants who generally gave the event very good reviews. Sufficient funding was raised to cover expenses while holding registrations at a reasonable level. This year the committee instituted a “Vendor Track” where vendors paid to make presentations on their products, and proved to be very successful from both the vendors’ and participants’ standpoints. Proceedings are archived on the website www.treatminewater.com.

- WPCAMR visits, meetings, trainings and workshops with dozens of watershed groups throughout western PA helped these watershed groups in increasing their technical and organizational capacities, leading some to on-the-ground reclamation projects. As a member of the Consortium for Scientific Assistance to Watersheds (C-SAW), WPCAMR was able to expand the types of trainings and support available to watershed groups. The Watershed Coordinator sat on the planning committee for the nascent Northwest PA Regional Watershed Conference and helped lead that group to a modest, yet successful first conference aimed at watershed groups in NW PA.
- WPCAMR has resurrected its email newsletter *Abandoned Mine Posts*, and made it a weekly, mostly single article format. The subject matter is somewhat eclectic, but is meant to be timely, succinct, snappy, and with relevance to AMR. With roughly 300 subscribers, it has proven to be very popular and enjoyable. While the Watershed Coordinator has gladly taken on the bulk of the writing, the Regional Coordinator contributes to the publication as well, as does an occasional guest writer. The newsletter has been great in getting WPCAMR’s name *out there*. This venue also has the advantage of extremely low cost to produce. Subscribe at <http://amp.wpcamr.org> and view the archive of past articles.
- WPCAMR regularly notifies the press with noteworthy events regarding AMR. This often generates articles. To go along with this, WPCAMR is also a source that reporters seek out when AMR issues arise.

- The AMRClearinghouse web site (<http://AMRClearinghouse.org>) continues to be a staple for general information about abandoned mine reclamation and related topics. The website annually generates over a quarter of a million hits.
- WPCAMR regularly participated in statewide and regional organizations and taskforces including the PA Association of Conservation Districts, Mining Reclamation Advisory Board, NPS Liaison Workgroup, Citizens Advisory Council, the PA Water Resources Planning Committee, and the Eastern Coal Regional Roundtable.
- WPCAMR acted in behalf of its constituents in recommending and promoting consistent and streamlined rules for Chapter 105 permitting regulations regarding wetlands in the construction of passive treatment systems for AMD. WPCAMR's input to DEP is largely being incorporated into revisions now underway in a lengthy process. When finished, the revised regulations should result in a smoother process devoid of some regulatory inefficiencies.
- WPCAMR has taken on a half-time OSM-VISTA member who augments WPCAMR's normal activities. These include:
 - Assistance to watershed groups
 - Writing grant proposals
 - Research on a variety of subjects
 - Public relations
 - Outreach and education
 - Board development

The OSM-VISTA member's other half time duty is to be the northern coordinator for the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team whose overall mission meshes well with WPCAMR's. The OSM-VISTA member is housed at WPCAMR's offices in Greensburg.

- WPCAMR produced 2 separate brochures for public consumption that highlighted industry's role and involvement in abandoned mine reclamation efforts in Pennsylvania.
 - Environmental Benefits of Burning Waste Coal in CFB Power Plants
 - Remining for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
- WPCAMR operates in an entirely open and up-to-date manner. All of our major organizational documents, as well as Board Meeting materials for the past 5½ years may be found on the wpcamr.org website.

Much of WPCAMR's strength results from the strong, interdependent coalition of conservation districts and watershed groups in its 23 county service area as well as having a rich network of ties to government, industry and other conservation groups.

- WPCAMR works interactively with the Watershed Specialists and other Conservation District personnel in identifying watershed groups and AMR projects within counties, providing support where appropriate. Visits to local CD's and potential project sites are part of the effort to maintain good working relationships and communications with all involved. WPCAMR's new Watershed Coordinator worked diligently at making these connections.
- Quarterly WPCAMR meetings provide a venue in which WPCAMR can interact with its board and membership, not only in providing ongoing direction for WPCAMR, but to act as a regular roundtable where AMR issues and developments can be openly discussed.
- A valuable role played by WPCAMR is *knowing who does what*. WPCAMR regularly connects people and projects together.
- While difficult, largely because of the 23 county service area, we see the need to further strengthen the board of directors through orientations, trainings, involvement, and more site visits.

