



Public Service Commission

NEWS RELEASE
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PSC Presents Reclamation Awards to the Coteau Properties Company and the Falkirk Mining Company

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC) recently announced that the Coteau Properties Company and the Falkirk Mining Company are the recipients of this year’s Award for Excellence in Surface Coal Mining and Reclamation. The PSC’s Reclamation Division recommended that both companies be recognized for going above and beyond regulatory requirements.

“The PSC holds North Dakota’s lignite mines to very high standards. They often exceed expectations and in special cases like these, our Reclamation Awards highlight this exceptional performance,” said Commission Chair Randy Christmann, who holds the coal reclamation portfolio.

During last summer, nightshift operators at Coteau’s Freedom Mine were working overtime to remove overburden in one of their active mining areas. The overburden was being removed approximately 60 feet below the ground surface. During the course of the night, a dozer operator noticed an object that seemed out of place. The dozer operator immediately stopped work to investigate and soon realized that it appeared to be the remains of a large animal. After informing his supervisor, work was stopped in the area and the site was secured. They determined that it was possible this was the remains from a woolly mammoth.

The North Dakota State Historical Society and other state and federal agencies were notified about the find and after visiting the site, it was confirmed that this was a tusk and bones from a woolly mammoth. The North Dakota Geological Survey led the excavation and preservation of the woolly mammoth. Coteau is in the process of restoring the remains and they are planning to donate it to the state.

All employees at the Freedom Mine undergo training when they are hired regarding proper procedures and protocols if an unanticipated find is discovered. Because of this training, the woolly mammoth was identified and was able to be preserved.

The second award was presented to Falkirk Mining Company for their great professionalism while working with the PSC’s Reclamation Division and knowledge of the state’s laws and rules during a busy period of mining permits and revisions.

The PSC’s Reclamation Division received applications for 8 permit areas held by the largest coal mining operators in North Dakota. Based upon their review, the Falkirk Mine exceeded

expectations by submitting complete and accurate permit applications that met the satisfaction of the Reclamation Division in a timely manner. Over the past 5 years, Falkirk submitted 18 permit revision applications for their active permits, including a significant revision that added over 3,000 acres to an existing permit. Staff determined that their initial permit applications required only a minimal number of corrections. Notably, the process to add over 3,000 acres to an existing permit was completed in just over a year from the initial application to final approval.

The awards were presented to the companies during the Lignite Energy Council's Annual Meeting held in Bismarck last week.

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

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