

WPCAMR Regional Coordinator's Report
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SMCRA Title IV Reauthorization Stays on WPCAMR Front Burner

We continue to be very active with matters related to the new Title IV authorization.

We have developed new and revised materials for educating the watershed and reclamation community about the amended legislation. Most importantly Andy's video is now complete and I have created a fact sheet called "Basics of SMCRA Title IV", both accessible on our website.

We have refined our understanding of the new legislation. We consider the most important policy decision is one that brings the maximum federal dollars to PA through Title IV. How to do that is to delay "certification" to coincide with funding from the AMRF being exhausted. A way to ensure that is by PA requesting the full 30% AMD set-aside. (A percentage less than 30% would also likely work, but because of many unknowns, that choice has inherent uncertainties.)

Keep in mind that funding for AMD related work will come through 2 provisions of the amended law:

1. the AMD set-aside, and
2. the provision of having an AMD project adjacent to a P1 or P2.

Both of these potentially represent very significant funding for AMD problems.

The idea of creating an OM&R fund via the Set-aside seems to be popular with most everyone, including DEP Sec. McGinty and Dep. Sec. Roberts.

Appalachian Clean Stream funding for AMD has been eliminated from the 2008 OSM budget.

I believe DEP favors the Mining Reclamation Advisory Board (MRAB) as the advisory body for Title IV funding. On the other hand, the AML Campaign favors a separate advisory board whose sole focus is Title IV.

I have given presentations to a number of organizations. I have also have met with Acting OSM Director Brent Whalquist, briefed the PA House Environmental and Energy Committee executive director Joe Deklinski, and sat on a panel at the West Branch Symposium, and am scheduled to make a presentation at an EPA conference.

DEP has announced its series of 8 public roundtables around the state. WPCAMR and EPCAMR will provide an educational component to each meeting (to include Andy's video). Those meetings will occur in late May and early June.

We use "Abandoned Mine Posts" to keep our audience informed of matters Title IV.

2007 AMR Conference Planning

Conference planning is well underway. The site will be the Ramada Inn in State College, Friday July 20 and Saturday July 21. Major topics will be Title IV, OM&R, 105 Permitting, and Prevailing Wage.

WPCAMR Has Change in Scope of Work for 2007-08

For our 2007-08 319 contract, we have added a new deliverable: WPCAMR will aid the Bureau of Watershed Management in locating stream segments currently on the 303(d) list in our service area that have shown water quality improvement. With the aid of GIS, we will concentrate on 4 areas annually from which we will make recommendations to BWM. We will use information available through our sources as basis for our recommendations.

WPCAMR Sponsors New Innovative Treatment Grant

WPCAMR will be the sponsor for another Innovative Treatment Grant through DEP. The grant will enable a demonstration project "Enhanced Iron Removal for Recovery from Aerobic Ponds Using Retrofit Lasaire Aeration" proposed by Jon Dietz whose firm will provide the actual work. The technique uses a grid of pressurized tubing submerged in a settling pond. Tiny holes in the tubing allow air to escape and provide enhanced aeration to oxidizing ferrous ions and for purging carbon dioxide, resulting in increased efficiency.

We Say Farewell to OSM-VISTA Jeff Gerard

Like it or not, occasionally there comes a time when "all good things must come to an end". The meaning of such a phrase hits home to those of us at WPCAMR this week as we bid farewell to our AmeriCorps OSM-VISTA volunteer, Jeff Gerard, as he moves on to grad school. Jeff has been with us for a year and has done a phenomenal job in orchestrating the FACTS program. But Jeff, the person who always looks for ways to be helpful, has also become valuable to WPCAMR in many, many other ways. He does much and asks for little. Let's just say that Jeff is an extraordinary young man with a superb intellect, a giant heart, a great sense of humor, an intense drive to do good for his fellow man, and is an all around good guy.

Jeff made good use of his time in Greensburg by not only working tirelessly to advance the mission of WPCAMR but by being a wonderful friend and co-worker to all of us in the office. While his youthful synapses were busy firing away to solve WPCAMR's periodic complex computer challenges, his "elderly" co-workers (Bruce and Andy) stood by wondering as to how a human being can solve problems so quickly. Needless to say, we continue to stand in awe of Jeff's abilities.

Jeff, you have quietly done more for WPCAMR than you can imagine. As you move on with your life, you will undoubtedly continue to make a difference and leave your mark in all you touch. We will miss you dearly.

Thank you, Jeff, for everything.