A WPCAMR priority is developing diversified funding for its various programs for its long-term sustainability. While WPCAMR has demonstrated the ability to generate funding through grant programs and from other sources, the diversity of funding (or lack thereof) continues to be an issue. Therefore, future emphasis will be directed toward more diversification of funding sources.

In this fiscal year, WPCAMR received funding as follows:

- \$125,000 for this grant from 319 funding.
- \$350,000 Growing Greener II award to fiscally manage the "Quick Response Program". This program provides funding for emergency repair of Growing Greener eligible BMP's.
- \$166,000 Growing Greener award for "Monitoring Support for Passive Treatment Systems II", a continuation of an existing Growing Greener grant which provides funding for laboratory analyses and the development of an Internet-based data management system.
- \$5,000 Growing Greener award as the fiscal sponsor for "South Sandy Watershed Association Startup Organization and Support".
- \$2,000 in small awards for the 2006 PA Statewide Annual AMR Conference.
- \$13,588 from the proceeds of an industry-sponsored golf outing.
- \$912,094 to be the fiscal sponsor of 4 DEP Innovative AMD Treatment awards.

With salaries being adjusted for inflation increased benefit expenses, and higher utility costs, WPCAMR operated this year at an approximate \$5,000 deficit which was made up by the WPCAMR general fund.

An important WPCAMR role is promoting the development of effective, efficient and practical solutions in AMR. Here are notable examples:

- Organization and sponsorship of PA Statewide Annual AMR Conference;
- Fiscal sponsor of 4 DEP Innovative AMD Treatment awards:
 1. *Limestone Upflow Pond Optimization*
 2. *In-situ Treatment of Mine Pools using Sulfate Reducing Bacteria*
 3. *Activated Iron Solids Treatment and Recovery of Large Flow AMD Discharges*
 4. *Enhanced Iron Removal for Recovery from Aerobic Ponds Using Retrofit Lasaire Aeration*
- Collaborating with the Mine Pool Taskforce (part of the Mining Reclamation Advisory Board) on alternative methods.

Another area of emphasis for WPCAMR is the overall issue of Operation, Maintenance and Replacement (OMR) of AMD Passive Treatment Systems in which we striving to take a lead role for the issue statewide. Here are notable examples:

- WPCAMR was awarded two Growing Greener grants for “Monitoring Support for Passive Treatment Systems”. This grant has 2 major components:
 1. Providing funding to watershed groups for laboratory analyses for water in passive treatment systems.
 2. Development of an Internet-based data management system. The system itself has a variety of functions including being a repository for analysis data, other treatment system data, and performing calculations that will allow the evaluation of passive treatment performance and ultimately the prediction of treatment system problems.
- WPCAMR was awarded a Growing Greener II grants to fiscally manage the “Quick Response Program” which provides funding for emergency repair of Growing Greener eligible BMP’s, including passive treatment systems.
- WPCAMR has just finished a Growing Greener grant which evaluated 18 early passive treatment systems with respect to OMR.

WPCAMR provided data to OSM which served as the basis of their passive treatment system database which enumerates and characterizes all publicly funded passive treatment systems in PA.

Miscellaneous

This year marked the start of new Watershed Coordinator, Andy McAllister, in July 2006. Andy is the former Watershed Specialist of Dauphin County, and has proved to be an extremely valuable addition to the staff.

WPCAMR has also moved its offices in December, 2006 to the Greenforge Building in the Donohoe Center campus, a building that was renovated to totally green standards. We now have somewhat more space in our new 2 office suite but at the same rental rate previously paid. With this move, WPCAMR no longer has dependencies for services from the Westmoreland Conservation District as has been the case for the past 13 years.