

WPCAMR Regional Coordinator's Report

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Planning for Pennsylvania's future in AMR

Since the last WPCAMR Quarterly Meeting in May and after a period where there wasn't that much to report, we've witnessed a number of manifestations of work that has become available for public view. Among those related to the 2006 amendments of SMCRA Title IV are:

- The long-promised OSM proposed rule-making for the revised SMCRA Title IV has finally become available, some 55 pages of small print and tedious reading in the Federal Register (on meeting webpage). We prepared draft comments for discussion during our meeting (on meeting webpage). Also on the webpage are links to various resources useful in providing comments to OSM.
- DEP held a focus group meeting in June to review a draft of "Mine Drainage Treatability and Project selection Guidelines" (on meeting webpage) produced by an internal DEP workgroup. Comments were solicited which BAMR is still evaluating. Presentations on the topic were given by Eric Cavazza and Brent Means at our annual conference in August [PowerPoints on conference website]. We will discuss this in our meeting. DEP representatives will be in attendance.
- DEP issued a draft comment and response document (on meeting webpage) regarding the town hall meetings held last year. There's really a lot of information on the Department's stand imbedded in this document. Sue Wilson of the Citizen's Advisory Council presented on this topic at our conference. [Powerpoint on conference website.]
- DEP has issued a draft position paper regarding the Set-aside program (on meeting webpage). We will discuss this in our meeting. DEP representatives will be in attendance.
- Joe Pizarchik, Director of DEP's Bureau of Mining Reclamation, made a very interesting presentation at our conference describing possible opportunities for watershed groups (and others) in DEP's fulfilling an obligation to provide treatment for AMD discharges that are now the Commonwealth's responsibility because of bond forfeitures on certain active mining sites. [PowerPoint on conference website].
- A number of coal companies sued the US Dept. of Interior to cease collecting reclamation fees (and refund what has been collected) on coal exported from the US, contending the practice is unconstitutional. A federal appellate court decided in favor of the US Dept. of Interior.
- The Mining Reclamation Advisory Board (MRAB) agreed to take up the issue of taking on the advisory function for PA's AMR program at a future meeting.

- I have been invited to participate in a small DEP work group to gather citizen input to Set-Aside program. Other citizen members are: John Dawes, Amy Wolfe, and Robert Hughes. First conference call will be next week.

The Annual AMR Conference

WPCAMR was the lead organization in this year's AMR conference, held Aug 11-14, in State College. As such, it currently represented a major focus of our overall workload for the last few months. Watershed Coordinator Andy McAllister served admirably as the coordinator for the conference, and his report will cover the highlights. All indications were that it was an unqualified success and perhaps set a new standard to follow for future conferences.

I've served as "Roving Shortstop" and had a variety of duties including conference website geek <http://treatminewater.com>, fiscal administrator, financial aid administrator, registration and attendance administrator, program designer, and overall pain in the butt where needed. In spite of thinking (at times) we would never be able to pull it off, somehow we did, and it appears to have been worth it. I'm very proud of Andy individually and as a team member for his considerable contributions.

We have yet to do some of the wrap-up activities. Those should be largely complete in the next couple of weeks. We'll hopefully have a somewhat easier job next year as we pass back the lead organization role to EPCAMR.

Miscellaneous Notes:

At the May WPCAMR meeting, board approval was granted to buy a replacement vehicle. I located and vetted a 2004 Dodge Caravan in excellent condition which we purchased. I strongly recommend to anyone buying a used vehicle to first have it inspected by a mechanic prior to purchase. I'd also had also located a couple others that seemed very good. The mechanic located items I had no expertise in diagnosing that could have been very costly. However, he was quite enthusiastic about the shape and care taken of the one we finally purchased, saying "This is the one!". In spite of its *uncoolness* factor, it so far has served its purpose well.

At the May WPCAMR meeting, board approval was granted to seek an AmeriCorp member to aid in our outreach efforts. We recently received word from the Mountain Service Corp that our application for an AmeriCorp member had been approved. We are now in the process of identification and recruiting.

We were the recipient of two significant pieces of equipment. OSM in Pittsburgh contacted us to see if we would like a surplus large format digitizer useful for some GIS applications. While picking up the digitizer, I commented on a large format 36" plotter setting next to it. I was immediately offered to have it surplus to us as well, which I snapped at. Both devices are said to be fully functional.

Our 319 contract for 2008-09 is now executed. We're operating with another annual cut, now \$121,500. We are making up operating shortfalls from our general fund.